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When a murder investigation reveals evidence of a sprawling conspiracy, the party must protect a prophet who predicts a looming doomsday for the city of Flint.

Special Thanks to Gabi, for teaching me about faeries.
And you know who, for teaching me about crazy,
soul-devouring banshees.

Ably Produced and Facilitated by Russell Morrissey

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INTRODUCTION

Wherein Solving a Murder Averts Doomsday.

In the first ZEITGEIST adventure, *The Island at the Axis of the World*, the PCs thwarted a coup attempt and helped prevent a war, but did so by aiding their homeland's traditional enemy. Such are the duties required by agents of the Risuri Homeland Constabulary, for protecting the nation is often at odds with simple black-and-white concepts of friend and foe.

In *The Dying Skyseer*, as the party investigates a murder they will cross paths with enemies they can recruit as temporary allies, and work with supposed friends who seek to mislead and betray them. This is a complex world, and it will take canny and dogged investigators to sift truth from amid layers of deception.

Of course, this is a heroic adventure game, and while different groups might turn the Grim/Dark dial up or down a few notches for their own campaigns, what players generally want is to find bad guys, take them down, and be rewarded for it. There are plenty of villains lurking under the smoggy skies of Flint, and it doesn't take a prophet to know the PCs are going to thwart their foul plans.

Before you run this adventure you'll want to be familiar with the Synopsis and the NPC Roster. Additionally, we've provided a Dramatis Personae handout, which you can give to the players at the start of the adventure. This presents illustrations and brief descriptions of NPCs the party would already know about at the start of the adventure. We intend to include updated versions of the Dramatis Personae with each adventure, to provide the players an easy visual reminder of whom they've met. You'll need to update this list based on your players' actions, or if you make changes of your own to the NPCs.

One benefit of releasing adventures in digital format is how easy it is to search the text. We do our best to make information easy to find, but if the PCs suddenly start suspecting Barb and you have no idea who that is, a quick search can turn up the information. (Barb is completely innocent, by the way.)

BACKGROUND

For the past few months, tiny tremors have shaken the city of Flint, which has no history of earthquakes. Docker poets take it as a manifested metaphor of the rifts opening up between the different districts and cultures. Angry protests march through Bosum Strand and Parity Lake to denounce cruel treatment of factory workers, and the police thrash those who make too big a name for themselves.

While these divisions concern the common people of Flint, three more powerful forces are at work in the city during this adventure.

Gale and the Fey Terrorists.

The rise of industry in Flint has faced opposition from many sources, most prominent among them being **Hana Soliogn**, dubbed "Gale" by the newspapers for her singular ability to fly away from the scenes of her crimes, despite most scholars saying such flight magic is impossible.

ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE.

All the heroic tier ZEITGEIST adventures assume the PCs are agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. If your players are free agents, they might be brought in as specialist investigators due to the tricky political nature of a murder at the Danoran consulate. Alternately, a PC with the Docker or Vekeshi Mystic character theme might have known Nilasa and so have a personal reason to solve the mystery.

If you're using this adventure in a different setting and want to strip out the technological elements, you just need to keep a similar element of simmering social unrest. You might replace factories with more old-fashioned sweatshops making goods for a group of distrusted foreigners; perhaps the workers blame some mysterious disease on those foreigners.

The mystery generally remains the same, with the emphasis on tracking down people who have clues to secrets hidden in the Bleak Gate (or Shadowfell in more traditional D&D), while another group tries to stop your investigation. You'll need the reason Reed Macbannin is refining witchoil, particularly if you're not planning to run the later adventures.

Gale's attacks usually take the form of sneaking into factories at night and sabotaging machines so work must stop, or unmooring ships so they drift into the harbor and sink, and for these she has won the sympathies of those who view industry as Danoran meddling. But many common workers see her as a threat to their livelihood, and the government has labeled her a foreign provocateur with ties to the Vekeshi Mystics. She is also blamed for thefts from the homes of wealthy factory owners, for the killings of a company of surveyors who wandered into the Cloudwood to site a potential railroad, and for a botched assassination attempt against Kane Westman, a tax collector with strong political friends.

Gale wants to garner more support with the common people. She recognizes that blindly attacking factories makes her look like a villain. In the weeks leading up to this adventure, one of Gale's loyalists, a half-elf woman named **Nilasa Hume**, gained the trust of a security guard at the Danoran consulate in Flint. Gale had tasked Nilasa with retrieving financial documents and political letters from the consulate in order to get a better sense of whom to target for future attacks. Nilasa's mission gets her killed just as the adventure begins.

The Family.

The Family criminal organization is based in Crisillyir, and sees the growth of Flint as a great opportunity to expand into a new market. For the past year they've been competing with the various local gangs, with many daring battles led by veteran bravura **Morgan Cippiano**, the face of the organization in Flint.

The Family tries to focus its violence only against other criminals, and targets its crimes against wealthy factory owners and merchants, rather than everyday people. They seek to convince townsfolk from relaxed Stray River to the gritty streets of Parity Lake that the Family will protect them better than the police can. Of course, they're working to get the police in their pockets too.

GALE AND THE VEKESHI.

The secretive cult of the Vekeshi Mystics has been trying to recruit Gale, since she and the Vekeshi have common enemies, and her ability to fly would make her an ideal assassin.

Before the adventure starts, inform any PC with the Vekeshi Mystic character theme that she has been given a mission. The latest gathering of adherents occurred on the last full moon before the solstice, when a representative of the Unseen Court opened a path into the Dreaming and offered everyone drink, dance, and love-making with beautiful fey.

Before the celebration, one of the more experienced members of the Flint cell—he always wears a mask, but has distinctive hands, marked with scars and calluses—took the PC aside and said it would be her task to protect Gale. While the RHC is tasked with capturing the fey terrorist, the Vekeshi want the PC to deliver a gift, and a message.

The gift is a bizarre mirror. It resembles a wreath of gnarled wood, and instead of a pane of glass, a sheet of water hangs within, no matter what angle you hold it at. It is magical, but its purpose is unclear. Normally it is just a beautiful mirror.

That message is: "The Unseen Court is watching. Take this mirror, and when you see the face of our enemies within it, bring them down and we shall reward you."

The party will have a chance to meet Gale, and this delivery can be the first step of many throughout the campaign that draws the PCs toward the Unseen Court.

KANE WESTMAN.

If the PCs check out Mr. Westman, he's clean. Gale attacked him because she detected energies from the Bleak Gate around his home, but he wasn't the source. In truth, Cillian Creed, Macbannin's aide, had been coordinating with Westman to ensure certain smuggled items disappeared from tax logs, but Westman assumed it was everyday bribery, and he has no idea about the operations on Cauldron Hill.

While most native criminals handle petty theft or crude protection rackets, the Family pursues high-end burglary, smuggling, and black-mail. Facing bloody opposition, Morgan has cleverly tricked gangs into turf wars that weaken them so the Family can move in. They're having trouble unseating one power player, though: **Lorcan Kell**, who has become a fixture in the industrial smuggling scene.

Nilasa Hume has connections with both Gale and the Family, and she has arranged for Gale and her allies to purchase a huge cache of smuggled magic items that Family thieves stole from Crisillyir.

The Obscurati.

As detailed in the *Campaign Guide*, the Colossus Cell of the Obscurati are constructing a massive golem inside Cauldron Hill, or rather the analog to Cauldron Hill that exists in the shadowy plane called the Bleak Gate.

This massive undertaking is secretly overseen by the city governor, **Roland Stanfield**, with the construction in the Bleak Gate directed by a steelshaper named **Leone Quital**. This adventure, however, focuses mostly on the involvement of **Reed Macbannin**, mayor of The Nettles, the city district where Cauldron Hill lies.

Macbannin spent years studying how to defend against dark magic, and he sincerely wants to protect Flint from whatever curses and evil energies were left behind by the witches of Cauldron Hill. He does not know about the existence of the Obscurati. Rather, he believes that Governor Stanfield is running a secret and morally-gray weapons research program for King Aodhan.

Macbannin has been told that the king expects an eventual war with the fey of the Dreaming—possibly even the awakening of the fey titans—as retaliation for his planned treaty with the Danorans. Hoping to cow the fey with technology, high-level officials in Risur and Danor are cooperating to construct a colossal golem. Of course common people would balk, and discovery by the fey would be disastrous, so secrecy is critical.

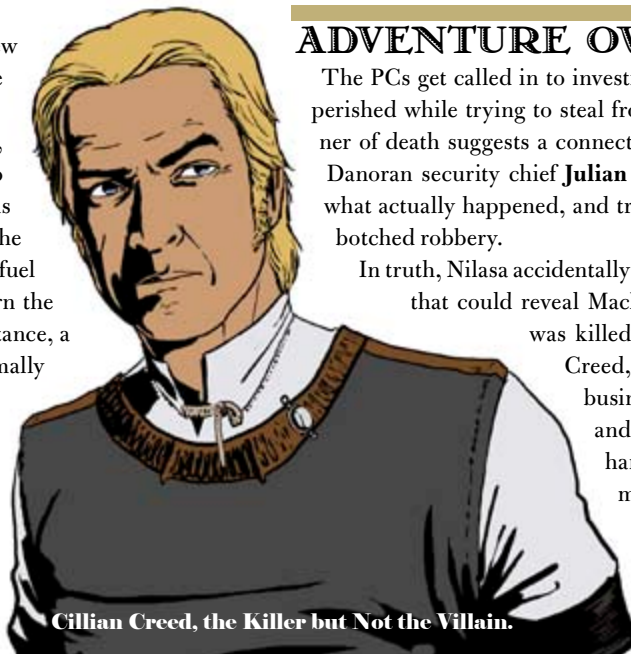
Macbannin coordinates the myriad elements that must work in the normal world to let Quital do his construction in the Bleak Gate. This includes working with crime boss Lorcan Kell to smuggle the necessary components into the Bleak Gate without raising any red flags, intimidating uncooperative factory owners to change their minds, and making sure investigations into mysterious happenings yield no results.

Macbannin carefully shields himself from direct involvement, typically sending messages through his butler **Cillian Creed**, a retired spy whose mastery of disguise conceals horrid physical corruption from a failed experiment involving energies of the Bleak Gate.

Of late, Macbannin has hired the services of a pair of dragonborn arsonists from Ber, **Eberardo and Valando**. When a factory produces something Quital needs for his colossus but which the owner is unwilling to part with, he is likely to find his house aflame, or his business ignited. An outsider will offer to buy the factory while it burns, after which

firefighters rush to put out the blaze. These new owners—proxies of Lorcan Kell—are of course cooperative to Macbannin's interests.

While Quital constructs the metal titan, Macbannin is researching his own way to aid the defense of Risur. Since fey magic is not trusted, Macbannin is repurposing the dark magic of the Cauldron Hill witches to fuel the mighty golem. He has found a way to turn the energy of the Bleak Gate into a physical substance, a liquid called witchoil. When people die, normally their souls linger in the Bleak Gate for a time before passing on, but if a person dies near a vial of witchoil, their soul is trapped in the fluid instead of passing into the plane of the dead. When the oil is burned, the soul is consumed, making it a potent power source. Macbannin has arranged to stash witchoil vials throughout many factories, which are naturally prone to industrial accidents. Meanwhile he refines an ever larger supply of the substance in a secret facility hidden beneath his manor on Cauldron Hill. Macbannin doesn't believe a soul has much worth after death, and so has no qualms trapping and annihilating souls of the deceased to help the living.



Cillian Creed, the Killer but Not the Villain.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The PCs get called in to investigate the death of Nilasa Hume, who perished while trying to steal from the Danoran consulate. Her manner of death suggests a connection to the fey terrorist Gale, but the Danoran security chief **Julian LeBrix** is under orders to cover up what actually happened, and tries to make it look like just a normal botched robbery.

In truth, Nilasa accidentally stumbled upon a cache of documents that could reveal Macbannin's criminal activities, and she was killed by Mayor Macbannin's aid, Cillian Creed, who was at the consulate for other business. Unfortunately for Macbannin and Creed, just before Nilasa died she handed off the stolen documents to a man who fled the scene.

This man, **Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen**, has no connection to any of the major players in the adventure, and was just an innocent bystander who panicked and ran. Once he discovered what

he'd been handed he hid in The Nettles, hoping to shake pursuit and arrange for passage out of the country.

The PCs set out to find the doctor and figure out what Nilasa was up to. By tracing Nilasa's connections they learn of a smuggling operation bringing in magic items to arm Gale's allies. Clues from various sources lead to a confrontation with wand smugglers in Flint's harbor. After a battle that fields barely-controlled magic wand blasts, the party captures a few Family toughs. Soon thereafter they are contacted by Morgan Cipriano, who offers to help the party out with their larger investigation in exchange for letting off his people.

Another thread of Nilasa's activities leads them to **Heward Sechim**, a man who runs a factory producing alchemical acid, and who was friends with Nilasa. Sechim, who despite owning a factory is opposed to Danoran presence in Risur, defends Nilasa as a good young woman.

Heward can get the party in touch with **Nevard Sechim**, Heward's sickly old uncle and a once-renowned skyseer. Nevard is highly respected by Gale, and if the party is willing to help him, he can get them a meeting with her. Nevard wants to climb above the smog cloaking the city to see the stars again; he hopes a vision will help soothe the unrest in the streets. But the only place to get a clear view within the city is the top of Cauldron Hill, said to be haunted and thus prohibited, except by permission of the mayor of The Nettles, Reed Macbannin.

When the party goes to Macbannin, he agrees to let Nevard up the mountain, and encourages them to go with him as defense against the evil spirits. In truth he hopes to arrange for their deaths and thus end their investigation; simultaneously he sends his dragonborn arsonists to destroy Heward Sechim's factory so he won't be able to point any other constables this way. When the party survives Macbannin's ploy, Nevard receives several visions, one of which guides them to thwart the arson just in time. Macbannin, of course, pretends to be pleased they survived the dangers of the mountain, while secretly planning another way to thwart them.

Nevard arranges for Gale to meet with the PCs on safe ground. She claims they have a common enemy, and shares her hunches and limited knowledge of a secret group operating in the Bleak Gate, which she thinks has ties to the Danorans. If the party doesn't try to arrest her, she gives them a ritual that will let them track the trace 'scent' of a person who

THE BLEAK GATE AND THE DREAMING.

These two planes are detailed in the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide*. In brief, they have the same general geography as the real world, but with distinct inhabitants and magical energies. Traveling to them typically requires powerful magic, but sometimes pathways open between the worlds, through rings of toadstools or banks of rancid fog on moonless nights.

The Bleak Gate is where the spirits of the dead linger before passing on. Gloomy clouds block out both sun and stars, and it's almost impossible to keep track of time. There are no birds or insects, and most sounds echo dully, except for howls and moans of monsters and the dead, which carry for miles in the windless air.

A hundred and fifty-four years ago a coven of witches took residence upon Cauldron Hill, which rises high in the center of Flint. They hid in the veil between the real world and the Bleak Gate, learning to use the souls of the dead as fuel for their foul sorcery. After years of terrorizing the city, they were defeated by the king of Risur and his allies, but unnatural forces still haunt the peak of that ominous hill.

Today the Obscurati have carved a massive complex out of the stone of Cauldron Hill in the Bleak Gate. As the mountain shifts and settles, it sends occasional tremors through the city, rattling even into the real world. The construction complex is guarded with monsters and magic, but the PCs will have a chance to pierce its defenses in *Adventure Five, Cauldron-Born*.

The Dreaming is a tangle of verdant and teeming nature, home to faeries, boggarts, trolls, and the Unseen Court. The land follows dream logic, and traveling requires a proper mindset more than a precise map. Though at first glance more pleasant and safe than the Bleak Gate, the Dreaming is home to capricious fey who delight in misleading and confusing people to their deaths.

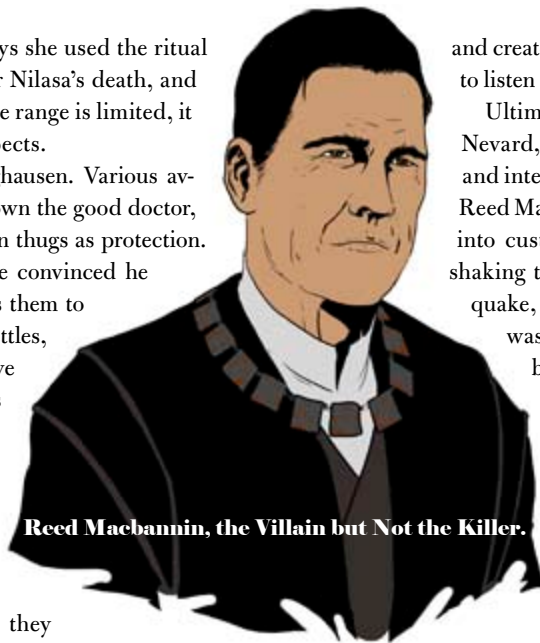
has traveled into the Bleak Gate. She says she used the ritual at the Danoran consulate the night after Nilasa's death, and sensed traces of dark energy. Though the range is limited, it can point the party toward possible suspects.

The final thread is Dr. von Recklinghausen. Various avenues give the party a chance to track down the good doctor, who has hired some of Lorcan Kell's own thugs as protection. When the party finds him, he has to be convinced he can trust them, and he eventually points them to an abandoned Clergy church in The Nettles, where he hid the documents Nilasa gave him. The doctor read the documents and found references to a substance he recognized as "witchoil"; he says they were written by Danoran security chief Julian LeBrix.

LeBrix reveals that months ago he was investigating strange goings-on in Danoran-funded factories. He thought they might have been caused by sabotage by Gale, but instead he stumbled upon strange vials of witchoil, stashed in dozens of factories. He wanted to find out what they were, but was told by his superiors to end his investigation. The party realizes that someone is using the deaths of factory workers as a way to gather energy for some nefarious purpose. LeBrix thinks that with the information he got as a starting point, it might be possible to figure out who's behind it.

When the party goes to recover the documents, though, Cillian Creed leads a strike team to kill the party, recover the material, and kidnap the doctor. Creed arranges a trap for the party, burying them alive, but clever thinking can save them.

With evidence of larger goings-on, but no clear idea of who is responsible, the party gets guidance from Nevard the skyseer, who says he will present his visions and interpretations of what they mean at a large rally. Dockers, factory workers, and thousands of townsfolk attend, making security nearly impossible, but the party gets clues in advance that the same group who killed Nilasa and tried to recover the documents will target Nevard. Magically-altered great cats, infused with shadow energy, attack



Reed Macbannin, the Villain but Not the Killer.

and create a panic, and it's up to the PCs to save the skyseer, or to listen to the revelations on his dying breaths.

Ultimately, with a combination of evidence and aid from Nevard, Gale, Morgan Cippiano, the documents Nilasa stole, and interrogating the arson brothers, the party is able to link Reed Macbannin to the whole plot. When they go to take him into custody, however, the strange tremors that have been shaking the city for weeks finally erupt into a massive earthquake, releasing huge torrents of witchoil that Macbannin was collecting and refining. As the mountain starts to break apart around them, the witchoil flood threatens the slums of The Nettles, forcing the PCs to decide what's more important—saving thousands of innocent lives, or capturing Macbannin.

RUNNING AN INVESTIGATION

A mystery is more complicated to run than a dungeon crawl, but after you've read through the adventure you should have a clear sense of which groups and individuals want what, and how their goals are interconnected. The PCs' initial mission should be to use Nilasa as a lead to track down Gale, but as they follow the clues it becomes clear that her death is connected to something more dangerous than the fey terrorist.

RHC Protocol.

To help structure the PCs' investigations, you might suggest the following pattern. Since there are no phones (and magical communication is rare and expensive), Risur Homeland Constabulary protocol for these sorts of cases encourages constables to start each day at the RHC office in Central district. Their personal office will probably have some sort of slate board marked with names of key figures, locations, and events, with arrows tracing their connections.

Each morning the group gets together at the office, files reports about the previous day, and makes plans for which leads they want to follow. If that entails splitting up, they can either meet up at the office the next morning, or set a meeting place and time, typically a district police station but possibly the home or business of one of the PCs' contacts.

Elements of the investigation are time-sensitive, while other events happen in response to the PCs finding the right clue or catching the attention of the wrong person. The adventure starts on the 1st day of summer, and you'll want to keep track of what day it is. If you want to keep track of time spent each day, consider that it typically takes an hour to travel from the center of one district to the center of an adjacent one if going by foot, or half an hour by carriage.

It's not a hard and fast rule that the party must return to the office each day, but bringing them back here gives them a clear sense of the passage of days, and reminds them that they have resources at their disposal. It also provides you a convenient time to hand out new information or messages; witnesses or requisitioned items can be waiting for the PCs at the RHC offices at the end of each working day.

Plus, their boss Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft reads their daily reports, so he has a record and can tell *his* higher ups what's going on. This can give you an excuse as the DM to have an NPC remind the PCs to follow up on a clue they may have neglected.

Finally, in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, action occurs in the office, and it will have greater impact if the party is familiar with the place.

COMBAT-HUNGRY PLAYERS?

The first ZEITGEIST adventure started with a bang (which may have annihilated the party in an explosion of steamship parts). This adventure takes a slower pace, and players who are eager for combat might get impatient.

You might try adding a bit of random action early on, perhaps moving the Fog of War encounter (page xx) to the start of the adventure, as part of an unrelated case. When the party comes back to the RHC office they get news of the murder, and so the mystery begins.

Alternately, you could just fast-forward through some of the early investigations by planting a clear lead on Nilasa's body. Maybe give her a receipt for Danisca Waryeye's apothecary shop (page xx), and when the PCs show up they interrupt a drug deal, provoking immediate combat.

You know best what your players will enjoy, but give them a chance to get involved in the mystery. They might discover that they like challenging their investigative skills as much as challenging their combat build.

INVESTIGATOR'S BEST FRIEND.

When in doubt, remember that the PCs don't know what's in this adventure. If they want to look for Dr. von Recklinghausen by checking local hospitals, have them make a skill check (usually Streetwise DC 13) to find a clue. Even if their hunch isn't right, don't make their search a dead-end. Try to think of a way getting a negative answer could still point in the right direction. Perhaps a doctor at one hospital did hear that sick people in The Nettles aren't going to charity clinics as often. This points the PCs toward the right district.

What If?

It's fine for the PCs to take a different route to tracking down Macbannin than we assume, but if your players come up with a way that might solve the mystery early—like by breaking into the Danoran consulate and seeking documents like the ones Nilasa stole, or by catching and mind-controlling Cillian Creed during a combat encounter—you might need to tweak things if you want to still make use of the rest of the adventure.

Don't make their efforts pointless, but try adjusting what information they yield so that the party gets some clues, instead of getting all the answers. Perhaps the consular kept documents in his safe that list various factories that are cooperating in "the project" and how much they're being paid, but they make no mention of Reed Macbannin. They might even reference Cillian Creed as "that old disfigured spy," but if the PCs try to find out who fits that description, you can justifiably say it takes a few days to track down the answer. Then, when the party is already in the thick of Thread Four: Conspiracy, their research bears fruit and they realize, gasp, that old disfigured spy is Macbannin's butler!

Of course, if you want a game where verisimilitude is more important than "adventure," let the players solve the case, commend them on their daring and clever plans, and move on to actually stopping the bad guys. Evidence might get stolen, witnesses might be killed in their cell, and the PCs will have to find more solid proof before they accuse a respected politician of being a mad scientist.

Contacts and Informants.

As detailed in the Player's Guide, before the start of this adventure, you should ask each player to pick two districts and come up with a contact his or her character has in those districts.

This contact could be a friend or family member, a criminal informant, an ex-girlfriend, a merchant whose shop the PC frequents, a minor noble who owes the PC a favor, a religious figure, or many other options. These NPCs help connect the PCs to the city, and provide you an easy way to set the scene whenever the party first goes to a particular district to investigate, or when they need to call in a favor (see Prestige in the *Player's Guide*).

Throughout the adventure, the PCs will seek clues in four different threads of a mystery. Often their search will require skill checks. At your discretion, if a particular PC has a contact who could be useful in finding information about a particular thread, you could grant the PC a bonus to his skill checks or perhaps even provide the occasional automatic success.

This gives slight benefit to PCs who have contacts of the unsavory, criminal sort, so look for creative opportunities to make use of more mainstream contacts.

ADVENTURE LAYOUT

The Dying Skyseer's plot has a precise beginning and climax, but the middle of the adventure can take many different paths. We roughly divide events into a beginning, four threads of investigation, and a climax. Each investigation thread has several prominent scenes, but the precise order the PCs reach them depends on their choices.

An easy way for you as DM to keep track of the plot is to think of the different threads as smaller individual adventures that occasionally link together. Completing each of the three initial threads (involving Smugglers, Gale, and Doctor van Recklinghausen) provides key clues to the fourth thread (Conspiracy). Once the PCs complete that thread, they'll be able to identify Reed Macbannin as the main villain, and the Climax details how they can take him out.

At the end of the adventure you'll find a DM Investigation Guide, a short reminder of how the different scenes fit together. You should encourage the players to keep notes of their PCs' investigations. This is almost critically necessary if you don't meet weekly.

Scene Layout.

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

- ♦ **Scene Type:** Action, Exploration, Exposition, Puzzle, Social, or Hybrid.
- ♦ **Duration:** Montage (a few hours or days), Real-time (a few minutes), or Tactical (round-by-round).
- ♦ **Encounter Level:** This assumes a party of 5 PCs. For non-combat encounters, use the table below as guidance to set skill DCs.

Difficulty Class by Level.

Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Level	Easy	Moderate	Hard
1	8	12	19	5	10	15	22
2	9	13	20	6	11	15	23
3	9	13	21	7	11	16	23
4	10	14	21	8	12	16	24

OTHER CONSTABLES

If you need the PCs to interact with their coworkers, remember that most constables are busy with their own cases, and are fairly low level anyway. But if you want to set up friendships or rivalries, here's a sample group of other RHC Constables.

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

Carlao is the nominal head of the group, but Serena is the brains and face. She and Kaea get along like sisters, but both have their eyes on Carlao. Dima has a bizarre joy for filing paperwork, while Josiah fills the stock role of "quiet loner sniper." Gaethan styles himself a cunning investigator, and he keeps a small book full of names of just about every person, place, or thing that has come up in a case.

Currently the group is assigned to investigate a group of Drakran occultists who have recently gained the ears of several politicians. The RHC suspects they are trying to recover relics from the old demonocracy.

NPC ROSTER

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

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

Recurring Characters. Stover Delft, Dr. von Recklinghausen, Morgan Cippiano, Lorcan Kell, Leone Quital, and Gale all play prominent roles in later adventures. All other NPCs that appear in this adventure might recur in minor roles, but feel free to do with them as you wish. If anyone important dies, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

NPC Entry	Page
Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft	xx
Nilasa Hume	xx
Consulate Security Chief Julian LeBrix	xx
Thames Grimsley	xx
Morgan Cippiano	xx
Heward Sechim	xx
Skyseer Nevard Sechim	xx
Mayor Reed Macbannin	xx
Cillian Creed	xx
Hana "Gale" Soliogn	xx
Lorcan Kell	xx
Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen	xx
Leone Quital	xx
Eberardo and Valando	xx

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

NPC	Page
Kane Westman, tax official	
Alfred Bellastair, police officer	
Tia Jedeau, consulate secretary	
Braden Sarkin, Nilasa's boyfriend	
Methan duNadria, Danoran consular	
Bartide Jannis, consulate house cleric	
Jack Byron, carriage driver	
Tad Hilly, owner of Thinking Man's	
Barb, waitress	
Jered Lawman, halfling bard	
Hennet Rinus, professor	
Derek Goodson, prison director	
Ford Sorghum, two-timing accomplice	
Travis Starter, accomplice with kid	
Blander "The House Elf" Waryeye	
Danisca Waryeye, apothecary	
Deorn Feldman, river smuggler	
Amba Bandia, Crisillyiri smuggler	
Dozy Miccini, family contact/cobbler	
Renard Woodsman, Cloudwood brigand	
Pazamu, orc shaman	
Dr. Barnaby Camp, surgeon	
Prof. Lynn Kindleton, human biologist	
Officer Roger Porter, alias of Creed	
Rufus Hammerton, Kell lieutenant	

REWARDS

At the end of this adventure, the PCs' Prestige with Flint should increase to 2 (or 3 if one or more PCs is a Docker), but if they act unheroically it might stay flat, or even drop if they dramatically screw up. As long as the PCs solve the case, their Prestige with Risur increases to 2 (or 3 if they have a Yerasol Veteran) and with the Obscurati increases to 2.

If the party proves to be useful allies or staunch enemies for the fey terrorist Gale, their Prestige with the Unseen Court increases to 2 (or 3 if they have a Vekeshi Mystic). Likewise, involvement with Family bravura Morgan Cippiano can increase their Prestige with the Clergy to 2. See the Player's Guide for details of the Prestige system, and how the PCs can use it to request items and call in favors.

At the start of the adventure, the PCs each receive 1,072 gp. They get another 1,479 gp when they reach 3rd level, and 2,096 gp when they reach 4th level. This represents a mixture of salary and stipend for their investigation.

If the PCs are free agents instead of members of the RHC, you'll need to make sure they receive the appropriate treasure parcels. One possible mix would be:

- ♦ **Start of Adventure.** Payment of 170 gp total as payment (from dockers or Heward Sechim who want to know about Nilasa's

death), four magic items possessed by NPCs, and 170 gp apiece of incidental loot (from the smugglers or other criminals). Most of the magic items being smuggled in would be seized by authorities unless the party is very clever at hiding them.

- ♦ **At 3rd Level.** Four magic items possessed by NPCs, 225 gp total in thanks from Heward Sechim for saving his factory (or as a bounty on the arsonists), and 225 gp apiece in loot from the Bosum Strand warehouse fight.
- ♦ **At 4th Level.** Four magic items possessed by NPCs, 280 gp total payment from the city for stopping Macbannin, and 280 gp apiece as bribe by Morgan Cippiano to help him take out the arsonists.

PACING AND LEVELING

The adventure can take many routes, and we discourage precise XP tracking, so when should you level the party? The party starts this adventure at 2nd level. We recommend that they reach 3rd level after they finish the Smugglers Night, Arson & Alkahest, or A Weight of Crumbling Stone encounter, then 4th level after the Dawn Square encounter, and finally 5th level at the adventure's end.

List of Magic Items as Treasure.

Cards for new items are presented at the end of the adventure.

- ♦ Various potions, elixirs, and other alchemical consumables worth 680 gp. Choose items useful for the PCs.
- ♦ Blander's *hat of hats*. Level 4. Pg. xx.
- ♦ Blander's *hedge wizard's gloves*. Level 4 (see the D&D 4E ADVENTURER'S VAULT™ for details).
- ♦ Two +2 *vendetta bullets*. Level 5. Pg. xx.
- ♦ Six *potions of healing*. Level 5 (see the D&D 4E PLAYER'S HANDBOOK® for details).
- ♦ A smuggled +1 *wand of Egal the Shimming*. Level 5. Pg. xx.
- ♦ Eberardo's +1 *defender greatsword*. Level 5. Pg. xx.
- ♦ *Cracked cauldron*. Level 6. Pg. xx.
- ♦ Renard Woodsman's *aerid bracers*. Level 6. Pg. xx.
- ♦ Gale's *messenger wind*. Level 6. Pg. xx.
- ♦ Valando's +2 *staff of arson*. Level 7. Pg. xx.
- ♦ Dr. von Recklinghausen's *malice-wrought rapier*. Level 7. Pg. xx. (Plus possibly the *surgical precision* power for Martial Scientists. Pg. xx.)
- ♦ Nilasa's *canary in a coal mine pendant*. Level 8. Pg. xx.

AND A FINAL WORD, BEFORE WE START...

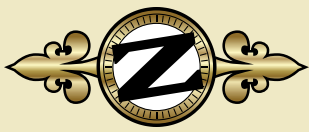
This is a detail-rich, multi-layered adventure. Your players will inevitably outwit you and find some way to short-circuit the expected path of the investigation, but that's fine. Just make sure that the key players don't reveal the existence of the colossus and that Governor Stanfield's role in the plot remains hidden; anything else is fair game. After all, the PCs are supposed to win. We're just trying to make the chase challenging enough to be fun.



CHARACTER THEMES IN THE ADVENTURE

Each ZEITGEIST adventure includes one or more scenes that bring the PCs' character themes (detailed in the *Player's Guide*) to the forefront.

- ♦ Dockers should be welcomed in the Thinking Man's Tavern (page xx) and the various riots and protests throughout the city. Thames Grimsley might invite a docker constable to speak at the rally (page xx).
- ♦ Eschatologists have a chance to talk philosophy at the Thinking Man's Tavern (page xx) and with the crime boss Lorcan Kell (page xx). The *icy ends of the earth* power can help immensely in battling the dragonborn arsonists (page xx and xx).
- ♦ Gunsmiths who befriend security chief Julian LeBrix can learn how to create *vendetta bullets* (page xx). Also, the ship-to-ship wand battle (page xx) provides a great opportunity for prolonged ranged combat.
- ♦ Martial Scientists can learn the *surgical precision* attack power from Dr. von Recklinghausen (page xx), and can meet a fellow scientist, Lieutenant Dale (page xx).
- ♦ Any Skyseer PCs give the party an easier path to contact the skyseer Nevard (page xx), and they receive prominent visions atop Cauldron Hill (page xx).
- ♦ Spirit Mediums can learn a great deal from the spirit of Nilasa Hume (page xx), and they might sense from afar the shrieking souls trapped inside vials of witchoil, particularly during the creation of the flayed jaguars (page xx).
- ♦ Technologists can find like-minded souls in the Thinking Man's Tavern (page xx), and have the best chance to stop the witchoil avalanche in the climax (page xx).
- ♦ Vekeshi Mystics start the adventure with a special mission to protect Gale, and to recruit her for a mission of assassination (page xx).
- ♦ Yerasol Veterans will naturally receive the focus of attention from journalists after various high-profile deeds, and will receive a special visit from Cillian Creed (page xx).



IT BEGINS: DANORAN CONSULATE

This act details the characters, events, and clues surrounding the Danoran consulate where Nilasa Hume was murdered. Investigating these should provide the PCs with hooks to the four threads of investigation that make up the rest of the adventure.

TIMELINE.

The adventure begins on the 1st day of summer. Keep track of how much time the PCs spend because some events occur on set days. The wand smuggler meeting, for instance, occurs the night of the 4th, and the villains find Wolfgang on the 7th if the party hasn't yet. If the party dallies, the earthquake atop Cauldron Hill strikes on the 10th.

GETTING AROUND IN A HURRY.

In general it takes half an hour to get from the heart of one district to the heart of an adjacent district (not counting The Nettles, which always takes at least an hour or two to pass through). To get to North Shore, the PCs leave the RHC Headquarters in Central and pass through Bosum Strand, meaning the trip takes an hour.

If the PCs want to rush to the crime scene, they can call in a favor (see the *Zeitgeist Player's Guide*) to take a swift steamboat and cut their time down to just half an hour. This has a Favor Rating of 2, so it's unlikely to be any faster unless the party has Prestige 2 with Flint and succeeds a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 21). If the PCs angered Thames Grimsley in the previous adventure, however, any boat they get on ends up taking even longer than a carriage through the crowded streets would.

OFFICER BELLASTAIR AND THE POLICE.

Bellastair and his three squadmates are willing to help the party for half an hour, but if the party wants them to assist for a few hours or more, such as to help track down leads after their investigation, one PC needs to succeed a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 20) to keep them around.

Should the PCs make good time, they find Office Bellastair in a kinder mood, honestly impressed by their speed. Reduce the DC of the above check to 9.

Aside from providing a personal face to the PCs' interactions with the police, Officer Bellastair plays no special role in the campaign.

ON THE FENCE

Puzzle/Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

The PCs investigate a murder scene.

If you want to give your players a brief feel for the city of Flint, read or paraphrase the following.

Forty years ago the city of Flint was a second-tier port, mostly a haven for fishermen and loggers. Still struggling to overcome the stigma of having once been the domain of a perilous coven of witches, Flint was prosperous, but played little role in Risuri affairs.

Then the Third Yerasol War ended and the new king declared Flint would be his nation's seat of industry. Mines in the Anthras Mountains poured iron and coal downriver to Flint's harbor. Old forests within the city limits were clear-cut and factories erected in their place to build guns, refine alchemicals, and forge steel rails and train cars.

Thousands of immigrants and gold-seeking villagers crowded into shabby flophouses and tenements around the factories, then when those were filled they built new slums on the sides of the city's steep hills. Smoke and soot poured forth from factory roofs, and criminal elements took root beneath these gloomy clouds, growing strong and feeding on the desperation of a new population of workmen, prostitutes, and orphans.

In places, Flint's historical beauty still endures—in the governor's island mansion fortress, high atop haunted Cauldron Hill, deep in the breeze-swaying branches of the Cloudwood, and on the bayou plantations west of Pine Island. And the confluence of people from so many stations has inspired great art and technological innovation. But cracks between competing groups are straining the peace, and all it would take are a few disasters to rive the city apart.

It's just before 11 a.m. on the 1st day of Summer, and the PCs are at the main office of the Risuri Homeland Constabulary going over leads in the Gale investigation when their superior, **Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft**, interrupts them.

"Time for some field work, constables. We just received a delightful report about the perfect lead for you. Young woman, identity unknown, jumps out of the fourth floor window at the Danoran consulate, impales herself on the spires of the compound fence, and perishes. Technically half of her is in our jurisdiction, which is good for you because the fence she landed on was forty feet from the window. Seems like our young victim thought she could fly."

A carriage is waiting to convey the party to the Danoran consulate, and even with official seals on its doors to help clear the way, the ride takes nearly an hour. The late spring morning is warm and muggy, and a foul breeze blows a cloak of smog over the normally clear-skied North Shore district. The street that runs past the consulate has no buildings on its opposite side, just beach, but four Flint police officers are trying to block off access to gawkers. A black coroner's carriage waits outside the consulate gate; the back door is open, and its driver sits on the slab where a dead body should go, looking bored.

By the time the party arrives, nearly two hours have passed since the woman's death. **Alfred Bellastair**, the officer in charge, looks at his cheap pocket watch as the PCs approach, then impatiently comes forward.

"We responded to some panicked witnesses, and by the time the first of our men got here the Danorans had taken the victim off the fence and carried her inside. But everyone had pretty much the same story. They heard gunfire, saw the woman jump out the window, and she landed on the fence. One scoundrel apparently stole stuff off her body and ran away as she was bleeding out. The Danorans wouldn't let us inside, but I yelled at them that you'd be showing up, and they said they wouldn't get rid of the body. The guy you want to talk to is the security chief, Julian LeBrix.

"You can handle the investigation from here without my men, right? We've got better things to do than sit around for another hour while the 'special constables' drink up the hospitality of the Danorans."

The Body.

The Danoran security chief Julian LeBrix meets the party at the gate to the consulate, while cleaning staff work to scrub blood and viscera off the fence just beside the gate. LeBrix introduces himself, then walks the party in through the courtyard gardens into the entry hall of the consulate. Along the way he says:

"This is a mess. I took a diplomatic post to avoid having to see blood and death anymore. It has our people shaken up—none of them ever saw war—and so I hope you can take the woman's body and go quickly. Better for everyone I think if the consular doesn't have to be bothered. He has more important things on his mind than a burglary. We have treaty negotiations, trade contracts, and you don't want powerful men thinking about death when they're deciding our fates, you know?

"The woman went by the name Nilasa Hume. She's been in a few times these past few months. Seemed nice enough. She brought us breakfast this morning. One of our security personnel, Braden, was dating her. She used him to case the building, and must have overheard someone talking about upstairs.

"I noticed she slipped out while everyone else was eating the food she'd brought. A hunch led me upstairs, and I found her slipping gold forks and spoons into her pockets."

LeBrix pulls out a small padded bag, then pulls from that a tiny ceramic egg, beautifully decorated with gems and gold.

"She also had this. It's worth thousands, and we had it sitting out on display. I saw her, drew my pistol. She ran. I realized she was about to jump out the window. I thought she was trying to kill herself, so I fired and hit her in the leg. Then she jumped. Flew straight through the glass. Now I'm thinking she's about to escape, so I reload and shoot her in the back. That's when she fell.

"That all happened within the consulate grounds. I'm within my rights to have taken these actions, though I wish I hadn't had to."

The consulate's main secretary, **Tia Jedeau**, watches the party as they come in, but gets back to work when LeBrix tosses a sidelong look at her. LeBrix takes them down a hall and stops outside a storage room.

"We're all professionals here," LeBrix says. "It would help me if you can take the body and leave quickly."

Examination and Investigation.

Inside the storage room, a bloodied white tablecloth covers Nilasa's body. Braden sits in a chair beside it, stunned and grieving.

LeBrix lets the party examine the corpse or ask questions of Braden or other staff, but he stays with them unless they make an effort to distract



**ASST. CHIEF
INSPECTOR
STOVER DELFT**

A local Flintner in his early 40s, Delft gets squinty and condescending when his authority is questioned, but he can recognize talent and good work. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices.

He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.



**CONSULATE
SECURITY CHIEF
JULIAN LEBRIX**

Old, balding, and rheumy-eyed, LeBrix served Danor in the Third Yerasol War, then spent decades as seneschal to various minor nobles. Soft-spoken and forward thinking, LeBrix is still handy with a pistol, but he prefers to anticipate trouble and avoid it. The consulate usually appreciates how smoothly he manages things, but a few months ago his diligence got him in trouble when he found clues to a conspiracy his superiors wanted to keep secret. He locked up the report and now is afraid of losing his job.

him. While he's watching, the consulate staff cooperates, but they omit or change certain key details in order to corroborate LeBrix's story above. (In particular, LeBrix claims he discovered Nilasa during the theft, but in actuality no one knew what was going on until they started to hear gunshots from upstairs.) The security chief also tries to rein them in if they start snooping around the consulate or asking to go upstairs to see where the woman jumped from the window.

You'll want to read The Mission and Its Aftermath below so you know what happened and what information the various witnesses have. Then, since this is the party's first investigation in the campaign, you might need to guide the players a bit to make sure they check the body, talk to witnesses both in the consulate and on the street, and then follow up on where clues take them.

The Mission and Its Aftermath.

Three Months Ago.

Gale asked Nilasa to go undercover. Deploying her natural charm and her cover as an established factory worker, Nilasa convinced a thick-jawed guard at the consulate—**Braden Sarkin**—to be her boyfriend. After a few weeks of earning the trust of the staff and learning their patterns, she began to opportunistically steal documents for Gale. Usually she'd sneak in at night, but she knew the consular's office was closely watched in the evening, but not as much during the day, so she devised a plan to sneak in during normal business hours.

One Week Ago.

Nilasa narrowly avoided being arrested when police raided the seedy home of two of her old burglar buddies—**Ford Sorghum** and **Travis Starter**. She had bragged to them about an imminent deal with smugglers to bring in some expensive wands, but so far they haven't sold her out.

This Morning, 9 a.m.

While a light drizzle dappled the city, Nilasa breezed into the consulate carrying a box of brigadeiro chocolates she'd picked up at Thinking Man's Tavern (in Bosum Strand). She briefly chatted with Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, who was waiting for his visa appointment.

Nilasa's boyfriend Braden came to meet her, and she told him she'd brought breakfast for the staff. She made coffee and set out the chocolates for the staff, which drew away the attentions of most of the consulate's

security. After distracting security's attention with the free food, she used an *elixir of invisibility* to sneak up to the fourth floor office of the consular.

Meanwhile, Dr. von Recklinghausen spoke with a low-level bureaucrat, who signed paperwork to get him a travel visa to Ber.

Simultaneously, Cillian Creed was meeting with the consular—**Methan duNadria**—in a basement chamber. Creed wanted to check on the status of a few factories that produce materiel needed for the construction of the colossus. When his discussion with the consular came to an end, Creed—an experienced spy—immediately noticed how the consulate's security had been drawn away from their posts.

This Morning, 10 a.m.

Nilasa picked the lock to a drawer, grabbed a bundle of files that looked promising, and tucked them into her shoulder bag.

Creed quickly swept up to the fourth floor, knowing that's where the consular kept documents that needed to remain secret. He spotted Nilasa and tried to talk her into surrendering. When she bolted for a window, he slipped through shadows and slashed at her face with talons, blinding her. She jumped anyway, smashing through the window and invoking magic to fly, but it did not carry her far enough.

At the same moment, Dr. von Recklinghausen was emerging from the consulate and just passing through the gate when Nilasa plummeted and was impaled on the spiked fence beside him. People nearby panicked, but Wolfgang tried to help the dying woman. She forced into Wolfgang's arms a bundle of documents she had stolen, then grabbed her *canary in a coal mine* necklace and told him, "Take this to Nevard."

In the fourth floor window, Creed spotted the hand-off, and he fired a pistol at Wolfgang. At the relatively long range, he missed and struck Nilasa in the leg. Wolfgang yanked the necklace from Nilasa's neck and fled. Wanting to make sure the thief did not survive, Creed reloaded, aimed carefully, and landed a second shot, this one in Nilasa's back.

The consulate was chaotic in confusion, but Creed immediately set off in a chase after Wolfgang, leaping through shadows to pursue him. He confronted the doctor in an alley, but to his surprise the doctor fought back. Wolfgang carries a *malice-wrought rapier*, a sword forged in the Malice Lands, which has an innate power to harm unnatural creatures. A single strike stunned Creed, and the doctor followed up with a shocking touch and a cut to Creed's hamstring. Creed's unnatural physiology allowed him to heal quickly, but by then the doctor had made good his escape.

Wolfgang, in no state to think straight, ran to the nearest carriage and demanded the driver take him to his hotel, explaining away his bloody hands by saying he was a doctor in the middle of a surgery. At the hotel he told the driver to wait for him, then hurriedly packed his belongings and fled out another exit without paying. Knowing of the stories of criminals hiding in the Nettles, Wolfgang fled there on foot, arriving at approximately two in the afternoon.

Cover-Up. Less than five minutes after Nilasa died, Creed staggered back to the consulate. Knowing that the wounds to Nilasa's face would rouse suspicion, he told the Consular duNadria to have the woman's body dragged inside and be healed by the consulate's house cleric—**Bartide Jannis**—so it would look like she was just killed with gunshots and the impact. Creed then had the consular personally dismiss Jannis and send him home, figuring that the RHC would arrive soon and not wanting the cleric around to answer questions.

Creed checked the consular's desk to see what documents had been stolen, then intimidated Security Chief LeBrix into going along with the

BRIGADEIROS.

Named after the brigadier general who invented them, this confection consists of a gooey ball of chocolate covered in granulated chocolate, castor sugar, or grated coconut.

TRAVEL, VISAS, AND BUREAUCRACY.

Dr. von Recklinghausen, from the minor Malice state of Arrovia, travels under the protection of a Danoran passport. The burgeoning nation of Ber has enthusiastically embraced bureaucracy, so the doctor has had to make three separate trips between the Beran and Danoran consulates to get a travel visa to Ber.

CLUES OVERVIEW

- ◆ Basic wounds (Perception DC 9). Minor wounds (Perception DC 20). Source of damage (Heal DC 13). Order of injuries (Heal DC 20).
- ◆ Concealed elixir vial (Perception DC 20). Determine ingredients (Arcana DC 13, one hour). Seek seller (Streetwise DC 13, one hour per district).
- ◆ Nilasa's face was healed (Arcana DC 20). This occurred after death (Heal DC 20). Nilasa has no magical powers (Arcana DC 9).
- ◆ Interrogate spirit about non-secret details (Arcana, Diplomacy, or Insight DC 9), or secret details (DC 20). Intuit her faith (Religion DC 9) to reduce hard DC to 13, and use Bluff to question her.
- ◆ Staff can provide Wolfgang's case file (Diplomacy DC 13). Staff is acting oddly upbeat (Insight DC 13). They ate candy laced with fey pepper (Arcana or Thievery DC 20). Seek seller (Streetwise DC 13, one hour per district).
- ◆ Sense that LeBrix is following orders, and might share more if asked later (Insight DC 20). Staff might mention Consular duNadria had a guest with a Risuri accent (Diplomacy DC 20).
- ◆ Upstairs, LeBrix keeps party out of consular's office because something happened there (Insight DC 20). Lock was picked (Perception DC 20 or Thievery DC 13). Picking lock is hard (Thievery DC 25). Rug near broken window was moved to hide bloodstains (Perception DC 13). That blood was from a slashing wound, which doesn't match any of the wounds on Nilasa's body (Heal DC 13).
- ◆ Various clues from crowd (Diplomacy or Streetwise DC 13, half hour per attempt). Alleyway scuffle dropped Danoran business document (Perception DC 13). Electrical magic was used in alley (Arcana DC 13). Odd blood trace (Perception DC 20) is infused with necromantic energy (Arcana DC 20).

story. It was LeBrix's suggestion to use the expensive ceramic egg as cover for what the thief was really after.

With matters at the consulate settled as best as possible on short notice, Creed set out to track down the doctor and recover the stolen documents.

The Clues.

The key targets of the party's questions and observations should include the following. Let the players make skill checks to find clues if they want, but if they ask the right questions or say they're examining the right thing, reward their thinking and don't force them to make a check.

Nilasa's Body.

Physical scrutiny reveals (Perception DC 9) glass wounds on arms, two fence punctures to abdomen, gunshot to back left thigh and shoulder, and (DC 20) unusual wound on scalp. It is possible to determine (Heal DC 13) that the scalp wound was caused by necrotic energy and (Heal DC 20) that the gunshots probably came from above *after* she was impaled on fence.

Examination of clothes and possessions reveals a bail certificate in her pocket (no check needed). The document is from the Parity Lake police station, and reveals that she was picked up in a contraband raid recently but released on bail, paid by one "Heward Sechim." Law requires her to carry the certificate until her trial. A trip to the Parity Lake police station can pull up details of her arrest. See page xx.

Better hidden (Perception DC 20) is an empty elixir vial in her top. A brief examination by someone trained in Arcana reveals that it was an *elixir of invisibility*; creating or possessing such an elixir is a crime without the proper permits. An hour of examination at a proper alchemist's laboratory can determine (Arcana DC 13) notable ingredients of the elixir. A PC can then spend an hour in a district to search (Streetwise DC 13) for any alchemists in that district who use those particular ingredients. Most districts are dead ends, but if a PC succeeds the check in Pine Island, he finds Nilasa's potion and drug dealer. See page xx.

Magical scrutiny reveals (Arcana DC 20 each) recent healing of wounds on Nilasa's face, consumption of the invisibility elixir, and use of flight magic. It's possible to determine (Heal DC 20) that the facial wounds were healed after death. It can be determined (Arcana DC 9) that the woman doesn't personally wield magic, and that she has no traces of a *flight* elixir, which suggests she benefited from some other magic item that is currently missing. If her boyfriend Braden is asked about it, he recalls that she always wore a yellow bird pendant. This is her *canary in a coal mine* pendant; see page xx.

Spirit Communication.

A PC spirit medium, or one requested through Prestige (Favor Rating 2), can ask three questions of Nilasa's spirit within a day of her death. Answers require an Arcana, Diplomacy, or Insight check. She readily (DC 9) shares the details of her death or talks about her life (at least according to her cover identity), but is more reticent (DC 20) to discuss her mission for Gale or her smuggling arrangements.

A PC who makes a Religion check (DC 9) can intuit that Nilasa is a follower of Seedism with some Vekesh tendencies, and explain how best to talk to her. This lets a PC make Bluff checks if he prefers instead of Arcana, Diplomacy, or Insight, and makes it easier (DC 13) to get her to admit her secrets, since Nilasa's spirit will be more trusting.

Consulate Staff.

Nilasa's boyfriend Braden shares Nilasa's connection to Thinking Man's Tavern and Heward's Factory, if the party asks. The secretary Tia recalls Nilasa speaking with a foreign doctor; she's willing (Diplomacy DC 13) to share Wolfgang's case file, listing temporary hostel address and Flint contacts.

It's possible to note (Insight DC 13) that a lot of people seem oddly upbeat. Following up can determine that everyone affected ate some of Nilasa's brigadeiros. The candies (Arcana or Thievery DC 20) were mixed with powdered fey pepper. Its effects are similar to the real-world drug ecstasy. Similar to the alchemy search above, a PC can spend an hour in a district to search (Streetwise DC 13) for the person who sold the fey pepper to Nilasa. Most districts are dead ends, but a PC who succeeds the check in Pine Island finds Nilasa's drug and potion dealer at Waryeye's Apothecary. See page xx.

Also, if the PCs check, the box of brigadeiros has an inkstamp mark with the icon and name of the Thinking Man's Tavern. See page xx.

It's possible (Insight DC 20) to figure out that security chief LeBrix is following orders he doesn't agree with and might be more willing to talk elsewhere.

If the party specifically asks about noteworthy visitors, it's possible (Diplomacy DC 20) to learn that Consular duNadria had a guest in the basement meeting room. People know he had a Risuri accent, but no one recalls what he looked like. Cillian Creed did not leave any particular trace that can identify him.

Upstairs.

If the PCs search the fourth floor offices, LeBrix stays with them at all times, trying to hurry them up. He insists that the consular's office is off-limits, and that nothing happened there, but Insight (DC 20) can detect that his denials are not simply to protect state secrets. If a PC can manage to get out LeBrix's view, they might be able to see (Perception DC 20 or Thievery DC 13) that the office door of the consular had its lock picked. Opening the lock is harder (Thievery DC 25), and liable to cause an international incident.

In the gallery where Nilasa jumped out the window, a rug (Perception DC 13) was moved to cover blood stains. Someone with medical experience (Heal DC 13) could tell that the blood spatter was from a slashing weapon that flicked blood sideways from the victim, not a gunshot that would cause a puncture and spurt.

The Crowd Outside.

If your players prefer to roleplay their interactions with witnesses, they find an assortment of wealthy businessmen who were headed out to gamble, household servants who were heading home after their night shifts, fleet messengers delivering trading news from the stock market in Central district, carriage drivers delivering Danorans who had appointments at the consulate, beggar children (but of the well-dressed, respectable sort), and a trio of glaziers who were fortunate enough to walk by just as a fancy window was shattered.

Most of the people who saw the event have already left, but any number of PCs can spend a half hour chasing down witnesses. Those who do so can make a Diplomacy or Streetwise check (a PC can also try Intimidate, but the crowd is generally willing to talk, so the PC takes a -5 penalty for coming across as an asshole). For each PC who beats DC 13, the party gets one of the pieces of information below. If a character beats DC 20, he's able to find an additional piece of information in that time. The party can spend more time and make additional checks if they want.

- ♦ The woman crashed out the window, hit the fence, and then there were two gunshots, a few seconds apart. When she jumped, she had her arms covering her face, as if to shield herself.
- ♦ Someone was up in the window, but he looked like he was completely black, except for something shiny, perhaps a gun. A moment later he had vanished.
- ♦ A man with a goatee went up to the dying woman, and she handed him a bundle of papers and folders, then whispered something before she died. The man yanked a yellow pendant and necklace off the woman's neck, before running away.
- ♦ A man sprinted down the street then turned down an alley, carrying an armful of something. (The witness can point out the alley.)
- ♦ When the Danorans took the woman's body off the fence, her face was covered in blood. People matching the description of LeBrix, Consular duNadria, and a third unknown man got into a brief shouting match as the body was being carried inside.

SURGERY? WHAT ABOUT MAGICAL HEALING?

While the wealthy and fortunate do have access to magical healing, some ailments are more complex than mere gashes and bruises, making them beyond the skills of novice clerics and other healers. Additionally, the current academic belief is that healing magic could be more effective if the practitioner possessed a thorough understanding of the human body, so surgery and vivisection is popularly seen as a progressive form of research.

Dr. von Recklinghausen, for instance, understands both advanced surgery and magical healing, allowing him to more precisely repair wounds that normally require high-level magic to fix.

Alleyway Scuffle.

If the PCs get a witness to guide them, or if they search the area themselves for half an hour (Perception or Streetwise DC 13), they find signs of a brief scuffle, and a fallen piece of paper in the mud, which looks like a copy of a deed of ownership for a canal barge, marked with the seal of the Danoran consulate. This fell from the bundle of documents as Wolfgang fled.

It is possible to sense (Arcana DC 13) the recent use of electrical magic, or to notice (Perception DC 20) a tiny spurt of oddly coagulated blood in a smear of mud. Close examination of the blood (Arcana DC 20) reveals it is infused with strong necromantic energy.

Where Wolfgang Went.

If the PCs make it to the alley, a carriage driver named **Jack Byron** spots them and comes to talk. Otherwise, this information reaches them through a police report, which gets delivered to the RHC office later that day, marked for their attention. The carriage driver who picked up Dr. von Recklinghausen never got paid, and after a few hours he returned to the street where he picked the man up, hoping to maybe collect money from someone who knew him. When he saw the criminal investigation, he came looking for the PCs.

The driver tells the PCs that he picked up a man with bloody hands who was carrying some kind of bundle—the driver opines that the bundle contained surgical tools. The man with the bundle spoke with an accent the driver found unfamiliar, but the driver placed the accent as originating north of the Avery Sea. The man asked to be driven to a hostel—the House of Blue Birds—two miles away on the western edge of the North Shore district, and he eventually explained away the blood, claiming that he was a doctor in the middle of a procedure and that he needed specialized surgical equipment that he knew could be found at the House of Blue Birds. The driver took the man to the hostel, then waited for half an hour before realizing he'd been ditched.

PURSUING LEADS

At this point there's not much else the PCs can do here. They'll need to decide which threads of the investigation they want to pursue, and whether they'd rather all work together on one lead at a time, or split up and pursue different leads in small groups. These paths are detailed in the following chapters.

Nilasa's Criminal Background.

If the PCs contact or swing by the Parity Lake police station, after about three hours they finally receive a thin hand-copied file of what information the police have on Nilasa Hume, reproduced as a handout at the end of this adventure. Details are sparse, but they include her last few known residences, a list of accomplices and their whereabouts, and details of her various arrests.

Of particular interest is her latest arrest, when she was picked up in a raid on a known den of criminals just a week ago. She was charged with Supporting Criminal Activities and told to appear in court a few days from now. Her bail was paid by Heward Sechim, whose address is listed (he lives at his factory). The document notes that she was picked up with two men—Ford Sorghum and Travis Starter, both of whom are currently serving a term for parole violation, locked up in a floating prison in Flint Bay called the Goodson Estuarial Reformatory. See page xx.

NEW RITUAL.

Detect Planar Energy

The energy drifts to you like a fragrance on a breeze. You spin and locate the strongest source of the smell, then set out.

Level: 1 **Component Cost:** 17 gp

Category: Divination **Market Price:** 50 gp

Time: 10 minutes **Key Skill:** Arcana

Duration: 1 hour

Choose a plane you have visited, or otherwise have had contact with. For the ritual's duration you can sense the direction to and intensity of energies from that plane, to a maximum range of one mile. These energies tend to fade after a few hours or days, but it is possible to track creatures native to other planes by following their trails. The ritual can be foiled by strong sources of energy from the same or other planes. For instance, Cauldron Hill in Flint is a powerful beacon of shadow energy, so you would be unable to pinpoint any sort of foreign energy there, not even fey or elemental energy.



RETURNING TO THE CONSULATE

In the course of their investigations the PCs might come back to the consulate, but they won't get any new answers unless they've found the proper clues and know to ask the right questions.

Breaking In.

If the PCs want to sneak in and find more documents of the sort Nilasa stole, make sure they understand that getting caught will cause a diplomatic disaster and probably land them in prison. Security is tighter, with experienced guards stationed on the fourth floor at all times, and magical alarm wards placed in the consular's room. The consular clears out any incriminating documents, and he places them in a wall safe.

Getting LeBrix's Trust.

If the party recovers from Dr. von Recklinghausen the documents which Nilasa stole, they find reports signed by Security Chief LeBrix. If they mention these reports to LeBrix, and share some of what they've seen, they might get him to open up about his investigation and how it was shut down.

If the party captures the dragonborn arsonists or any of their accomplices, they can learn about a canceled hit job, where the arsonists were hired to burn LeBrix to death in his home, but called off a few hours before they did the deed. This also helps earn LeBrix's thanks, and if the PCs have not yet taken down the arsonists, LeBrix can give them something to help out. If any PC uses firearms, LeBrix provides two +2 *vendetta bullets* (see page xx), one etched with the name Eberardo, the other Valando.

If a PC has the Gunsmith theme, LeBrix instructs the character in how to harness one's ire to create such bullets in the future, effectively granting them the ability to use the Craft Magic Item ritual, but only for *vendetta bullets*.



NILASA
HUME

By the time the party encounters Nilasa she's already dead, but details of her life can come out through investigation or magic.

The illegitimate daughter of a blacksmith's wife who was seduced by a wood elf, Nilasa left home as early as she could and spent her teenage years living off petty crime, with occasional stints of incarceration. Several years ago she tried to reform, and found work in Heward Sechim's alkahest factory. Her bold personality earned her many admirers in the streets near the factory, as well as at the Thinking Man's Tavern in Bosum Strand, where Heward would occasionally bring his workers after a shift.

But she was drawn to the rebellious rhetoric of Gale, and so she joined up with the so-called 'terrorist,' performing reconnaissance for acts of sabotage and using her old criminal connections to acquire illicit magic weapons and defenses. Shortly after Duchess Ethelyn's failed attempt to kill King Aodhan, Gale decided to take a different approach, and recruited Nilasa to infiltrate the Danoran consulate. To aid her missions, Gale gave Nilasa various potions and elixirs, as well as a pendant—the *canary in a coal mine*—which allows brief bursts of flight.



THREAD ONE: SMUGGLERS

This act details what the PCs can discover as they investigate Nilasa's criminal background and her connection to the Thinking Man's Tavern. If the PCs do poorly at this thread, for the rest of the campaign the criminal element in Flint will have ready access to cheap and dangerous magic wands. Even if they fail, though, they'll catch the eye of Morgan Cippiano, head of The Family in Flint, who can be of use later in the adventure.

MEANWHILE, IN THE NEWS...

The adventure already has a lot going on, but if you want to give a little extra life to the city of Flint, you can occasionally drop mentions of the following current events. People murmur about these in cafes, gossip on the streets, or read about them in papers. Only a few have even a tangential connection to this adventure's plot. You might spin some of these into side quests, but be careful that your players don't latch onto the wrong ones and run off chasing red herrings.

- ♦ **Murder.** The Ragman has grown more active, and is believed responsible for four deaths over the course of two weeks. Flint police investigate, and an impoverished Yerasol Veteran claims he saw the same pattern of wounds on fellow soldiers in the last war.
- ♦ **Music.** Randall Pell, a renowned composer from Slate, will be conducting the Navras Opera House and plans to hold auditions for performers. This has led to a boom in sales of "respectable" attire for amateur Docker musicians, who want to make a good impression.
- ♦ **Mayhem.** A rash of eighteen small fires in Parity Lake is believed to be arson. So far the burns have killed over forty, but fire responders have managed to keep them from spreading. The fires seem to target properties of by factory owners, even the occasional factory out-building, and so are believed to be the work of Gale.
- ♦ **Monsters.** Citizens are warned to avoid the western bayous around the Battalion school in Pine Island. The martial university has imported exotic wild beasts from a Risuri colony in Elfaivar, and will be conducting exercises in beast tracking and monster slaying.
- ♦ **Marriage.** Wealthy industrialist and renowned son of Flint Guy Goodson is getting married to a Crisillyyiri noblewoman: Faith Unitas. The ceremony will be closed to the public, but reporters are eagerly sharing every detail of the arrangements. The intense interest has journalists excited about all the papers they'll sell when King Aodhan has his marriage early next year.

THINKING MAN'S TAVERN

Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

Clues to the activities of the murdered woman wait at a watering hole for scholars, artists, and revolutionaries.

The Thinking Man's Tavern lies a few streets off from the main docks of Bosum Strand, memorable for the cobbled-together statue that stands by its entrance, an assortment of flotsam and jetsam assembled into the shape of a sitting man deep in thought.

If the PCs come by early in the day, they'll be unlikely to find anyone who knew Nilasa. Waiters might encourage them to come back in the evening, when a larger crowd has assembled.

The tavern has seven main sections.

- ♦ The bar, with stools for ten and tables for an additional thirty.
- ♦ The common room, with tables to seat sixty on the ground floor, and another forty on an upstairs balcony. Each floor has a lavatory with plumbing.
- ♦ Patio behind the building with seating for ten and the titular "thinking man" statue.
- ♦ The game room on the ground floor, which seats thirty; there is a pool table and a storage closet that holds various game supplies. A secret panel (Perception DC 22) in the storage closet reveals a locked trap door (Thievery DC 20) leading to the basement.
- ♦ The riot room on the uppermost floor. It has limited dining space, but its chairs are usually claimed by writers, artists, and philosophers who just want to sit in a dormer window, drink, and scribe, sketch, or share their latest thoughts.
- ♦ The kitchen, on the ground floor in back, with the many necessary pantries and supplies.
- ♦ The basement, seldom used to begin with because it gets moldy, has flooded to ankle-deep since the city-wide tremors started. Mostly just used as a joke at the expense of new employees who ask where to find something, since nothing's down there. A side tunnel hidden behind a cracked statue (Perception DC 22) leads to similarly flooded basements of other establishments in the area. Courtesy and several padlocks deter criminal entry, but the owner has keys handy for those he wants to sneak out.

Owner and Staff.

Tall like a ship's mast and twice as well-traveled, **Tad Hilly** bought the tavern after he retired from a twenty year career as a merchant marine, though often when the night's drinking runs long he prefers to recount his history as one of piracy and adventure. He brags about outwitting the king of the mer-fey and outwrestling his pet kraken, and occasionally offers to let drunkards 'search for his buried treasure' (i.e., bail out the flooded basement) to cover their tab.

The rest of the staff mostly consist of women scholars studying at Pardwight University, or occasionally the wives or daughters of professors. Eschewing the typical brand of wait and cook staff hired for their looks, Hilly knows his customers derive more enjoyment from exchanging repartee with women who are cleverer than them.

The tavern's most famous hand is **Barb**, now going on sixty and starting to show the physical wear and tear from her other job at a factory that

makes bores and drills. At first impression she seems little more than wrinkles, a toothy smirk, and two handfuls of silver rings, but she effortlessly makes visitors feel at home and shriekingly silences any regular who gets too full of himself.

Tad knew Nilasa only by appearance, but Barb formed an early bond with the woman before she realized the gorgeous young Nilasa could fend for herself against the attentions of the other patrons. Few people have a higher opinion of Nilasa, but like in most mother-daughter relationships Barb had no idea just what trouble the young woman was getting into.

Patrons.

While the tavern has a generous mix of performers, revolutionaries, intellectuals, and poseurs to the same, two main groups can provide useful information about Nilasa.

First, the Band is a group of a dozen musicians with connections to the Cloudwood brigands (page xx), but who prefer to work in the city. Led by a long-haired halfling ocarina-player named **Jered Lawman**, the Band writes and performs songs that support Gale, the duchess, and other fey-friendly figures. They then have further connections to other rebellious groups throughout the city. They crack jokes in bad pidgin Elven, pass around the latest screeds that mock the king and insinuate that he's a puppet of Danor, and in general think haughtily that they're part of the vanguard of an imminent revolution against the industrial powers.

Nilasa was one of their main connections to the Cloudwood brigands, and in the past few months she had managed to steer these musicians toward actually causing trouble rather than talking about it. Jered was planning on the 5th of Summer to have his band dress up as eladrin warriors, sneak aboard a ship carrying huge casks of firegems, and throw the fuel into the harbor.

Second, the Professors consist of eight 'professional students' who have been attending Pardwight University for a decade or more, plus their various less-experienced colleagues. Dominated by a dual philosophy/archaeology student in his late forties named **Hennet Rinus**, the group have weekly meetings and nightly drinking, often collaborating on and sharing papers and books on eclectically cross-disciplined topics. The august body likes to round out its weekly meetings with a shared pipe of fey pepper, and the wild thoughts they have during these often prompt next week's discussion topics.

Nilasa had only recently made friends with this group, after she learned that Hennet had spent a year in Crisillyir, studying the fossils of



A grizzled sailor, still with a full head of hair in his early 50s, Grimsley acts as head of the dock workers guild in Flint. He took a gash from a policeman's knife on the side of his face in the last big docker riot. A couple of months working at a theater as a child gave him a very stylized public speaking voice, one full of unnecessary, melodramatic pauses.

dragons and demons near Alais Primos. She had recently begun negotiations with the Family smugglers (page xx) to bring in a cache of stolen wands, and after determining she could trust Hennet she had him help her write correspondence in fancy Crisillyiri style to make a good impression with the criminals' boss, Morgan Cippiano. Hennet knew that Nilasa was working with some Crisillyiri group to acquire something illegal, and that she was writing to someone named Monsigneur Morgan Cippiano, but no specifics.

Finally, the PCs can spot a familiar face, **Thames Grimsley**, whom they met in the first adventure. Now head of a slowly-growing docker union, Grimsley is organizing large protests outside of factories that abuse their workers. His presence and how the PCs treated him in the first adventure can sway the crowd here.

Trembler.

When the party first enters the tavern, the place shakes a little bit. Patrons freak out as glasses topple off tables and crack. An orc sailor from Ber cries out, "Earthquake!" but the tremor stops almost immediately.

People are momentarily nervous until Hennet Rinus speaks up from a table by the bar, loud enough for the whole place to hear.

"Don't listen to the porcine panic. Flint has been geologically stable since it was founded. We could no sooner have an earthquake than a blizzard! It was probably just the ground settling."

Soon, the clientele return to their drinks and food.

Asking Questions.

As is usual in Bosum Strand, initial reaction to government authority figures is suspicion. If the PCs were police they wouldn't get anywhere, but the RHC is slightly more respected. Still, the party should sense a palpable disapproval once it spreads that they're law enforcement.

If the PCs mention that Nilasa is dead, Barb in particular cries out in despair and demands to know what happened. Word ripples through the tavern, and those who associated with her clam up, not wanting to talk until they figure out if trouble might spill over to them.

Barb can initially help the party identify whom to talk with, but if the PCs start to reference Nilasa's criminal connections, Barb turns against them, convinced that they're dishonoring the name of a wonderful girl who would never hurt anyone. The more the party upsets Barb, the harder they find their inquiries in the rest of the tavern. If they step on enough toes, or make the mistake of bringing up gruesome details of Nilasa's death or threatening anyone in the tavern, Tad Hilly has his bouncers throw the party out. Resisting leads to an all-out brawl, with the party outnumbered at least ten to one.

Existential Investigation.

If the PCs comport themselves well, they'll have to convince either the Band or the Professors that it's in their interest to talk. Which-ever group they go to first, Hennet Rinus shows up and poses an assignment. (Do not be surprised if the PCs interrupt him during his lecture.)

"In any society there are rituals of interaction to establish authority and mark the passage of one stage of life to another. You as law officers must be familiar with these rituals, particularly the one where you ask questions, the suspect claims he knows nothing, and you by turn explain how you will punish those who do not cooperate.

"But this is an old tradition, and we live in modern times. We live in what some call an age of reason. A few of the ladies and gentlemen in this fine establishment would prefer if it were an age of revolution. And like a revolution, reason requires us to turn our thoughts. Always approach a problem the same way, with the same ritual, and you miss other possible paths to satisfaction.

"So I pose to you, constables, an assignment. Rather than convincing us that your authority is mighty and that we should quail at the thought of disobeying it, can you give us reason why your authority is legitimate? We can leave for another day the discussion of whether it serves our interest to let watchmen hold us to account for actions when we are arguably individuals of free will. Today, though, just tell us why you think you have the right to enforce the law."

Arguments and Abuse.

As long as the PCs are good sports, Hennet just throws up a few questions to their rationale ("If you're part of a governmental structure endorsed by society as a whole, what size society is necessary for a group to claim it is separate from that whole?" or "If you're protecting us from harm, what makes you better arbiters of what is harmful than any of us?" or "If outnumbering us gives you the right to tell us what to do, why do you allow us to do anything you dislike? Have you heard *their* music? Don't they deserve to get arrested for *that*?").

Jered and his band might heckle and jeer anything that involves prying into their secrets, but Hennet encourages them to "follow the forms of the ritual" and answer the constables' questions. He'll even do the same, admitting to his Crisillyiri correspondence while maintaining ignorance of any criminal wrong-doing. Jered will in turn admit to knowing Nilasa worked with a band of brigands in the Cloudwood, and he can provide general directions to find them.

If the PCs balk, or argue with might rather than logic, Hennet tells everyone to just lie to the constables, since it's more fun than playing along. It's still possible to intimidate people into talking, but news will quickly hit the streets, and the PCs will become infamous as mindless government goons.



Returning to the Tavern.

Once the PCs learn of Nilasa's links to the brigands and the smugglers, Thinking Man's Tavern holds little extra of use in this investigation, but depending on your party it might become a familiar stomping ground, or a nest of rivals.

If the party needs to get word spread across the city in a flash, this is one of the best places to start a rumor or make a proclamation. Different groups of specialists can also help with niche problems. A gang of amateur geologists might assemble makeshift seismographs and set them up around the city, finding evidence that further tremors are emanating from Cauldron Hill. Talking with sailors might provide clues at least of where smugglers *wouldn't* arrange a delivery. Simply meeting with

would-be rioters who come here for marching orders might help quell some of the violence later in the adventure.

In later adventures, Hennet can be a resource on matters archaeological, and despite his initial foppish appearance, Jered can be shaped into a useful agent when foreign elements disrupt the city.

GOODSON ESTUARIAL REFORMATORY

Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

Nilasa's associates are incarcerated on a barge off the coast of Pine Island, and with the right deal they'll share what she bragged to them about.

Guy Goodson is a wealthy factory magnate who owns a private island in the Ayres. He portrays himself as a philanthropist, and a few months ago he convinced the city legislature to approve his reformatory program. Taking old sailing ships that would normally just be scuttled or dismantled and replaced by newer steamships, the program hastily refitted the vessels to have cells and guard quarters, with the intention of "moderating the criminal impulses of recidivists." A dozen such vessels sit off the coast of Pine Island, loosely moored together and anchored in place, with no rigging to tempt prisoners into wild escape attempts. A thirteenth ship sank in a tragic fire a few weeks ago, allegedly after one of the prisoners agreed to testify against his old accomplices.

Inmates spend most of the day in their cells, equipped with hammocks and plenty of books (nevermind the fact that most of them can't read). They get fed breakfast in their cells, then are let out to clean the deck in the afternoon, which they must do if they want to get dinner. Their legs are always lightly manacled, so the distance to shore usually deters escape attempts. A musketeer sits in every ship's crow's nest, just in case distance and drowning isn't enough of a deterrent.

Staff, prisoners, and visitors have to be ferried over by rowboat. To help "socialize and acclimate" the prisoners, each day different activities

are arranged, usually musical performances, classes on Risuri history and geography, or calisthenics. All the boats have fresh coats of paint that are smeared dark at the waterline with all the human excrement that floats around the stationary barges.

The director of the reformatory is **Derek Goodson**, son of Guy Goodson. He'll want to meet with the PCs if they come to interrogate any of his inmates, and will hastily shuffle around some men so his best-behaved prisoners will be around to show how 'well' things are going.

Nilasa's Accomplices.

Ford Sorghum and **Travis Starter** used to work with Nilasa in petty burglary and cons, but they haven't had any jobs with her for two years. She was hanging out with them, reminiscing about old times, sharing the bounty of her recent successes, and bragging about a big smuggling deal she was arranging, when a police raid picked them all up. Ford and Travis were wanted for various acts of larceny, and so they were put away. But they cared for Nilasa enough that neither incriminated her, despite being offered a plea deal.

Each man knows that Nilasa was working with a group of newcomers to the city to acquire a large cache of wands stolen from a Crisillyir eldritch repository. The newcomers call themselves *The Family*, and they're edging in on the other smuggling operations in the city. Nilasa said they could provide dozens of magic wands to her allies in the Cloudwood, which would make future acts of sabotage all the easier, and which would help protect them against law enforcement.

Nilasa told them the delivery was going to be on the 4th of Summer, and implied she and an ally from the Cloudwood she called '**The House Elf**' would link up with members of *The Family* and sail out to the meet-up from some place in Pine Island. She said she was going to be paying tens of thousands of gold pieces for the haul. When they asked how she got that much money, she waved casually and said Gale had friends among the merfey, and that seventeen centuries of shipwrecks pays for a lot of contraband.

The PCs just have to break one of the two men to get this information, but both Ford and Travis know the rumors of snitches getting killed out here, so the PCs have to provide a sweet deal for them to talk. Honestly,

the men are petty thieves and RHC constables have authority to get them a pardon in exchange for their assistance, but this scene is largely to see how comfortable your players are with making deals with shady characters.

Turning a Witness.

Negotiating with each prisoner has three stages. In each stage, let the PCs announce their intentions and roleplay the situation a bit, then ask one of them to make a skill check. Use DC 9 if you think they've done a great job, DC 13 if they've only made things a little easier, or DC 20 if the party has done something to spook or upset the prisoner. Most skill checks will be Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate, though Insight or Thievery could work if the PC has a good plan.

To get one of the men to cooperate, the party has to get two successes. If they fail on two out of the three checks with one man, they can try again with the other.

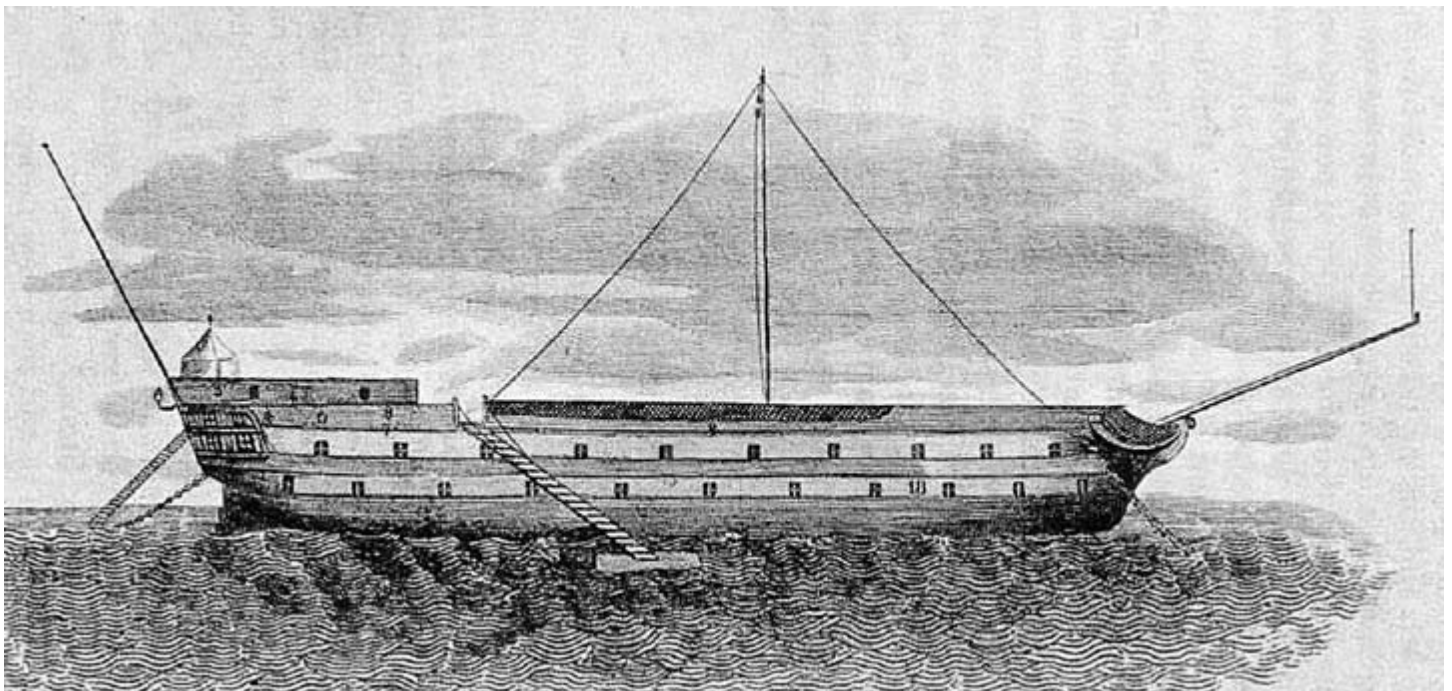
Stage One: First Impressions.

Let the PCs decide how to talk to the prisoners. Do they come when they're locked up (which makes the men nervous that their cell mates will overhear), or chat on the forecastle while a visiting string quartet plays nearby, or bring them to shore and treat them to a fine meal and some wine to loosen their tongues?

Stage Two: Making an Offer.

If given the chance, both Travis and Ford's first desire is to get both of them out of prison. Doing so counts as calling in a Rank One favor (see Prestige in the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide*), but generally lets the PCs make an easy skill check to get their cooperation.

Failing that, Travis wants the party to arrange weekly visits by his son, who is currently living in an orphanage. Meanwhile Ford wants to be allowed conjugal visits; he says there's a good space in the ship's aftcastle, where the guards usually take their breaks. He says he'd be willing to cooperate if the party can get both of his girlfriends to come by—but on different nights, of course. These second-tier arrangements just take a little time and the party's involvement, but require a moderate skill check to get cooperation.



Finally, either man could begrudgingly agree to help in exchange for a few extra amenities—weekly laundering of their bedsheets and clothes instead of monthly, and getting the ship turned just a bit so direct sunlight isn't heating up their cell in the afternoon so much. This can be done with a quick talk to Derek Goodson, but generally requires a hard skill check.

Stage Three: Getting the Information.

Once a deal has been struck, the party has to conduct the interrogation and be careful to ensure the men give the whole truth. If the party is willing to wait until the deal they made goes through—the men have been released, or Ford has gotten to sleep with his girlfriends—they can make any easy skill check here. If the offer is pending, the check is moderate, and only if the PCs do something really foolish like refuse to make any offer and just demand information is the check difficult.

Of course, if the PCs have already succeeded the two previous checks, the prisoner trusts them enough to not withhold anything. Otherwise, it might take a little coaching and nudging to get all the information.

Once they have the prisoners' information, the party can start tracking down The House Elf. If the party fails to get any answers here, they have the harder task of searching for other people who might have information and be willing to talk.

THE HOUSE ELF

Action/Social. Tactical/Real-Time. Level 4.

The party tracks down a skilled liar and illusionist.

Nilasa had allies all throughout the city. In the Pine Island district, she bought her drugs and elixirs from **Danisca Waryeye**, a gnome mage sympathetic to Gale. Once content to sell potions and philters for a living, Danisca was inspired by Duchess Ethelyn of Shale's stand against the king's industry, and she's now working to arm Gale's allies with alchemical weapons.

Nilasa wasn't sure she could trust the Family, and she needed Danisca's help with a variety of elixirs for her mission, so she confided in the gnome alchemist. She planned to bring along Danisca's husband **Blander Waryeye**, an absent-minded stage magician who performs under the name The House Elf. A unique marriage ritual grants the couple an empathic link, so Danisca would have been able to notify Gale if she sensed her husband in enough peril. Plus, Blander's handy in a fight, despite his quirks.

After word gets out that Nilasa is dead, Danisca decides to go to the meet-up herself. If the party interrogates Danisca and gets her to break, they can learn the precise launch point and time of the wand deal, and by taking her out of the picture early, they'll have a much easier time dealing with the smugglers on the night of the 4th.

Two Fronts.

The Waryeyes own a pair of buildings that sit back to back on a strand of shops in the Pine Island district. Streets run past the front face of each building, one her shop Waryeye's Apothecary, and the other a small illusionist's studio with just a painted sign of a clichéd magician in a gentleman's coat pulling a badger out of a top-hat. While Danisca makes most of their money through sales of minor magic in her shop, her husband Blander operates a side business as a performing magician.

Blander mostly just spends his days fiddling with possible illusion tricks, devising creative combinations of actual spells and impressive sleight of hand. On occasion he'll put on acts for festivals or parties.

Most of the time, the two keep to their own buildings, but they can easily cross via a fenced-in bridge on the second floor. Due to their wedding ritual empathic connection, if either gets into trouble, the other won't be long. Also, because of the valuables in her shop, during business hours Danisca keeps three guards, and at night she wards the place with the usual spells. The two share a bedroom upstairs of the apothecary shop.

Danisca comes across as ebullient and methodical, working through complex situations with an enthusiastic smile. She buys eclectic and colorful fashions, and has magically turned her hair bright purple. Blander, for his part, stands even shorter than his wife and has an impishly curled moustache. He uses magic to switch hats multiple times throughout a conversation, and is prone to bizarre non sequiturs on technical topics, ranging from the proper way to store goat's milk for travel, to the different types of undead that are capable of turning those they kill into more undead. He longs one day to build a trebuchet.

Meet the Apothecary.

It's possible the PCs will track down Danisca by alchemically tracing the fey pepper at the consulate. If so, they can question her, but she tries to deceive them. Already an adept liar (Insight DC 21), if Danisca realizes the PCs are law enforcement, she'll offer them fresh water or sweetened lime juice, then discreetly imbibe an elixir from her kitchen-laboratory to enhance her skill at prevarication (Insight DC 26).

She'll claim that Nilasa was a regular customer, and that she sold her the fey pepper and an *elixir of invisibility*, but that Nilasa presented the proper permit (since normally magic that can make you invisible for more than a few seconds is illegal). She feigns ignorance of Nilasa having any criminal connection.

If the PCs take the time to snoop around, they might (Perception DC 21) notice a secret gnome-sized door that leads from behind her shop counter to her laboratory. Searching around in the upstairs office can (Perception 21) find her a wall safe behind a painting, but it's locked (Thievery DC 21), and she won't let them open it without a warrant, which takes a day unless the party calls in a Rank 1 favor, which speeds that up to about an hour. Mages might (Arcana DC 21) detect a faint illusion concealing the magical auras of the items within the safe. More cavalier PCs might just open it anyway and get a warrant lie. The safe contains contraband like more glibness and invisibility elixirs.

If the PCs want to arrest her, her reaction depends on how much trouble she thinks she's in. As a legitimate businesswoman she doesn't want to attack or flee if she'll just get hit with a fine, but if she thinks she might go to jail or have her business license revoked, she'll try to lure the party into her *dreaming dust* trap.

Meet the Magician.

Alternately, the PCs might never know about Danisca, and instead try to track down the House Elf. Two hours of asking around (Streetwise DC 14) reveal the House Elf's reputation and the address of his studio, as well as dozens of conflicting stories of his appearance and powers.

Blander assumes the PCs want him to perform for them, and he'll start eagerly showing off his pet honey badgers even before the party gets a chance to start asking him questions.

Blander isn't as good a liar as Danisca (Insight DC 14), and he's not as cool a thinker, so at the first sign that the PCs know he's involved in criminal activities he'll bolt. He calls for Danisca's help mentally and then scampers upstairs to the bridge that leads to Danisca's shop. When he links up with Danisca she chides him and again tries to lure the PCs into her *dreaming dust* trap. If that fails, they'll try to escape.

Setup.

- ♦ Blander Waryeye
- ♦ Danisca Waryeye
- ♦ 2 Apothecary Guards
- ♦ 3 Honey Badgers
- ♦ Dreaming Dust Trap
- ♦ Drowning Tank Trap
- ♦ Razzle Dazzle Trap



Blander Waryeye

Small fey humanoid, gnome

Level 2 Lurker

XP 125

HP 30; **Bloodied** 15

Initiative +2

AC 14, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14

Perception +5

Speed 6, Teleport 3

Traits

► The Prestige

Any charlatan can make something disappear, but making it reappear in an unexpected place is how you make a real impression.

When Blander hits a target on his turn, if he was hidden or had total concealment from that target at the start of his turn, his attack deals an extra 2d6 damage.

Standard Actions

☞ **Sleight of Hand** ♦ At-Will, Basic

The mustachioed gnome breezes past you in a flurry of movement, opening clasps, loosening buckles, tying laces together, and all around confusing you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6+3 damage and the target grants combat advantage and takes a –2 penalty to its attack rolls until the end of Blander's next turn.

✓ **House Elf Fling** ♦ At-Will

A telekinetic force far larger than the tiny fey controlling it picks you up and chucks you across the room.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +5 vs. Fort

Special: This ability does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Hit: 1d10+3 damage and the target is slid 5 squares and knocked prone.

Triggered Actions

► **Fade Away** ♦ Encounter

"Unfair!" exclaims the gnome as your attack grazes him. He scowls for a second, then vanishes completely.

Trigger: A creature hits Blander with an attack.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Blander turns invisible until the end of his next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +10, Arcana +8, Bluff +3, Stealth +12, Thievery +10

Str 4 (–2) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 8 (+0)

Con 12 (+2) **Int** 14 (+3) **Cha** 16 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

Danisca Waryeye

Small fey humanoid, gnome

Level 2 Elite Controller

XP 250

HP 66; **Bloodied** 33

Initiative +5

AC 14, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 17

Perception +3

Speed 6

Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Standard Actions

☞ **Let Go!** (charm) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Danisca shoves you away, her hands glowing with faint charm magic.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10+4 damage.

Effect: The target cannot take opportunity or immediate actions until the end of this turn.

✧ **Sense Seizure** (charm, psychic) ♦ At-Will

The colors of the world start to dance and spin you around.

Attack: Area 1 within 5 (enemies in area); +5 vs. Will

Hit: 1d6+4 psychic damage, and the target is blinded and slowed until the end of Danisca's next turn.

✓ **Temporary Alliance** (charm, psychic) ♦ Encounter

Oh no! These strangers are attacking your friend Danisca. You have to protect her.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +5 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dominated until the end of Danisca's next turn, then dominated (save ends).

Aftereffect: The target takes 3d6+4 psychic damage.

Miss: Target is dominated until the end of Danisca's next turn.

Minor Actions

✓ **Alchemical Flurry** ♦ At-Will

Danisca reaches into her coat and hurls the first flask she finds.

Prerequisite: Danisca can only use this power ten times during the encounter.

Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +5 vs. Ref

Hit: The target is affected by one of the following effects at random.

1: Alchemist Fire. 1d6+3 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire (save ends).

2: Thunderstone. 1d6+3 thunder damage and the target is pushed 2 squares and deafened (save ends).

3: Jinx Juice. 1d6+3 necrotic damage and the target takes a –5 penalty to its next saving throw.

4: Alkahest. 1d6+3 acid damage, and each creature adjacent to the target takes 2 acid damage.

5: Tanglefoot Flask. The target is immobilized until the end of Danisca's next turn, then slowed (save ends).

6: Healing Potion. The target can spend a healing surge and regain 10 HP.

► **Minor Healing Potion** ♦ Encounter

Danisca pulls out a flask and quaffs it herself, causing her wounds to heal.

Effect: Danisca heals 16 HP.

Triggered Actions

► **Fading Escape** ♦ Recharge when first bloodied

The gnome yelps as your attack connects, but then she vanishes and you hear scurrying feet.

Trigger: A creature hits Danisca with an attack.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Danisca turns invisible until the end of his next turn, and she moves her speed.

Skills Arcana +9, Bluff +11, Insight +8, Stealth +8

Str 8 (+0) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+3)

Con 12 (+2) **Int** 16 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Elven, Primordial

WHAT IF THERE'S NO FIGHT?

If the party never comes here, or if the PCs resolve the situation without a fight, you can still make use of this location later in the adventure. If the PCs try to lure Dr. von Recklinghausen to talk with his friend Lynn Kindleton, he might arrange to meet at an abandoned apothecary's shop that's identical to this one. Or if the PCs get Morgan Cippiano's help to take out the dragonborn arsonists, he might hire the brothers to burn down Danisca's recently-abandoned shop, and the PCs can lay a trap here.

Two Fronts

1st Floor



2nd Floor



One square equals 5ft.

Apothecary Guard

Level 1 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 100

HP 30; **Bloodied** 15

Initiative +4

AC 17, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 10

Perception +5

Speed 5

Traits

► Hired Defender

When an apothecary guard makes an attack on his turn, he marks the target. If that creature shifts away from the apothecary guard or attacks a creature other than the guard, the guard can make an opportunity attack against the marked target.

Standard Actions

✓ **Baton Flurry** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+2 damage.

✓ **Grapple** ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Ref

Hit: 1d8+4 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 13).

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 15 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+0)

Con 14 (+2) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Honey Badger

Level 1 Minion Brute

Small natural beast

XP 25

HP 1 (see *diehard*)

Initiative +1

AC 14, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 11

Perception -1

Speed 5

Resist 5 poison

Traits

► Diehard

The honey badger just doesn't care.

When a honey badger would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, if that source does less than 5 damage, the badger takes no damage and instead becomes bloodied. The next time any source would deal damage to it, even a missed attack, the badger is reduced to 0 HP. (So you either have to deal 5 damage to it in one hit, or hit it twice.)

Standard Actions

✓ **Gnaw** ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage, or 8 against an immobilized, restrained, or helpless target.

Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 8 (-1)

Con 18 (+4) **Int** 2 (-4) **Cha** 6 (-2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Tactics.

If the PCs try to arrest Danisca, she pretends to go along with them, but mentally alerts Blander, who'll sneak in to the upstairs balcony and follow her lead. Then she tells the PCs that she needs to take a few minutes to safely put away some alchemicals in her lab, or else the place might burn down. She lets the PCs accompany her to the entrance of her lab, but warns them to stay at the doorway. She heads to the far corner of the room, then uses a cantrip *prestidigitation* to release a burst of *dreaming dust* from the ceiling (see below). Her hope is to confuse the PCs and wipe their recent memory.

If that doesn't work, she'll try to dominate a PC. When she's attacked she turns invisible and flees to the second floor, then across to Blander's magician studio, hoping the traps will slow pursuit down so they can escape into the street. Meanwhile Blander tries to cause a distraction by

Dreaming Dust

Level 2 Blaster

Trap

XP 125

With a quick magical nudge, Danisca causes a metal plate to fall on and shatter several vials of dreaming dust hidden in the ceiling. Yellow powder bursts downward through tiny holes, filling the entrance to her laboratory.

Perception

♦ DC 15: There are small regular holes in the ceiling just inside the entrance to the lab, like a sieve for passing powder.

♦ DC 20: You can barely make out some glass vials through those holes.

Trigger

Danisca can activate the trap by using magical *prestidigitation* as a minor action. Otherwise, jostling the ceiling might set it off accidentally. This creates a zone of intoxicating powder in close burst 2 centered on the space just inside the hallway door, which lasts until the end of the encounter or until dispersed. When the trap triggers it makes the following attack against each creature in the area.

← Attack

Opportunity Action; Close Burst 2

Target: Creatures in the burst

Attack: +3 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dazed (save ends).

First Failed Save: The target is stunned (save ends).

Second Failed Save: The target falls unconscious.

Special: If a creature ends its turn in the zone of the dust, the trap repeats its attack against that creature, and if the creature is already dazed or stunned from being hit previously, a hit counts as the creature failing a saving throw, which worsens its condition.

A creature that gets stunned by *dreaming dust* becomes highly susceptible to suggestion, to the point that even its short-term memories can be changed by simply telling it something else happened. The susceptibility wear off after a few hours, but the memory alteration is permanent.

Countermeasures

♦ A character who wears a specially-made breathing mask is immune to dreaming dust. Simply holding your breath or covering your mouth and nose with a cloth is not enough. A few such masks lie scattered around Danisca's lab.

♦ A character adjacent to the trap can disable it with a DC 15 Thievery check.

unleashing his penned honey badgers (he uses them in magic tricks like humans would use doves, and they're very fond of him).

The guards, for their part, know not to go near the *dreaming dust* trap. Though they're wary of getting charged with attempted murder, they figure that Danisca can muddle the memories of the PCs as long as they can knock them out.

Alternately, the PCs might approach Blander first, in which case he'll try to reach the second floor bridge over to Danisca's shop. Danisca, empathically alerted, will have already unlocked the doors for the bridge, and will be waiting to slam the door shut and lock it once Blander gets through.

Though focused on making their escape, when Danisca and Blander do attack, they try to strike from opposite directions, drawing enemies apart so neither of them gets surrounded. Danisca uses her alchemicals to stymie pursuit, while Blander throws enemies into piles of volatile magic or the various traps set up in his studio.

Terrain.

The multiple floors of the two buildings suit Blander well, since he can teleport from ground to balcony or catwalk while most enemies have to use the stairs.

Drowning Tanks

Level 2 Obstacle

Trap XP 125

The floor drops out beneath you and you plunge into a cramped glass-walled tank filled with water. A trap door snaps shut above you, promising a horrible drowning death if you can't find a way out. Criss-crossing threads of gold wrap around the outside of the glass, and gold blocks teleportation, so you're in trouble.

Perception

- ✦ DC 15: You're pretty sure when the magician ran through here, he jumped over a section of flooring.
- ✦ DC 15 (only if viewing from the level of the tank, not from above): On second thought, there's paint flaking off the "gold" threads revealing some other metal beneath.
- ✦ DC 20: A hinge in the floor is probably some sort of trap.

Trigger

Two tanks are placed beneath two trap doors on the second floor. These trap doors fall open if anyone steps on them.

✦ Attack

Immediate Reaction; Area 1 within 0

Target: Triggering creature

Attack: +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target falls into the tank and needs to hold its breath or else drown. The ceiling seals shut.

Miss: The ceiling seals shut.

Special: Normally used as an escape artist act, the drowning tank's "gold threads" aren't actual gold, and so they don't inhibit teleportation at all. Blander can easily teleport out, but others might fall for the deception.

Countermeasures

- ✦ A submerged character holding his breath has some time to discover a means of escape. Consult the drowning (suffocation) rules in the D&D® 4E DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE®.
- ✦ A latch on the ceiling of the ground floor can disable the trap door. If a person falls into the tank while someone else is already inside, the second person can make a DC 13 Athletics or Acrobatics check to stand on top of the first person and keep from plunging in. This stops the ceiling from automatically shutting and latching.
- ✦ A character trapped inside can make a DC 20 Thievery check to jiggle the latch and unlock the top of the tank. They then need to make a DC 20 Athletics check to lift the lid off while swimming.
- ✦ Dealing 30 damage to the tank shatters it, spilling the creature out. The tank has resist 5 all, and a creature trapped might not be able to use certain options, like two handed weapons.

Many spaces in Danisca's shop are display tables covered with volatile chemicals. These spaces count as difficult terrain, and they require an Athletics or Acrobatics check (DC 13) to enter safely. If a creature fails its check, or if forced movement moves it into the space, the creature takes 5 points of acid, cold, fire, necrotic, and thunder damage (total damage, not 5 damage of each). A character can take at most 5 damage in this way in a single turn, no matter how many spaces it moves through at once.

Blander's magician studio has several props that can act as traps, and Danisca has set up a dreaming dust trap in her lab.

The second floor doors between the buildings are locked (Thievery DC 20), but Danisca and Blander both have keys, and most likely the doors will be unlocked before a fight begins.

Aftermath.

If either of the pair is knocked out or captured, the other will stop fleeing and will fight to free them. Remember that the PCs should be trying to take prisoners, not kill the pair. Likewise, neither of them wants a

Razzle Dazzle

Level 2 Lurker

Trap XP 125

This place is a real fire hazard. Dozens of buckets filled with quick-flash firedust and other theatrical alchemicals lie stacked about, some of them having fallen on their sides. Worse, the floor is riddled with strings and tiny pressure plates, and you think you might have just lit a fuse by stepping on one of them.

Perception

- ✦ DC 15: The floor here does not look safe to step on.
- ✦ DC 20: A single misstep here will trigger a cascade of blinding and burning explosives.

Initiative +0

Trigger

A creature who steps into one of these spaces triggers a fuse. Roll initiative for the trap. On its initiative count, it makes the following attack.

✦ Attack

Standard Action; Close Burst 2

Target: Creatures in burst

Attack: +5 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d6+5 fire damage and the target is blinded (save ends).

Effect: Any other un-triggered razzle dazzle spaces in the burst are triggered, and they roll initiative.

Countermeasures

- ✦ A flask of water splashed on a fuse can stop a square from going off. Jumping on top of a canister of alchemicals will cause the creature to be automatically hit, but will limit the attack to just the origin space, and prevent other razzle dazzle spaces from being triggered.
- ✦ A DC 10 Thievery check can disable a fuse.
- ✦ A single point of fire damage dealt to one of these spaces will immediately trigger the explosion, which can handily clear out the area before the party goes through.

murder charge, so they won't go for killing blows.

Once captured, Danisca tries to make a plea deal, getting her sentence reduced so she and her husband avoid jail in exchange for her telling the party where and when they can find the smugglers. She knows the man who's captaining the ship that Nilasa was going to ride is named **Deorn Feldman**, and that the ship is to set out at high tide, two hours after sunset on the 4th, leaving from a particular dock she can provide directions to. She doesn't know exactly where the meet-up is, but it's going to be somewhere near an uninhabited rock in The Ayres islands.

If the Waryeyes knock out the PCs, Danisca will drug them with a heavy dose of *dreaming dust*. Likewise if she gets lucky and her trap succeeds, she'll talk to the susceptible PCs and tell them a cover story. If they came to her shop, she'll say they talked to her, and that everything was in order. If they were looking for The House Elf, she'll instead say they found a stage magician who talked to them and seemed completely unsuspicious.

She'll then encourage them to go to a nearby pub and drink the rest of the day away. By the time the powder wears off, the PCs won't remember what happened except for a general sense that it was a dead end. If they decide to come back, Danisca will have cleared out anything incriminating, and Blander will just hide and not talk to the PCs. Danisca will then start making plans to close up shop and move to another city, but not before warning Gale and the smugglers that the PCs are onto them.

Treasure.

In addition to a variety of potions and alchemicals the party could loot (worth roughly 680 gp), the party can recover Blander's *hedge wizard's gloves* and *hat of hats*.

SMUGGLERS' NIGHT

Action. Montage/Tactical. Level 5.

Smugglers working for a group called The Family have a ship docked in Pine Island. The party can follow them to their rendezvous, or ambush them before they get out to sea.

By interrogating Danisca, or perhaps by following other leads, the PCs can learn the location of the dock where Family smugglers are prepared to set out on the night of the 4th, sailing a small cutter called *Silvo*. They intend to rendezvous with a Crisillyiri merchant ship, *Li Grifoni Grinyande* (*The Grinning Griffin*), off an uninhabited island in The Ayres.

The Crisillyiri will hand over three crates of magic wands, and the local smugglers will pay them with a case of gold worth 10,000 gp, plus stack of bills of mark worth a total of one hundred and fifty thousand gold pieces. These bills are popular currency for massive transactions, but the bank that backs them with actual coinage is based in a small neutral city in one of the border states between Drakr and Crisillyiri.

The party has a few choices of how to go after the smugglers.

♦ **Caught in the Act.** First, they might board a ship of their own (page xx), wait for the smugglers to depart, and shadow them to the rendezvous. There's enough traffic in the harbor near dusk that as long as the party doesn't set out with a five-masted warship, they probably can watch from afar without attracting attention. Then once the two ships link up they can close and apprehend them.

The benefit of this plan is that the party can catch both groups at once. The drawback is that if there's a fight, they'll have a lot more enemies to contend with. If they're clever the PCs might sneak up, make a note via spyglass or swimming scout of the name of the Crisillyiri vessel, then wait for them to separate. The party can chase down the local smugglers and seize the wands, then alert the port police to seize the Crisillyiri vessel when it docks.

♦ **The Boss has a Cold. He Sent Us.** Alternately, the party might attack the wharf in Parity Lake before the local smugglers can set

out. Prisoners can give them directions to the rendezvous, and the PCs can board the smugglers' ship, letting them get close to the Crisillyiri ship and catch the crew off guard.

If the party uses *Prestige* to get back-up, they might have their allies wait a short distance away on the party's own ship, ready to sail in as reinforcements.

♦ **I Sure Hope They Come Back Soon.** The party might decide to let the local smugglers go to the rendezvous, while the PCs lie in wait at the Parity Lake wharf. The smugglers plan to stop briefly back at their dock to hand over one crate of wands to some local allies, but then they'll sail up to Stray River, where they'll offload the other two crates of wands. Family operatives will deliver one crate to Gale's allies in the Cloudwood the next day, and they'll distribute the rest to their people throughout the city.

Though Nilasa is dead, even if the PCs keep Danisca Waryeye from going on the smuggler's ship, Morgan Cippiano knows the value of making allies, so he'll stick to the deal and hand over the wands to Gale as promised.

Multiple Encounters.

If the PCs make poor plans they can get caught in an overwhelming level 6 encounter, whereas if they are clever and already dealt with the Waryeyes, they might just have to face two level 1 encounters.

Some groups prefer challenging set-piece action scenes, and would want a tough fight even if they are clever. If that describes your group, you might need to add some foes to some of the encounters.

If the PCs confront the two ships together, it's a level 5 encounter (or level 6 if the Waryeyes are present)—an appropriately challenging capstone of this thread of the investigation.

Alternately, the PCs might go after the Parity Lake wharf, which is a level 3 encounter (or level 5 if the Waryeyes are there). That leaves *Li Grifoni Grinyande*, normally just a level 1 encounter. To kick it up to level 5, you might decide to have the whole crew join any fight, increasing from 15 minions to 35 minions, though that could get tedious. Alternately you could add 8 more minions plus three sacred mastheads, spirits of beautiful women willingly bound to the ship's mast. Stat-wise they're just reskinned apothecary guards (see page xx) that can animate the ship's planks and rigging to thwack and entangle the PCs.

If the PCs decide to confront the two ships separately and they go after the *Grifoni* first, you might just increase it to a level 3 encounter (add two sacred mastheads and two more minions), and then increase the *Silvo* from a level 1 encounter to level 5. For that, make the crew consist of Deorn and nine Family bravuras. If the Waryeyes are tagging along, they provide enough of a challenge that you can get away with just converting two sailors into bravuras, for a total of Deorn, five unscrupulous sailors, four Family bravuras, and a pair of married gnomes.

Either way, one of the biggest excitement factors of this scene is the chaotic blasts from the smuggled wands, so if you're shooting for drama, try to steer the party to go after whoever has the wands only after they've dealt with the other group.

Calling in Help.

This is an excellent time for the PCs to use the *Prestige* system to call in a favor or two. Their ship is easy enough to pilot by themselves, but extra manpower will come in handy for a fight, or at the very least will make the ship faster and more maneuverable by trimming sails or shoveling firegems into the boiler.

SHIPS OF THE RHC

One goal of this scene is to establish that the PCs, as constables of the RHC, have a ship their team can treat as its own. All the later adventures will include scenes that involve ships, and we want the players to think of their ship as a sort of mobile boat base. Though at first they just have access to simple coast guard style ships, as they increase in level they'll either be able to trade up for superior vessels, or outfit their ship with weapons and magical enhancements.

At the end of this adventure you'll find five sample ships, as well as a quick-play guide to the rules of naval combat. The ships include basic rowboats, as well as the two smuggler ships *Li Grifoni Grinyande* and *Silvo*, plus two basic cutters—one sail, one steam—that the PCs can choose as their own.

In the run-up to this scene, have the PCs pick which ship they want to use, and encourage them to name it and give it some personality and details.

If you use battle maps and miniatures, we recommend you print the ship layouts on thick paper, or hand draw them, then cut out the ships so it's easier to move them through the battle.

If your PCs are not members of the RHC, you might have one character—preferably a Yerasol Veteran—own his own ship, or the party might borrow a ship from the Constabulary.

Allied Officer

Level 1 Minion Controller

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP n/a

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion

Initiative n/a

AC 15, Fortitude 11, Reflex 11, Will 11

Perception +0

Speed 6

Traits

► Linked Ally

Each allied minion is linked to one PC, and only acts at that PC's direction. Whenever a PC uses a move action to move, his linked ally can take a move action to move as well. The PC can also spend a move action to have the ally move on his own, or a minor action to have his ally take a minor action like picking up or manipulating an object.

If a PC is unconscious or dead, the player can control the ally independently. It can take two move actions and one minor action per turn.

► Just Got My Wind Knocked Outta Me

Allied Soldiers are not killed when reduced to 0 HP as long as their allied PC is alive. Instead they are knocked unconscious. They regain consciousness after a short rest and return to 1 HP. If their allied PC is dead, they die when reduced to 0 HP. Likewise they die if someone goes to the effort of delivering a coup de grace.

► Under Arrest

When an Allied Officer moves, it may deal 2 damage to one enemy adjacent to it at the end of its movement. If it moves more than once in a turn, it only deals this damage once. A creature adjacent to an Allied Officer has to spend an extra square of movement to leave its space.

► Pistol

Once per encounter, a PC can spend a standard action to have his allied officer fire a pistol. This deals 5 damage to a creature within 10 squares, and requires no attack roll.

Str 10 (+0) Dex 10 (+0) Wis 10 (+0)

Con 10 (+0) Int 10 (+0) Cha 10 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned Languages Common

It counts as a Rank 2 favor to get one police officer for an evening, Rank 3 to get one allied soldier or four police officers, or Rank 4 to get four soldiers or twelve officers. Anything beyond that would take too long on the time table the PCs have. Each officer counts as an Allied Officer (see below). Divide the officers among the PCs so the players are responsible for their actions.

Allied Flint Soldier

Level 5 Minion Soldier

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP n/a

HP 1 (see *tougher than your average minion*)

Initiative n/a

AC 19, Fortitude 15, Reflex 15, Will 15

Perception +2

Speed 5

Traits

► Linked Ally

Each allied minion is linked to one PC, and only acts at that PC's direction. Whenever a PC uses a move action to move, his linked ally can take a move action to move as well. The PC can also spend a move action to have the ally move on his own, or a minor action to have his ally take a minor action like picking up or manipulating an object.

If a PC is unconscious or dead, the player can control the ally independently. It can take two move actions and one minor action per turn.

► Tougher than Your Average Minion

When an Allied Flint Soldier would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, if that source does less than 7 damage, the soldier takes no damage and instead becomes bloodied. The next time he would take damage from any source, even a missed attack, he is reduced to 0 HP.

Allied minions are not killed when reduced to 0 HP as long as their allied PC is alive. Instead they are knocked unconscious. They regain consciousness after a short rest and return to 1 HP, unbloodied. If their allied PC is dead, they die when reduced to 0 HP. Likewise they die if someone goes to the effort of delivering a coup de grace.

► Follows Orders

When an Allied Flint Soldier moves, it deals 5 damage to one enemy adjacent to it at the end of its movement. If it moves more than once in a turn, it only deals this damage once.

► Alchemist Fire

Once per day, a PC can spend a standard action to have his allied soldier throw a flask of alchemist fire. One creature within 5 squares takes 5 fire damage and gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). No attack roll is required.

► Pistol

Once per encounter, a PC can spend a standard action to have his allied soldier fire his pistol. This deals 8 damage to a creature within 10 squares, and requires no attack roll.

Str 10 (+0) Dex 10 (+0) Wis 10 (+0)

Con 10 (+0) Int 10 (+0) Cha 10 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned Languages Common

FAMILY WHARF

Encounter Level: 3 (5 with the Waryeyes)

This small bayou house can only be reached by a narrow boardwalk which the Family keeps watch on, or by swimming or taking a boat. The party might completely bypass this area, but if they do want to strike here, they'll have a hard time making good use of their ship in the tight quarters. Rowboats would be more useful, or perhaps simply swimming. Of course, there are piranha in these waters.

Because the ships can move, the map for this encounter doesn't include either the *Silvo* or the two rowboats. The *Silvo* is moored to the east of the house. One rowboat sits outside to the north, the other on the south by the boardwalk.

Under the direction of **Deorn Feldman**, a local Flinter whom the Family recruited for his excellent riverboating skills, seven unscrupulous sailors prep the *Silvo*, a short cutter, single-masted, 30 ft. long, little more than a hull with a sail. Two Family bravuras stand lookout on the boardwalk, separated by 20 ft., just within sight of each other. The other

two bravuras are busy cleaning up after dinner. If the party hasn't apprehended them or scared them off, Danisca and Blander Waryeye are also present, full after a fine Crisillyiri meal of pesto chicken and pasta.

Technically only Deorn and the bravuras are members of The Family, but it's tradition in the criminal syndicate to share a meal with teammates to help build trust and get a sense of who might be a liability.

A piranha throng lurks by the cypress trees east of the house. Normally schools of piranha don't attack large creatures, but the smugglers have made a habit of dunking their leftovers and the leavings of butchered fish and fowl, to let the piranha clean dishes and leave stripped bones that local fishermen buy as jewelry. Busy with prepping the *Silvo*, the smugglers haven't fed the fishies yet tonight, and they are hungry. They attack indiscriminately.

The stats for this location are included at the end of this encounter, to consolidate the crews of the two ships. If the Waryeyes are present, their stats are on page 19.

Setup.

- ♦ Deorn Feldman
- ♦ 4 Family Bravuras
- ♦ 7 Unscrupulous Sailors
- ♦ Piranha Throng
- ♦ Danisca Waryeye (maybe)
- ♦ Blander Waryeye (maybe)

Tactics.

If the party approaches by boardwalk, the two lookout bravuras try to hold the boardwalk and bottleneck the party while the rest of the criminals rush to launch the *Silvo*. Two of the sailors act as crew, and at the end of the round the ship pulls away from the house and flees into the night (see the Ship Guide, page xx). The remaining bravuras then dive into the marsh and try to swim away.

If the party approaches by boat, Deorn figures he can't just run, so he tries to lure the PCs in. The bravuras on the boardwalk take a rowboat and try to stop the party from making landfall. Deorn and his sailor minions fan out and fire from cover behind fences and buildings—go prone, then stand, shoot, and go prone again. Meanwhile the bravuras in the house sneak to the second boat and stay out of the light as they try to flank.

If the Waryeyes are present, they try to stay out of combat until the party actually gets to the house. Neither has good long-ranged options, but once the party closes in they can disrupt attempts to take out Deorn and the sailors. If anyone is bloodied while in the water, the piranha throng streaks in and swarms the unfortunate victim.

If the party has their ship and the smugglers manage to slip past them, see the *Silvo* Chase skill challenge, below.

Terrain.

A chest-high fence conceals parts of the boardwalk and house, and gives defenders cover, but it wouldn't be hard to smash through the old, bayou-rotted wood.

Light water near the cypress trees can be waded through as difficult terrain. The rest of the water is at least 10 feet deep and must be swum through (Athletics DC 10). Though the water to the north is fairly open, surrounding trees make navigating ships through here difficult.

Aftermath.

If defeated, the smugglers can be convinced to tell the party where the meet-up is through clever interrogation or an offer to let one of them go in exchange for squealing. (If that happens, one of the unscrupulous sailors takes the offer, and ends up dead within a week.) They have little here at the wharf of value aside from the money they were planning to use to pay for the wands.

If the smugglers take out the party, they know better than to kill law enforcement officers. Instead Deorn has the party disarmed, tied up, and taken to the house of a nearby friend who can keep his mouth shut. Then after finishing the wand exchange, Deorn loads the party in his ship and delivers them to Family allies in Stray River. The next morning the party will wake up to a meeting with Morgan Cippiano.



THE MEET-UP

Encounter Level: Special.

Both Ships, 5 (6 with the Waryeyes).

The *Silvo*, 1 (4 with the Waryeyes).

The *Grifoni*, 1.

The local Family smugglers have a pre-arranged plan to meet south of an uninhabited rocky island in The Ayres. On the *Silvo*, Deorn will play a set of five horn notes every few minutes and then the captain of *Li Grifoni Grinyande* will respond with another set of notes. This, combined with lantern signals, will let the two ships find each other in the night.

If either captain blows a single long horn note, however, it will warn the other ship that it's not safe, and the meet-up will be canceled. Afraid of being discovered by customs, the Crisillyiri smugglers will send a longboat out to a nearby island and quickly bury the cases of wands just off the beach. They'll hope to retry the exchange a few days later, and with luck the rich owner of the island won't happen to dig up their treasure in the interim.

Details of the two ships are provided in the Ship Appendix (see page xx). If it comes to a fight, the opposition includes the following.



Setup.

♦ *Silvo*

- Deorn Feldman
- 2 Family Bravuras
- 7 Unscrupulous Sailors
- Danisca Waryeye (maybe)
- Blander Waryeye (maybe)

♦ *Li Grifoni Grinyande*

- Captain Amba Bandia
- 15 Unscrupulous Sailors

The Exchange.

When the two ships are together, they tie ropes to keep themselves close, and they adjust their sails so they're relatively stationary. The actual hand-off takes about ten minutes, and involves friendly greetings, a few shared drinks, and then the transaction of money for wands. If anything interrupts them, it takes five rounds for the crews of the two ships to ready their vessels for departure, so if the PCs approach stealthily they can strike while their enemies are vulnerable.

Stealthy Approach.

In the dark of night, the PCs can spot the lights of the two smuggler ships from nearly a thousand feet out. If the PCs snuff their light sources they can easily come within five hundred feet without being spotted. Even if they have a steamship, the sound of wind and surf covers engine noise.

To approach any closer, the party can attempt three skill checks (DC 20)—one Perception to determine what angle best hides them from the enemy lookouts, one Nature to best take advantage of the waves and wind, and one Stealth to pick the proper angle that hides them in the shadow of an island. If the party succeeds at least two, they can get within 200 ft. before being noticed.

Fight or Flight.

If the party confronts both ships at the same time, the criminals figure they outnumber the party and will try to pincer the PCs' ship, though it might take them a while to get their ships moving.

If the party approaches the *Grifoni* while it's on its own, Captain Bandia orders her crew to discreetly arm themselves, but acts casual when the PCs arrive. If they ask to inspect the ship, she invites them on board, hoping to swarm them with her crew.

If they go after the *Silvo* when it's alone, Deorn orders the crew to turn about and run back to the *Grifoni*, where they'll have reinforcements for a fight. If the party makes a point of waiting until the *Silvo* is far from the *Grifoni*, then Deorn's goal is to flee back to the Parity Lake wharf. It's a similar result, just with different reinforcements. See the *Silvo Chase* skill challenge sidebar.

OOH, TEMPTATION

By all means, let the PCs claim some of the wands, even though it's against protocol, highly illegal, and they're technically stealing from the Clergy, one of the most powerful organizations in the world. In the next adventure an audit of their activities will likely uncover any illicit activities they've been up to, but until then they can certainly justify having a little extra power when going up against dangerous criminals.

Plus, what good is being a cop if you can't benefit from being corrupt?

SILVO CHASE

This quick skill challenge represents the party trying to catch the *Silvo* before it can link up with reinforcements. The party's ship is faster, so catching up is easy, but getting ahead of them and stopping their run for help is harder.

The PCs have 3 "rounds" to catch the *Silvo*, and each round represents a few minutes of sailing. Every round, each PC can make one skill check to aid the pursuit. The party wants to succeed 8 skill checks to cut the *Silvo* off from its allies.

Starting Successes. If the party got within 200 ft. by a Stealthy Approach (see above), they begin this challenge with 3 successes.

Narrating the Challenge. Emphasize that both ships are tearing across the bay at top speed. Wind whips surf in the PCs' faces and heaves the two small boats high across rough waves. The two ships start at 500 ft. apart, and close 100 ft. for each skill check the PCs succeed.

From four successes on, the challenge shifts from pure speed to clever maneuvering. The PCs' goal is to pass the *Silvo* upwind, then cut back and approach the *Silvo* from the front, leaving the *Silvo* with no way to reach its allies without meeting the PCs head on. In the process of closing, the two sides might take occasional potshots at each other, but the rolling waves, darkness, and wind render such attacks ineffectual.

The first two rounds of the challenge are in fairly open waters. At the start of the third round, the party can see the *Silvo*'s destination in the distance—either their allied ship the *Grifoni*, or their wharf base.

Skill Checks. Unless otherwise noted, the DC for these checks is 20. Some possible actions the PCs can take include:

- ♦ **Bluff (DC 18).** A PC could make a point of lighting up their own ship, then waving fake orders at the crew so that Deorn, watching with his spyglass, makes poor tactical decisions. This trick only works once.
- ♦ **Endurance.** In the third round of the challenge, PCs could make checks to keep working at peak efficiency despite fatigue.
- ♦ **Insight.** A PC could observe Deorn's crew through a spyglass to predict their maneuvers and cut them off. A PC with low-light or darkvision gains a +5 bonus to this check, because Deorn assumes the night's darkness will hide his orders.
- ♦ **Nature.** A PC familiar with the waters of Flint Bay can guide the ship to the best winds and currents.
- ♦ **Charisma (DC 15).** Each round one PC can make a Charisma check to keep up crew cohesion.
- ♦ **Intelligence (DC 15).** A PC who recalls the location of shoals or rocky islands could trick the *Silvo* into hazardous waters.
- ♦ **Strength (DC 15).** A PC could use his strength to trim the sails or shovel firegems into the boiler to enhance the ship's speed or maneuverability.

Results. At the end of the third round, if the party doesn't have at least 6 successes, the *Silvo* reaches its allies, so the PCs have to decide whether to engage the larger enemy force. If they do, the two sides start roughly 100 ft. apart.

If the party gets 6 or 7 successes, they manage to close to skirmish range, but can't cut off the *Silvo*. Place the *Silvo* within 200 ft. of its allies, and then let the PCs place their ship roughly 100 ft. from the *Silvo*. Deorn will still try to link up with his allies.

If the party gets 8 successes, they start well away from reinforcements. Place the *Silvo* in the center of open water, and let the PCs place their ship roughly 100 ft. away. The *Silvo* cannot move on its first turn.

WANDS OF WONDER

If you were a bunch of desperate criminals about to get arrested while you're sitting on a cache of magic weapons, what would you do?

The Crisillyiri wands belonged to a military collection and have been enchanted so they could be easily shown off to visiting nobles and religious hierarchs. Each is unique, from any of a dozen different centuries, and an archaeologist or arcane scholar could keep herself delighted for years discovering the secret iconography and histories of these weapons. But for rich Crisillyiri patrons, it's important to be able to pick it up and shoot it without worrying about command words or magical training.

All of the wands have been enchanted so that they can each be fired once per month by whoever is holding them, requiring only a simple act of will. No training or command word is needed. However, the power level of the spell cast through the wand is minimal, so some flashy effects will miss wildly or do inconsequential damage.

When a fight breaks out between the PCs and the smugglers, Deorn or Amba quickly orders the sailors to take cover behind the crates, crack them open, and start shooting with whatever they can get their hands on. A character adjacent to a crate of wands can spend a minor action to retrieve a wand, and a standard action to use it. As he activates it, the wielder innately learns the power the wand possesses so he can properly choose its target, but he can't choose not to use it. After the wand is used once, it can't be used again until the wielder studies it and learns the proper commands.

Each crate contains about fifty wands, carefully wrapped in fine fabrics to keep their energies from intermingling catastrophically. When a character draws a wand from a crate, roll 1d12 and consult the table below to see what he gets.

1d12: Random Wand

- Magic Missile.** Attack does 2 force damage to a target within 20 squares, no attack roll.
- Thunderwave.** +1 vs. Fortitude, close blast 3, 1d6 thunder damage and push 1 square.
- Burning Hands.** +1 vs. Reflex, close blast 5, 2d6 fire damage.
- Ray of Enfeeblement.** +1 vs. Fortitude, ranged 10, 1d10 necrotic damage and the target is weakened until the end of your next turn.
- Fire Burst.** +1 vs. Reflex, area burst 2 within 20 squares, 2d6 fire damage.
- Dimensional Jaunt.** User teleports 10 squares.
- Lightning Bolt.** +1 vs. Reflex, ranged 10, 2d6 lightning damage. On a hit, +1 vs. Reflex against two creatures within 10 squares of initial target, 1d6 lightning damage.
- Invisibility.** User or adjacent ally turns invisible until the end of your next turn.
- Godslasers.** +1 vs. Reflex, ranged 5, 1d8 radiant damage and one ally you can see gets +2 to his next attack roll against the target.
- Expelliarmus.** +1 vs. Reflex, ranged 10, the target is disarmed, and whatever he was holding flies to your hand.
- Song of Jumping.** Close Burst 10. Creatures in burst get +10 to Athletics checks to jump until the end of your next turn.
- Viscid Globs.** +1 vs. Reflex, ranged 10, the target is restrained (save ends).

Tactics.

When Deorn realizes the jig is up, he has whichever men aren't busy crewing the ship take defensive positions. He hopes to strafe the PCs, ordering his men to fire crossbows, or use the wands if they've received them. If the two ships hit each other, he takes his bravuras and tries to board while the sailors provide cover fire.

Terrain.

There's not much in the way of terrain here, except for the ships. If the fight occurs back at the wharf there are cypress trees and a boardwalk to deal with, and during the chase skill challenge the PCs might force the *Silvo* near shoals or some rocky islands.

The deck of the *Grifoni* is covered in barrels and crates that provide cover and mobility options. On the *Silvo*, the hull of the ship is deep enough that a prone character gets cover from attacks originating off the ship. The unscrupulous sailors will try to stay prone except for when they pop up to shoot, or when Deorn orders one of them to jump between the two ships and get in the party's face.

Aftermath.

Much as in the Family Wharf encounter, if the PCs are defeated, they're handed over to Morgan Cippiano for a polite conversation the next morning.

Defeated smugglers clam up, except for Deorn, who brags that he'll be free in a week. None of them know how to get in touch with Gale or the fey, but members of the Family will say that someone who does know will be contacting the PCs shortly.

Deorn Feldman

Level 2 Brute (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 125

HP 44; **Bloodied** 22

Initiative +0

AC 14, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 14

Perception +3

Speed 6

Standard Actions

✂ **Cutlass** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Armed with a cutlass and an oversized pistol, the massive sailor smiles with knowing confidence as he attacks.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+4 damage.

✓ **Hand Cannon** (weapon) ♦ Encounter

A single shot of his huge pistol startles birds for a mile around.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+4 damage, or 2d6+16 on a crit.

Effect: All creatures within 5 squares are deafened until the end of Deorn's next turn.

Special: Deorn is also deafened by this power. Deorn can spend a standard action to reload his gun and recharge this power, but first he must sheathe his cutlass.

Minor Actions

► **Go Get Em!** ♦ At-Will (1/round)

The sailor glances at a cowering ally, gives him a swift kick, and yells for him to charge.
Effect: One allied minion adjacent to Deorn moves its speed and makes a melee basic attack. Until the start of Deorn's next turn, he and his allies get a +1 bonus to attack rolls against whatever target the minion attacked.

Skills Nature +7

Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 8 (+0) **Wis** 14 (+3)

Con 14 (+3) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+3)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Family Bravura

Level 1 Skirmisher

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 100

HP 30; **Bloodied** 15

Initiative +3

AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 13

Perception +0

Speed 6

Standard Actions

☞ **Free-Hand Pummel** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

He leads with his sword, but instead of slicing you, he uses it to bat away your own weapon, then slams his free fist into your face and chest in a flurry of punches.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 3d4+1 damage.

☞ **Double Dagger Fling** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4+3 damage.

Special: The Bravura has four daggers, and can only use this power twice per encounter unless he recovers his weapons.

► **Bravado Rush** ♦ At-Will

Effect: The Family Bravura charges an opponent. If he hits, he pushes the target 1 square.

Triggered Actions

► **Part of the Family** ♦ Encounter

Your attack knocks the criminal to the ground, but before he loses consciousness he reaches out for help toward one of his allies. That ally's expression burns with vengeance.

Trigger: A creature's attack reduces the Family Bravura to 0 HP.

Effect (Free Action): One allied creature with this same ability can move its speed, then can make a basic attack against the triggering creature.

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 10 (+0)

Con 14 (+2) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 14 (+2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Unscrupulous Sailor

Level 1 Minion Artillery

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 25

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion

Initiative +0

AC 13, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 13

Perception +0

Speed 6

Traits

► **Desperate Imprecision**

The sailor seems more concerned about not getting hit than about hitting you.

When trading fire with enemies, an unscrupulous sailor often chooses to keep his head hidden behind cover. If he has cover, he can choose to attack without looking. He takes a –5 penalty to his attack rolls because his opponents have total concealment, and his enemies take a –5 penalty to attack rolls against him because he has superior cover.

Standard Actions

☞ **Crossbow Smash** ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 4 damage.

☞ **Crossbow Shot** ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage.

Special: Load minor.

Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)

Con 11 (+0) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —



Captain Amba Bandia

Level 2 Skirmisher (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 125

HP 37; **Bloodied** 18

Initiative +9

AC 16, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12

Perception +1

Speed 6

Standard Actions

☞ **Rapier** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

The captain adjusts the fine Crisillyiri lace of her cuffs, then nods politely as she draws her rapier with a flourish.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+5 damage.

✂ **Whip** (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Brushing her massive assortment of hair curls and brooches, the captain unfurls a whip and cracks it toward you.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+5 damage, and Amba's allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against the target until the end of Amba's next turn.

✂ **Whip Snare** (weapon) ♦ At-Will

The elaborately coiled captain snags you with her whip and flashes you a smirk.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8+5 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 12). The target can move closer to Amba, but not farther away. The whip can be attacked and has Amba's defenses. Any hit destroys the whip. (Amba has two whips.)

Minor Actions

► **Swashbuckling Swing** ♦ At-Will

The captain lashes her whip around a yard and swings across the battle.

Special: Amba must have a whip and be on a ship.

Effect: Amba flies 4 squares, but cannot increase in elevation by more than 1 square.

Skills Nature +7

Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+1)

Con 13 (+2) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 16 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned

Languages Common, Elven, Primordial

La Grifoni Grinyande

Piranha Throng

Level 2 Controller

Medium natural beast (swarm)

XP 125

HP 28; **Bloodied** 14

Initiative +7

AC 14, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12

Perception +1

Speed 0, swim 6

Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks

Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks

Traits

☼ **Churn the Water** ♦ Aura 1

It's said a school of swarming piranha can chew a full cow down to bare bones within minutes. The roil of their feeding frenzy makes it nearly possible to swim to safety.

Any creature that starts its turn within the aura takes 5 damage. The aura is difficult terrain for creatures other than the throng, and Athletics checks to swim in the aura take a –5 penalty.

Str 1 (–4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)

Con 10 (+1) **Int** 1 (–4) **Cha** 4 (–2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —



Treasure.

If any PC uses a wand as an implement, he is drawn to one wand amid the stash, an ancient *wand of Egal the Shimmering*. The RHC confiscates all the wands, but the PC might requisition (or steal) the item if it appeals to him.

MAKE THEM AN OFFER

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

Morgan Cippiano, head of the Family's operations in Flint, wants to have coffee with the party.

The party can get to this encounter several ways. If they lose a fight to Family allies, they might wake up in an unfamiliar room, windowless but pleasantly appointed with a bed for each PC, its door locked. Their wounds have been dressed, fashionable clothes in their sizes will have been laid out by each of their beds. A young boy with a Crisillyiri accent will come by shortly, inviting them to breakfast.

Or if the party's successful, a day after thwarting the smuggling, finely handwritten letters arrive for them at the RHC headquarters, each with a variant arcane lock on its wax seal so only the named person can open the letter. The missive invites them to come to a coffee shop in Stray River on the corner of Yearling Street and Healers Street, near where a subrail station is being built.

The writer, who signs "Morgan Cippiano," says he takes breakfast and lunch there, and he'll wait at their convenience for the next three days. He says he wishes to discuss the legal case against his 'family members, and says he might be able to help them in their greater investigation.

If the party doesn't come for three days, Morgan finds a way to arrange that they share a route with him for a few minutes, perhaps a stroll, a carriage, or a ferry. He has plenty of Family members along the way as a precaution.

Coffee and Cakes.

When the party arrives, Morgan casually gestures to the proprietor, who tells his daughters in Crisillyiri to bring out comestibles. Sitting at a table, already partway into a cup of black but intensely sweetened coffee, Morgan cranes his head to get a view of the PCs' shoes. He makes a sincere effort to niceties, with a particular emphasis on fashion and clothing, then moves to business after some light fare is brought out.

Morgan mentions that he has friends all over the city, and when the party managed to get involved in that smuggling business, he got interested. He had his friends ask around, and he learned just how busy the party is. He says he admires their diligence—it's a trait that's very handy for both government and private entrepreneurs like himself. Now he wants to know if they might have more in common, and he'd like to begin their relationship by offering them some help.

Inform the party that they have gained a Prestige rating of 2 with The Family. (It's actually a Prestige rating with The Clergy, since these criminals are just a distant arm of their interests, but that will be revealed later.)

Morgan wants to make a deal to get his men out of trouble—the bravuras in particular. Deorn isn't family, not really, and Morgan couldn't

care less about any unscrupulous sailors, though he might make an effort for the Waryeyes because he has a soft spot for married couples. What he offers depends on where the PCs stand.

You as DM can use this situation as a way to nudge the party if they're lost—perhaps Morgan's men can point the party to Wolfgang's lair, or arrange passage through the Cloudwood to Nevard's henge. More likely, though, the party will meet Morgan late in the adventure, in which case he can offer to lure the dragonborn arsonists to a trap so the party can arrest them, or his men can "encourage" Cillian Creed's carriage driver to come forward to the PCs.

While it's perfectly possible for the party to solve this entire adventure without Morgan's help, you want them to feel like they got a massive break by compromising just a little.

Aftermath.

The party might rebuff Morgan, but he's a hard man to upset. If the party or any individual PC is interested in forging a stronger relationship with the criminal elite of Flint, Morgan is too busy to spend much time personally with the party, but he can get them in touch with an underling—a talented cobbler named **Dozy Miccini**. With Family help the party will have an easier time fencing illicit goods and hiding their ill-gotten wealth from investigations.

You can also deploy Morgan and the Family later in the adventure if you want to make an impression of how civic-minded these guys are. If the party loses track of any key bad guys, from one of the dragonborn to Macbannin himself, in the wrap-up of the adventure the person in question is delivered to the RHC headquarters along with a fancy coffee press and finely ground coffee beans.



MORGAN
CIPPIANO

Morgan Cippiano, going on forty and stylishly bald, conducts Family business from the nondescript coffee shop in an immigrant-heavy neighborhood, occasionally going outside to encourage the kids playing street sports. Morgan came over from Crisillyir a few years ago with instructions to foster Family interests by recruiting Crisillyiri immigrants and any local Risuri followers of the Clergy who had a similar ideology.

A devout Clericist (follower of the Clergy), Morgan strives to keep a moral code while running a branch of a powerful criminal organization. He hopes some day to be seen as a father figure to his community, but for now he's willing to smash a few heads and order a few throats slit in order to clear out the competition.

Though gruff-voiced and cocky, Morgan has an unusual fascination with fashion. He rejects trends, but has a good eye for classical styles that people of any culture can appreciate. He considers coffee quite fashionable, and is trying to convince more of his family back in Crisillyir to start drinking it so he can be a business contact.



THREAD TWO: GALE

This act details what the PCs can discover as they investigate Nilasa's lodgings at Heward Sechim's alkahest factory and her connection to the fey terrorist Gale.

HEWARD'S ALKAHEST FACTORY

Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

The party questions the owner of a factory where Nilasa lived and worked.

By searching Nilasa's body or investigating her associates, the party should learn about Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings, a factory in Parity Lake that produces powerful acid. (Alkahest is sometimes referred to as "universal solvent," but this name is just an exaggeration.) After nearly landing in prison five years ago, Nilasa tried to reform and found work at the factory just as it was starting up. Ever since she has been a sort of mascot for the workers; her sense of humor made it much easier to cope with the stress of constantly being in danger of getting dissolved.

Factory Details.

A few hundred employees work in shifts throughout the day, most of them living in tenements in Parity Lake, with a few trekking down from slums in The Nettles. Like most buildings on its street, the factory is forty feet tall, on a lot fifty feet wide, by eighty feet long, with streetside doors for workers on the front and a small pier facing the lake itself at the back. There are no windows below the third floor.

The wide open factory floor has catwalks and chain pulleys twenty feet up. Raw materials enter from the pier, and different teams handle the purifying and refining procedures. Then specialists combine reagents to create acids and corrosive pastes of various strengths. One section of the factory floor is separate with a low wall; Heward is currently experimenting in this room, trying to create a magic urn that you can simply pour raw materials into, wait, and let it create acid, without labor-intensive oversight.

The second floor is thirty feet up, consisting of a common lounge area, Heward's personal residence, storage rooms, and a room with a few cots for workers who are pulling double shifts and want a nap. (Few factories have such a luxury.)

Heward lives and works at the factory, so he should be there whenever the party comes by, either tinkering in his personal laboratory, overseeing on the factory floor, or in his upstairs residence.

The Neighborhood.

As the party arrives, it's obvious that something's different with Heward's factory. This whole section of lake-side factories all contribute to Risuri military and naval resources, but Nevard's factory is the only one not being protested.

The factory to its left, which uses various drills and bores to finely machine cannons, guns, and steamworks, is surrounded by a small mob of women singing traditional Risuri folk songs. Thick metal chains are wrapped around the double doors leading into the bore factory, and the entrance is guarded by burly men that the party might (Streetwise DC 13) recognize as off-duty police officers.

An identical scene fronts the factory to the right, which employs hundreds of people to manually sift firedust into different grains and package it into charges with bullets for firearms. And across the street three smaller factories all have comparable crowds. The women are the wives, mothers, and daughters of factory workers, and their protest is the second stage of a months-long conflict with the factory owners.

Previously small groups of dockers had come to argue for better working conditions for the workers. Momentum had built and there was talk of having a worker walk-out. The owners retaliated by locking their factories in the middle of a shift, and they refused to let anyone leave unless they produced their quota, and even then only if a new worker came in to replace them. Also, they're not paying any workers until the protests end. Now the women are protesting to try to get their loved ones free. Similar protests dot the district, since many factory owners coordinated their actions.

Heward has a trio of guards in front of his business, but they're present to keep the adjacent factories from trying to sabotage the alkahest factory.

Breaking the Bad News.

When the party tells Heward about Nilasa's death, he grimaces, then nods and says his uncle warned him about this. He explains that his uncle, a skyseer, is getting on in years and doesn't have many visions anymore, but just a week ago he told him that 'an adopted daughter will blindly ride the wind to her demise.'

Heward says he knows Nilasa had been trying for years to befriend Gale and the fey terrorists. He blames himself, because she listened to him a bit too much when he would talk about how horribly other factory owners treated their workers. Heward just wanted to instill a sense of pride and allegiance in his people, but he thinks Nilasa wanted to punish harsher owners. He says he cared for her too much to try reporting her.

Nilasa's Room.

Heward will gladly let the PCs check out Nilasa's small room upstairs, but there's not much to find: just some clothes, incidental money, and a lesson book for her to learn Elvish.

A Favor.

Heward makes a point to say that he understands both sides of the debate about Risur's tradition versus its future. He's been on both sides, gotten into his fair share of trouble both times. He's not the kind of person who can fight, because he doesn't think either side is wrong.

He asks the party if they can get in touch with his uncle Nevard. He says that Nevard has the respect of radicals like Gale, but that he's not violent, and could be able to arrange a peaceful meeting between Gale and the authorities. Heward hopes that could prevent any other misguided kids from getting themselves killed. Any PC with the Skyseer heroic theme immediately recognizes Nevard's name, and other PCs might (Arcana or Nature DC 13) know of him.

He can give the party directions through the rough roads and trails in Cloudwood to the henge where Nevard and his followers live. He hopes the party hurries, though, because Nevard's an old man, and if he dies one of the best chances for reconciliation dies with him.

Other Concerns.

In the course of the discussion, Heward mentions that he's got a lot on his plate already. There are the protests on either side, the government pushing for him to lower his price so they can get the arcane etchings they need for the next ship like the *Coaltongue*, and then some strange men who he's afraid will damage his factory.

The men, who smelled odd, sort of like burnt engine grease, wanted to buy a few cases of alkahest, but insisted he not report the sale. Since he sells to the government and his product is hazardous, he has to account for all his materials; so he refused. The men got angry, made some heavy allusions to the fires that have been striking around the district, and then left, saying they'd be back. The second time, two different men came. Heward stalled, said he needed time to arrange something, then had the men followed. They went to a seedy part of the district, away from the lake and nearer to the Nettles, but that's as far as they could be tracked.

Unbeknownst to Heward, these were agents of crime boss Lorcan Kell, who is trying to discreetly assemble the many various components needed to construct the colossus in the Bleak Gate. Intensely strong acid is needed to etch runes into the adamantine skin of the titan, and since Heward isn't cooperating Lorcan is making plans to have the dragonborn arsonist brothers set fire to the factory so one of his affiliates can buy it cheaply.

Want to Buy Some Acid?

Heward is willing to sell many types of acid and alchemicals, and is willing to fill custom orders or offer some basic vials of acid as gifts if the party can get him some answers to what led Nilasa to be killed.

FOG OF WAR

Action. Tactical. Level 5.

En route to meet with skyseer Nevard, the party finds a carriage imperiled by Cloudwood brigands.

In the steep, tangled terrain of the Cloudwood only a few roads are well-maintained enough for carriages to travel, and most traffic is on foot or horseback. Four miles from Parity Lake, Nevard's henge lies near the end of one of the roads, as does a community of musicians who act as the main contact this region has with outsiders. Bands of brigands roam the forest, and they get their supplies from this outpost in exchange for providing protection.

As the PCs near Nevard's henge, they're nearly two thousand feet above sea level, and the humid, sweltering air is thick with low clouds that cut visibility to as short as a few feet at times. The road ascends on switchbacks toward a forested plateau, and when the PCs reach this area they hear the panicked neigh of a horse galloping toward them. The animal streaks past, an arrow in its shoulder and a snapped carriage harness



HEWARD
SECHIM

Using wealth he received from his prestigious skyseer uncle Nevard, Heward Sechim spent the past two decades developing a reputation as a crafter of pure and potent acids, a critical component for devices that combine magic and technology. Five years ago he was challenged by his uncle to open a large factory that would treat its workers with respect; most such operations are wretched and dangerous.

One of his first hires was Nilasa, whose upbeat personality had a positive effect on the rest of the workers. Heward thinks of her as a daughter, and he's grown worried of her flirtations with terrorist activities. He lets her sleep in one of the top floor storage rooms of the factory.

Heward has to rein in his natural exuberance for experimentation in order to keep his promise to his uncle. His main business just mass produces liquid acids and corrosive glazes, and he keeps separate his arcanotechnical work-room separate from the main floor, to cut down on the chance of a kid getting incinerated in an incomplete enchanted forge. Indeed, he tends to only have child workers handle cleaning and maintenance, and not work with actual acid. A few times each week, Heward takes the hardest workers out for drinks at the Thinking Man's Tavern, and he makes a point of keeping the windows open to let out noxious fumes. By Flint standards, the factory is an almost pleasant workplace.

trailing behind it. Then they hear a woman's muffled cries and intermittent sounds of gunshots and bowfire.

It takes a few rounds to get within view of the unfolding battle. A carriage leans precariously at the corner of a switchback, its wheels stuck in undergrowth. The door to the carriage hangs open and three men huddle near it, reloading poorly-made pistols and looking around as if trying to spot their enemies. A fourth man, the driver, sits dead atop the carriage with an arrow in his chest. Just as the party arrives, an arrow streaks in from the south hill and kills one of the men, and the other two scramble to the opposite side of the carriage. The woman's screams continue from within the carriage, which seems to slowly be sliding toward a thirty-foot plunge.

At first glance, it appears that a group of travelers have been set upon by Cloudwood brigands. The situation's a bit more complex, though. The carriage men are members of Lorcan Kell's thieves' guild. For the past several months the Family has been making in-roads in the city by playing different criminal groups against each other, and in this situation the Family had convinced a gang of Kell's thieves that they deserve a cut of the banditry going on in the Cloudwood. The dispute got out of control, and members of Kell's gang decided to kidnap **Morena**, the lover of the brigands' leader, **Renard Woodsman**.

After the kidnapping, Renard scrambled his fastest men, headed off the carriage at these switchbacks, and managed to pin down the kidnappers. More of his men are on their way, and they'll all assume the PCs, being outsiders, are hostile. Renard's attention is too closely focused on killing the kidnappers for him to realize at first that Morena's carriage is about to fall and kill her.

Setup.

- ♦ Renard Woodsman
- ♦ 4 Cloudwood Brigands
- ♦ Cloudwood Falconer
- ♦ 4 Hummingbird Huntswarms
- ♦ 2 Kell-Guild Pistoleers

Renard Woodsman	Level 3 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 150
HP 38; Bloodied 19	Initiative +3
AC 15, Fortitude 15, Reflex 15, Will 15	Perception +8
Speed 6, climb 4	
Traits	
► Aeriad Bracers	
If Renard falls, his magic bracers let him shift 1 square for every 10 ft. he falls.	
Standard Actions	
⌚ Longbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic	
<i>The archer's bow creaks as he draws back and aims for you.</i>	
Attack: Ranged 20/40 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10+5 damage.	
⌚ Cloudwood Axe (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic	
<i>You don't have time to admire the folk carvings on his axe's haft as he chops for your face.</i>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8+6 damage, and Renard pushes the target 1 square.	
► Show Your Face, So I Can Put an Arrow There ♦ At-Will	
<i>The archer grimaces and holds an arrow taut, waiting for a clear shot.</i>	
Effect: Renard chooses a creature he doesn't have line of sight to. The next time he has line of sight to that creature before the start of his next turn, he uses <i>longbow</i> and can ignore normal cover and concealment against his chosen target.	
Skills Athletics +7, Intimidate +8, Nature +7, Perception +8, Stealth +8	
Str 13 (+2) Dex 14 (+3) Wis 14 (+3)	
Con 14 (+3) Int 12 (+2) Cha 14 (+3)	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Primordial	

Cloudwood Brigand	Level 1 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 100
HP 30; Bloodied 15	Initiative +4
AC 17, Fortitude 13, Reflex 13, Will 10	Perception +5
Speed 6, climb 4	
Standard Actions	
⌚ Cloudwood Axe (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic	
<i>All these brigands have fine hand-carved axes. Sharp-looking, too.</i>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6+1 damage.	
► Twin Axes (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
<i>These axes look like a matched set.</i>	
Effect: The brigand uses <i>Cloudwood axe</i> twice.	
Triggered Actions	
► Intercepting Lunge ♦ At-Will	
<i>As you make a move for the brigand's ally he leaps in your way and swings his axe.</i>	
Trigger: A creature within 3 squares of the brigand makes a melee or close attack that doesn't target the brigand.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The brigand moves his speed to a space adjacent to both the triggering enemy and its target, then uses <i>Cloudwood axe</i> against the triggering enemy.	
Str 14 (+2) Dex 15 (+2) Wis 10 (+0)	
Con 14 (+2) Int 10 (+0) Cha 10 (+0)	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Primordial	

Cloudwood Falconer	Level 3 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 150
HP 46; Bloodied 23	Initiative +2
AC 15, Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 15	Perception +3
Speed 6, climb 4	
Standard Actions	
⌚ Bow Smash (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10+4 damage.	
Effect: The first time the falconer uses this power, his bow cracks slightly. The second time he uses it, it breaks and can only be used for melee attacks, not ranged attacks.	
✓ Gale Arrow (weapon, thunder) ♦ At-Will	
<i>Thunder rumbles as the druid looses an arrow.</i>	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +6 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d10+4 thunder damage and the falconer slides the target 1 square.	
Effect: The falconer pushes each creature adjacent to him 1 square.	
✓ Blood Arrow (weapon) ♦ Encounter	
<i>A red-fletched arrow twists in the air and flies for your heart.</i>	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d10+4 damage and the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
✱ Earth Surge ♦ Encounter	
<i>The stone beneath you comes alive and heaves you away.</i>	
Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +7 vs. Fort	
Hit: 2d6+5 damage and the target is knocked prone and slid to the nearest square outside the burst.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Minor Actions	
► Cloudburst ♦ At-Will	
<i>The druid waves an irritated hand at a fog bank, and the cloud moves.</i>	
Effect: The druid chooses a cloud bank he can see, and slides it 3 squares.	
Skills Athletics +7, Nature +5, Stealth +7	
Str 12 (+2) Dex 12 (+2) Wis 14 (+3)	
Con 14 (+3) Int 8 (+0) Cha 8 (+0)	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Primordial	

Hummingbird Huntswarm	Level 1 Minion Skirmisher
Small fey beast (swarm)	XP 25
HP 1 (see <i>minion swarm</i>)	Initiative +4
AC 17, Fortitude 10, Reflex 17, Will 10	Perception -1
Speed 0, fly 6	
Traits	
► Minion Swarm	
A ranged or melee attack that does less than 5 damage to the hummingbird huntswarm does not destroy the swarm. Area and close attacks that hit the swarm, or that deal damage on a miss, destroy the swarm.	
Standard Actions	
► Humming Streak ♦ At-Will	
<i>A tiny horde of black and ruby hummingbirds streak by and graze you with jagged beaks.</i>	
Effect: The huntswarm flies its speed and makes the following attack during the movement. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks from its target.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage. If the target is bloodied or taking untyped ongoing damage, the huntswarm enters the target's square and frenzies. While frenzied, it can take no actions but deals 5 damage to the target on its turn. The frenzied swarm stays in the target's square until it is destroyed or subjected to forced movement.	
Str 1 (-5) Dex 18 (+4) Wis 8 (-1)	
Con 10 (+0) Int 2 (-4) Cha 6 (-2)	
Alignment Unaligned Languages —	

Kell-Guild Pistoleer

Level 1 Artillery

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 100

HP 23; Bloodied 11


Initiative +0

AC 13, Fortitude 13, Reflex 13, Will 13

Perception +0

Speed 6

Standard Actions

 **Pistol Whip** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6+2 damage.

 **Pistol Shot** ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+4 damage, or 1d8+12 on a crit.

Special: Load standard.

Minor Actions

► **Kidnap** ♦ At-Will

The pistoleer grabs you and uses you as a human shield.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 13). Until the target escapes, the pistoleer can use the target as cover.

Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 10 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+0)

Con 11 (+0) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Tactics.

Renard and one Cloudwood brigand are perched on the south rise, content to wait for reinforcements to arrive. On the northeast rise a Cloudwood falconer has just summoned four swarms of ruby-red blood-drinking hummingbirds (monsters from the Dreaming are beautiful and weird), and another brigand guards the man's flank as he sends forth his minions to drive the kidnappers from cover.

Another two Cloudwood brigands are approaching from the north, and will reach the map on the start of the 3rd round. They move around the northwest rise in a bid to drive the two surviving kidnappers from cover. The kidnappers spot the PCs and call out for help, but stay in the cover of the wagon, only occasionally popping out to shoot at enemies. Morena is tightly tied up on the floor of the wagon, but she has managed to get her gag loose and cries out in fear.

Development.

At the start of the 2nd, 5th, and 8th round of combat the wagon slides 1 square west. On the 8th turn this movement takes it over the edge, and it plummets 30 ft., dealing 3d10 damage to anyone inside. This mortally wounds Morena, but magical healing or a Heal check (DC 22, multiple attempts possible) can save her if it is administered within 3 rounds.

Keep two of the four Cloudwood brigands off the map until the start of the 3rd round. Unless interrupted, the pair spend rounds 3 and 4 circling around the northwest rise; they plan to reach the kidnappers on their turn in the 5th round.

Cloudwood Switchback



Only after the kidnappers are killed or subdued will Renard listen to the PCs. At that point, it might be possible (Diplomacy DC 22) to get him to stop shooting and call off his men to talk. This becomes much easier (DC 15) if the PCs point out that there's a woman in the carriage in mortal peril and that they can help save her.

Terrain.

The steep granite cliffs of this area have plenty of small trees growing out of them, and can be climbed with an Athletics check (DC 15).

The carriage is 2 squares by 2 squares, and it starts 1 square from the edge of the 30-ft. high cliff at the corner of the switchback. It only falls off the cliff if all its squares are over the edge. As a standard action, a character can slide the carriage 1 square (Strength DC 20) or tip it over (Strength DC 22) or sabotage all four of its wheels (Thievery DC 22) so it stops rolling toward the edge. If a creature tries to move or 'trip' the carriage with an attack, treat it as having AC, Fortitude, and Reflex of 25. Morena is much easier to move.

At the start of the encounter, place three small cloud banks on the map. Each cloud bank is 5 squares across, and creatures inside have concealment from adjacent enemies, or total concealment from non-adjacent enemies. Each round the cloud banks drift 2 squares to the southeast. If one leaves the edge of the map, place a new one somewhere on the opposite side of the map. Perhaps use a token to mark the center of these clouds, and move them each round. A thunder attack used inside a cloud bank destroys it.

Aftermath.

Renard and his men are criminals—they've robbed dozens and killed more than a few in the past year—but they're not specifically hostile to the party. Indeed, killing them will earn the enmity of dozens of other brigands in these woods, and might sabotage efforts to speak with Nevard and Gale.

If the party saves Morena, Renard is willing to escort them to Nevard. If Morena dies, Renard's men have to hold him back from attacking whichever PC he thinks is most to blame. He orders them to leave the forest or suffer his ire, and then he recovers her body and departs. He can be convinced (Diplomacy DC 15) to let the party through to talk to Nevard, and he'll automatically allow in a party with a Skyseer.

For decades Nevard was one of the most prescient and respected skyseers in Risur. Then with the rise of industry and the fading power of the skyseer's visions, his star waned, and he withdrew into the Cloudwood east of Flint to focus on keeping his order alive. Now nearing one hundred and twenty years old, Nevard cannot see the path forward—for the world or for his order.

The old man walks feebly and leans on a plain staff which carries the banner of his family line. His deep voice warbles frailly, but somehow when he speaks the wind hushes so everyone nearby can hear him. He possesses no overt magical power, certainly nothing of use in a fight, but the land and sky respect him and make his passage easy.

He has foreseen that he'll die within the year, but he is conserving his strength, hoping to make one last journey, before he dies, to the peak of Cauldron Hill.



SKYSEER
NEVARD
SECHIM

In either case, though, Renard wants to kill the kidnappers, and persuading him not to (Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 15) becomes much harder (DC 22) if Morena is dead. If the party can't get him to back down, he'll fight them if necessary for the right to kill those who took his love. If the party fails to get his permission to continue on, they'll need to either make Stealth and Nature checks (DC 10), or attract the attention of a patrol of eight brigands.

Treasure.

If the party arrests Renard, they can recover his *aeriad bracers*.

NEVARD'S HENGE

Social. Real-Time. Level 2.

The party seeks an elderly prophet's aid to arrange contact with the fey terrorist Gale.

Uphill from the nearest cluster of homes, a ring of stone plinths stand in a grassy clearing. Normally empty during the day, now a tent sits at the edge of the clearing, and a half dozen caretakers sit outside, waiting for their leader to pass.

Nevard's closest family and followers have brought the old man to live out what they expect will be his dying days near the henge where for most of his life he would watch the stars every night. No single ailment is killing him; his heart is weak, his kidneys failing, his bones brittle, his blood thin. But he has more strength than he lets on, having foreseen he would need to test himself one last time before he dies.

Occasionally Nevard receives visitors who wish to pay their respects, and often his younger skyseer peers come to ask his advice for keeping their order alive. The summer nights are warm enough to sit out and stargaze, but the mountains here are low, and thick clouds, streaked with soot blown out from Flint's factories, obscure accurate views of the night sky. Still, each night Nevard invites his guests to sit with him, hoping to see something of the future.

Nevard's tenders are wary of the PCs unless they come with Renard's recommendation, or include a character with the Skyseer theme. Otherwise they are stopped at the edge of the clearing. The party might persuade (Diplomacy DC 20) the guards that Nevard would want to see them; alternately they might offer medical service (Heal DC 13), or show familiarity enough with skyseer traditions (Nature DC 13) to earn entry.

Failing that, Nevard himself is always interested in talking, and while his tenders try to keep visitors away, if the party makes a commotion Nevard will hear them and invite them into his tent.

A Dying Man's Wish.

Inside the tent, the light from smoldering incense sticks is dim, to spare the old man's eyes. A faint stench of withering cloys the air, not quite masked by fragrant scents of cinnamon and cloves.

Nevard knows that Gale has been causing mayhem in Flint. Indeed, she has come to him several times asking his guidance. She hasn't listened to him much, which makes him chuckle. But the last time she visited she said she had followed his advice and had found a mutual threat that even the people of Flint would take seriously.

Nevard might not agree with Gale's tactics, but he likes her because she's one of the few beautiful women who'll give an old man like him

more than polite conversation, and she always is accompanied by the sweet music of birds. He hopes she'll be able to get people to listen to her warnings, and he would like if the party could help her, but he is wary of betraying her trust. He says he can easily arrange for Gale to meet with them—she owes him that much—but he'll only do it if the party can grant him his dying wish.

He wants to go to the peak of Cauldron Hill, the highest point in the city, with the clearest skies and the strongest font of magical power. There he thinks he might be able to pierce the strange veil that seems to have fallen over the vision of the skyseers. He wants to find a path that can let people like Gale and those pushing for industry walk together in harmony.

But Cauldron Hill is firstly restricted, and only Reed Macbannin, the mayor of the Nettles district and a mage skilled in the defense against the dark arts, can grant anyone access. Secondly, the reason it's restricted is because it is probably the most dangerous and cursed place in the country, so even if Nevard can go there, he'll need armed protectors.

Nevard wants the PCs to arrange for he and they to climb to the peak of Cauldron Hill and spend an evening. It's not unprecedented; Macbannin and some of his apprentices go there to keep eyes out for threats before they get out of hand, and occasionally the military trains elite warriors atop the mountain. With the right wards from Macbannin, it could even be safe.

The PCs can easily arrange an appointment to meet with Macbannin, if they're willing to help Nevard.

A Witch's Brew.

One of Nevard's allies—an orc shaman from Ber named **Pazamu**—possesses a scroll of a forbidden ritual, Bond of Forced Faith, originally used by the witches of Cauldron Hill to make themselves nigh invincible in battle. It binds the life forces of one or more people to the ritual's target, so that one person can share the health and vigor of the others.

If the PCs approve, the day of the climb Pazamu will perform the ritual. Each willing PC sheds a drop of blood into a cup of milk, and Nevard drinks. Then, for the next 24 hours, Nevard will be able to climb and move with the health of a normal adult person, and damage that would be dealt to him is instead divided evenly (rounded down, minimum 1 apiece) among those bonded to him.

The ritual is written on a scroll of human flesh with invisible ink made from the blood of an infant sacrifice and the milk of its also-sacrificed mother. Neither Pazamu nor Nevard mention these unpleasant details, but a PC observing the ritual might (Arcana DC 20) recognize the abhorrent history of the magic. The scroll is a centuries-old relic, and will be consumed with the casting; Nevard prefers it be used for good rather than the horrors it was originally intended for.

Refusal.

If the PCs decline, Nevard eventually manages to arrange for Gale and some of her allies to sneak him to the top of Cauldron Hill. He still uses the Bond of Forced Faith ritual, and without the PCs to draw Macbannin's attention, he is not set upon by Cillian Creed's sabotage. He schedules his rally to reveal his vision, as detailed in Thread Four: The Conspiracy.

NESTLED ATOP THE NETTLES

Social. Real-Time. Level 7.

Nettles district mayor Reed Macbannin holds the key to fulfilling Nevard's wishes.

The one quality road in The Nettles curves around Cauldron Hill, heading up to the manor of Mayor Reed Macbannin, located a thousand feet up the twenty-three hundred foot high mountain. Here the gentle slope of the lower mountain turns to a steeper and rockier rise of stone, making Macbannin's rich manor the gatekeeper between the slum homes of thousands and the cursed mountaintop.

The compound's high iron fence surrounds a manor house, servant houses, a stable and a track for horses, a carriage house, a red-brick gardener's building, and overall beautiful landscaping with myriad flowers. Macbannin employs fifty regular staff, and all of them have received at least rudimentary training to understand the dangers of the eldritch magic further up the mountain.

While it's possible to bypass the manor and attempt a more perilous climb, stories of people coming back down changed and evil are enough to keep most fools from trying. Also, throughout the day Macbannin's guards patrol a ring around the mountain with hunting dogs to check for signs of people who have snuck through.

Secrets and Sorcery.

Any person who sits as mayor of The Nettles must have the approval of the previous mayor and the city governor. He is not elected to his position. A lattice of wards, assembled over centuries, protects the rest of the city from the dangers of old witchcraft, and whoever oversees these wards must be skilled in defensive magic and be trusted not to be corrupted by undead spirits of the witches who once ruled there.

Macbannin is not corrupted, simply deceived. He believes his actions are sanctioned by the king, and so he acts with patriotic zeal to protect the king's secrets. By the time the PCs come to him, he has already learned from Cillian Creed about the theft of documents from the Danoran consulate, and that the PCs are investigating the crime. Knowing their reputation after the events in Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*, Macbannin can't take the chance that the PCs will simply fail to solve the mystery.

Macbannin sees their coming to his own doorstep as a great fortune. He sees a chance to kill the party without suspicion, thus ending the investigation. While he laments having to kill loyal subjects of the king, he believes he acts for the greater good.

The Courier.

When word of the consulate theft reached Governor Roland Stanfield, head of the Colossus Cell in Flint, he contacted the leader of the Obscurati, Nicodemus the Gnostic. Governor Stanfield has used *needlewire*, a magic serum, to transfer Nicodemus's consciousness remotely into a middle-aged human vagrant. A quick shave and bath later, Nicodemus assumed the role of a simple courier named **Doro**, ferrying messages between Reed Macbannin on Cauldron Hill and Leone Quital *beneath* Cauldron Hill in the Bleak Gate.

Nicodemus uses a secret system of arches along the Stanfield Canal to pass between the two worlds, and in the past few days he's gotten on top of the threat to their project's secrecy. Even Macbannin and Quital don't realize he's anything more than a trusted courier of Governor Stanfield, and indeed in a matter of hours Nicodemus plans to kill this body and return to the Obscurati palace in the Crisillyir city of Vendricce.

When the PCs arrive to speak with Macbannin, Cillian Creed—in his role as the manor’s butler—asks the party to take a seat in the garden in front of the house. A few minutes later Nicodemus finishes delivering a message to Macbannin about how Quital is sending over some of his soldiers to help recover the missing Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen. (If this event, see *A Weight of Crumbling Stone*, page xx, has already occurred, the meeting instead is to discuss how to resolve the doctor, and whether to recruit him or execute him.)

Creed goes to inform Macbannin of the party’s arrival, and Nicodemus stops in the garden for a moment. He lights a cigarette—known as *leaf of Nicodemus*—and nods to the party. His gaze is drawn to the slums stretching out across the nearby hillsides, and he shakes his head as he exhales a huff of smoke.

“Can you imagine what it’s like to live down there?” he asks, almost rhetorically. “Chaos, that’s what it is. The mayor,” he nods his head back toward the house, “he could come up with the most brilliant plan to help those people. He could get all the money in the city’s coffers. He could do everything right, but he’s just one man. Not a cog in a machine, but a pebble on a beach. Chaos.”

He takes another draw on the cigarette, then smiles. “It’s beautiful, what people can create out of chaos. But I’d gladly give it up to stop their suffering.”

At that point a groom comes up, guiding Nicodemus’s horse. If any PC makes an effort to engage him in a discussion of morals or ideology, the mastermind can spare a few minutes, long enough to finish his cigarette. Soon Cillian Creed comes to the garden to say the mayor is ready to meet them, and Nicodemus mounts up, lights another cigarette, and departs.

The Meeting.

Macbannin invites the party into his office, its rear window facing the higher slope of Cauldron Hill. As the party says their piece, the butler serves whatever the PCs desire from the mayor’s supplies of tea, wine, coffee, and sweets. Macbannin listens to their request with a grim expression, ponders the possibilities, then grins and says that he’ll be glad to help.

He speaks with a convincing enthusiasm about how he hopes Nevard is actually able to avert further attacks by Gale, and that he thinks it will help his district if people know that he helped make it happen. If any of the PCs seem particularly interested in the history of Cauldron Hill and in defense against dark magic, he intimates that after this is all over, he’d be interested in taking the PC under his wing to teach them more; he says he expects the PC will go far, and he wants to leave a good legacy through his students.

Unless the PCs go to extra lengths to observe Macbannin in other situations, they shouldn’t get any hint that he’s up to anything nefarious. He’s quite experienced at telling these lies, so seeing through them is wildly unlikely. If the party gets a vibe from him that he’s not being completely sincere, it’s easy for them to chalk it up to him just trying to find an angle that will benefit his public standing.

Defense Against the Dark Arts.

Macbannin is willing to give the PCs one night on the mountain, and he insists that they come through his manor on the way up and the way down. They should ascend during the day and make camp at the peak before nightfall.

He will provide them each with a slightly rusted iron amulet, which they must wear to protect from possession by evil spirits. He’ll also give them four kegs of goat’s blood, which they must use to paint a ring of

red around wherever they make camp. Spirits are distracted by blood, and the color red in general. They will likely smell the party, but when they spot the blood they’ll believe they’ve found the trail of a wounded animal, after which they’ll mindlessly walk in circles since they’ll never find the end of the ring.

It’s not flawless. If the PCs don’t stay out of sight, the denizens of the Hill will pay more heed to a moving creature than a trail of blood. Also, while a dim fire will be useful because of the supernatural chill on the mountaintop, he suggests the party surround the fire with stones to hide its light.

The weather should be clear for the next few days, so they don’t have to worry about rain washing the blood away, but they should be careful not to mess up the ring themselves.

These recommendations are all legitimately useful. Macbannin plans to arrange the party’s deaths, but he doesn’t want it to be obvious that he was tricking them if somehow they survive.

He adds that on the way down, the party should come back through his manor. He’ll have a purification ritual prepared so he can clear away any dark energy that might be clinging to them. Macbannin plans this as a fallback way to kill the PCs, but events will conspire to keep him from following through on that plan.

AMULET MECHANICS

The amulets have no real mechanical effect, and they simply keep the PCs from being possessed by the barrage of supernatural energy on the mountaintop. They’re no use against domination or other attacks from the monsters that await them. Also, their enchantment only works in conjunction with the lattice of wards on the hill, and so they’re useless elsewhere.

If any PC takes off his amulet at night atop the mountain, he is afflicted with the Curse of Cauldron Hill.

Curse of Cauldron Hill

Level 5 Affliction

Stage 0: The PC recovers from the curse.

Stage 1: Initial Effect: If the PC is at less than full health, he treats his allies as enemies for the purpose of making opportunity attacks. While within 1 mile of the Cauldron Hill, he must make opportunity attacks against any creature, except those also afflicted with the curse.

Stage 2: In addition to the initial effect, the PC gains darkvision. He cannot take rests except during the day. If he tries to rest at night he loses consciousness and sleepwalks for 5 minutes, during which his body is controlled by a malevolent spirit. If the spirit takes any hostile action, the PC wakes up.

Stage 3: Final State: In addition to the previous effect, at night if the PC tries to rest he becomes fully controlled by the malevolent spirit until sunrise. It quickly begins to rampage, seeking to spill as much blood as possible, and the PC does not wake during these actions. However, it cannot move more than 5 miles from Cauldron Hill, and must return as quickly as possible if it is already farther away.

Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes a Wisdom check if it is at stage 1 or 2.

13 or lower: The stage of the disease increases by one.

14–19: No Change

20 or higher: The stage of the disease decreases by one.

NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN

Puzzle. Montage. Level 3.

The perils of Cauldron Hill will emerge at sundown, but will the party's wards be sufficient?

When the PCs ascend Cauldron Hill with Nevard, Mayor Macbannin offers them amulets of protection and kegs of goat's blood, then sends them on their way. The RHC can provide climbing kits, and in general the ascent is not particularly challenging. After an hour or two of climbing, the PCs reach the summit, a mix of rocky patches and dense treecover, with only scattered grasses and undergrowth.

The view is majestic, but from this height it's easy to see how thick the smog is over Parity Lake. A gray smear covers most of that district, while the upscale Central district on the other side of the Nettles is clearer and brighter. Nevard, though, looks upward. He smiles as a warm breeze blows his robes and beard, and he nods happily at the clear view of the sky.

The peak is long, narrow, and relatively flat, with a traversible slope to the east, but perilously steep drops of a thousand feet or more on the other three sides. If the PCs explore, in addition to scattered old bones of what look like human fingers, they can find a small black cauldron caught in a tangle of brush, down fifty feet on a rocky lip on the north face. It must have fallen centuries ago, but it has resisted rust. The climb down is difficult without rope (Athletics DC 21), and the cauldron weighs about forty pounds, but it can be hoisted fairly easily. The *cracked cauldron* is detailed on page xx.

Before Sunset.

The PCs should pick an area up to 10 squares in diameter to surround with their ring of blood. An ideal place is amid the toppled hengestones of the western rise, now grown over with grass, which would let the party make a fire for warmth without revealing themselves. It also provides an excellent view of the surrounding terrain, and has the least obstructed view of the sky, which Nevard appreciates.

There are several ways the party can better prepare for the trial ahead of them:

- ♦ **Camouflage.** The clever arrangement of stones, branches, and leaves (Stealth DC 13) can create a screen for the party to hide behind, granting a +2 bonus to Stealth checks against monsters outside the ring.
- ♦ **Hear our Prayers.** Whoever puts out the blood might want to reinforce it with defensive spells and prayers (Arcana or Religion DC 13), which can grant the same benefit as camouflage. If both are present, increase the bonus to +5.
- ♦ **Snares.** A PC might try to set a few snares (Thievery DC 13). Within reason, a PC probably doesn't have supplies for more than three or four snares unless they made a point of stocking up earlier. Each snare is a one-use trap: **Trigger:** A creature enters the square, **Atk:** +5 vs. Reflex, **Hit:** Target is grabbed (Escape DC 15).
- ♦ **Traps.** By using a weapon and some ropes and wood, it might be possible to make a trap (Thievery DC 13): **Trigger:** A creature enters the square, **Atk:** +5 vs. AC, **Hit:** 1d6+3 damage.
- ♦ **Magic.** Rituals like *endure elements* would mitigate the need for Endurance checks when the temperature drops at nightfall. *Silence* impose a -10 penalty on monster's Perception checks to notice sounds within the area. Later in the evening simple spells like *mage hand* or *prestidigitation* can help keep the ring of blood pristine, and *light* can distract monsters.

SEEKING A VISION

Skyseers normally watch the stars, then sleep so that the subtleties of what they saw will be translated into dream visions. Those of great skill such as Nevard can sometimes foretell the future while awake, just by tracking the interaction of the stars, planets, and other influences most people are blind to.

Any PC who is protecting Nevard through the Bond of Forced Faith ritual will also see glimpses of a vision later in the night.

- ♦ **Fake Camp.** Alternately, the PCs could bring up a few live goats, stake them to the ground on the eastern rise, and lure off a few monsters with a free meal.

Nightfall.

The sun descends brilliantly, gleaming off the waters of Flint Harbor, though the light is dulled by a haze across the city. Buildings far below cast long shadows in the streets. The darkness grows, consumes the city, and for a moment the mountain top is the only thing still illuminated. Then the night claims it as well.

City lights smear out below the party, but overhead the stars are brilliant and clear. Nevard says that he must study the stars for as long as possible, and that in the morning he will sleep.

Within an hour the air drops from the warmth of a tropical summer to a soul-chilling winter freeze. The wind fluctuates wildly, sometimes eerily still, then bursting with gusts that shake every tree on the mountaintop. Moans slide across the peak like waves, and when the wailing wind quiets, the party can hear suddenly-dry leaves cracking underfoot, and erratic bursts of malevolent laughter further down the slope.

Characters with the Spirit Medium theme can hear voices all around, but as long as he wears his amulet the sound is muted, like a party down the street. If anyone without the Spirit Medium theme takes off his amulet, he hears the wild music of spirits wailing in chorus while horns and strings cross dissonantly. If a Spirit Medium takes off his amulet, he's stunned for a round as the whole mountain screams insanely and imprints flashing images of bonfires and silhouettes of humans being sacrificed atop the mountain.

The PCs start to see shadows moving in the trees, creeping upward toward the peak. Wispy white spirits circle and swoop lazily to the silent music, and though they do not seem to see the PCs, slowly more and more float by them, as if attracted by a scent. Then the actual monsters show up. First something that looks like a semi-transparent legless man, its head just a bare skull, crawls hand over hand toward the PC's camp. It's hard to make out details in the dark, but it stops when it reaches the ring of blood, and then it turns to follow. Eager, maddened chuckling comes from the thing, like it's excited about an imminent meal.

Then a crowd of foot-high goblin-like spectres approach from the other direction, cavorting and jumping in wild circles like it's a celebration. They suddenly stop when they spot the ring of paint, and they too start to follow it, gibbering to each other in Abyssal. In the following minutes they're joined by horned vestiges of tiefling-like demons, a growling lion whose head is framed by a cluster of writhing snakes, bat-winged rats whose screeching rattles your heads, and more—all of them barely visible, like they're pressing up against a veil trying to reach into this world.

None of them cross the ring, but within an hour the party is surrounded on all sides by crowds of monsters, all of them mindlessly tracing endless circles in search of something to devour.

Vigilance.

The party must overcome several threats to make it through the night. For each of these, describe the threat, then let the players describe how they address the threat. If they have a solid plan, they can avoid a skill check, but otherwise they must make checks to avoid negative consequences.

- ♦ The first threat is the cold. Have each PC make an Endurance check (DC 21, or DC 9 if they have a fire) or lose a healing surge.
- ♦ The next challenge is staying hidden. Have each PC make a Stealth check (DC 9, or DC 13 if they have a fire). If any PC fails, one of the monsters perks its head up and looks into the circle as if it can't quite see the party. Only if half the party or more fails will the monster decide to break off from chasing the ring of blood in order to enter the circle.
- ♦ Third is the hours-long, mind-eroding cacophony of wails on the wind. Those who take no precautions lose a healing surge from psychic damage, but it's possible to mitigate the danger with magic (Arcana DC 13), traditional chants (Religion DC 13), crafting earplugs (makes the PC deafened), or singing a more upbeat tune. Singing automatically helps the whole party, and the monsters are too obsessed with tracking the blood ring to tell a human song from an insane demon mountain song.

The Vision.

Occasionally unnatural drowsiness will slide across one PC, or another will hear eerie horns playing in the night, while a third PC spots

an impossible oddity, like a mirror image of the party sitting on the opposite rise.

Then an apparition manifests in the center of the circle of blood: a velvet red curtain hovers in the air, looking completely solid, glowing as if hit by a spotlight that doesn't exist. The curtain sways, and there seem to be figures on the other side.

After a moment, or if anyone goes toward the curtain, Nilasa steps out before they can go in.

Nilasa puts a hushing finger to her lips, then points out into the night and says, "The man who killed me is coming. His face is scarred, so he hides behind many faces." Then she raises a featureless black mask to her face. When she puts it on she fades away, as does the curtain. The air is suddenly thick with the stench of burnt engine grease.

The following vision appears to everyone who bound their blood to Nevard.

The stars overhead seem to streak in lines as time stretches out, and then to the north, down by Parity Lake, a building catches fire with dreamlike swiftness. Suddenly you find yourselves standing between two factories, and two tongues of flame leap from one to the the next, like a pair of burning dragons. Screams erupt from the people trapped inside, the conflagration consumes the factories, and the charred buildings collapse to reveal tomorrow morning's sunrise. A blackened sign sits in the ash, saying "Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings."



Then the vision ends with a snap, and they're again standing on the black peak of Cauldron Hill. Nevard, still looking to the stars, gives a knowing hum. He points up at a red star.

"Jiese, the plane of fire, is brighter tonight than usual. Its light reflects off the lake. You saw it, didn't you?"

It's still unclear whether they're awake or dreaming when a man cries out for help from the dark beyond the ring. It sounds like he's been set upon by monsters, but Nevard shakes his head and warns you not to step out of the ring. The screams last for hours.

A RING OF BLOOD

Action. Tactical. Level 5.

A sinister figure sabotages the party's defenses and unleashes the spectral horrors of Cauldron Hill.

Slightly after midnight, during a lull in the mad dance of the spooks and monsters, any PC whose Passive Perception beats 21 notices something moving through the crowd of monsters perhaps a hundred feet away, on the other rise. Somehow less feral and wild, more deliberate in its movements, one would almost think it's a man, but the monsters aren't accosting it. They lose sight of it a moment later, and a minute passes. If any PC is so bold to venture forth, they can possibly thwart a disaster about to happen.

Almost imperceptible above the cacophony of spirits, the party hears the crack of a sunrod against stone. A brilliant glow lights up the mountaintop, shedding bright light in a 20-square radius. All the monsters surrounding the ring of blood turn to look.

A humanoid figure holds the sunrod, its body inhumanly angular, its skin featureless and black like a silhouette. It sprints to the near edge of the other rise and then hurls the sunrod. The glowing beacon arcs and then hits right in the center of the PCs' camp. As one, the monsters surrounding the blood ring lock eyes on the party and attack.

The Shadow Man.

The hostile figure is Cillian Creed in his normal form—without his illusory disguise. Macbannin gave him stronger wards than the PCs'; infused with the essence of the Bleak Gate, he incurs no attacks from the shadow monsters. He has three other sunrods, and will throw them at the party's camp to keep the PCs from simply throwing the light away before the monsters attack. He doesn't feel safe enough alone on the mountain to actually attack the PCs, and if the PCs hit him, especially with radiant attacks, he'll flee into the darkness. You can find his stats on page xx, but he's not a real combatant in this scene.

Spooks.

The main threats are four powerful monsters, but the mountain is filled with countless other creatures. While they could easily slaughter the PCs here, our assumption is that most of the dangerous creatures are far enough away that they won't make it to the party during the course of the fight. Either during or after the fight, the PCs should throw the sunrod(s) elsewhere on the mountaintop, which creates enough of a disturbance that they can escape.

However, to keep up the tension, you should liberally scatter Cauldron Hill spooks across the mountaintop. These are feeble minions, and act more like hazardous terrain than creatures. Start with twice as many as there are PCs in the party, but add two more every round the party's

camp is brightly illuminated, creating a tension of whether to throw away the light, or to keep it so you can see what you're fighting. They move slowly, but in huge numbers they can't be ignored.

Setup.

- ♦ Nevard Sechim, Dying Skyseer
- ♦ 10 Cauldron Hill Spooks
- ♦ Cackling Crawler
- ♦ Serpent-Maned Lion
- ♦ Hag Wraith
- ♦ Vestige of Death

Nevard Sechim, Dying Skyseer

Medium natural humanoid, human

HP 20; Bloodied 10

Initiative +3

AC 13, Fortitude 7, Reflex 13, Will 18

Perception +6

Speed 6, forestwalk

Traits

► Enchanted Age

The old seer moves with an enchanted vigor.

When under the effects of the Bond of Forced Faith ritual, Nevard gains a +5 bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution-based checks. All damage that would be dealt to him is instead divided evenly among the creatures he is bonded to (rounded down, minimum 1 point per creature).

Standard Actions

► Look Skyward ♦ At-Will

Nevard glances to the stars, and offers a soft word of guidance.

Effect: Nevard chooses an ally within 5 squares. The ally chooses an attack power he knows, rolls 1d20, and marks the result. The next time the ally would make an attack roll for that power during this encounter, he must instead use the rolled result. If the power has multiple targets or attack rolls, only the first roll is replaced.

When the ally uses the rolled result, he can still apply effects and powers to modify the attack roll. For example, a human could still use *human perseverance*, an elf could still use *elfen accuracy*, a warlord's *tactical presence* would still grant a bonus if the ally used an action point to use the power, and an avenger would still roll a second die and pick the better of the two results.

A given ally can only benefit from this power once per encounter.

Skills Arcana +12, Insight +14, Nature +12, Religion +12

Str 4 (−3) **Dex** 4 (−3) **Wis** 22 (+6)

Con 4 (−3) **Int** 16 (+3) **Cha** 16 (+3)

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven, Giant, Primordial

Cauldron Hill Spook

Level 0 Minion Brute

Small shadow beast

XP 5

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion

Initiative +4

AC 13, Fortitude 13, Reflex 13, Will 11

Perception −1

Speed 2, fly 2

Darkvision

Traits

☼ Pandemonic Dance ♦ Aura 1

Spectral goblins, swooping bats, tiny horned men, baying hounds, and disembodied heads scamper and dance in a slow, endless horde, ascending to the peak of Cauldron Hill. When one of these spooks spots a mortal creature it drags the poor soul into the throng of cavorting horrors.

Any enemy that ends its turn within the aura takes 2 damage. The spook treats any creature that is brightly illuminated, even other monsters, as if they are enemies.

Str 1 (−5) **Dex** 18 (+4) **Wis** 8 (−1)

Con 10 (+0) **Int** 2 (−4) **Cha** 6 (−2)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** —

Cackling Crawler

Level 5 Brute

Medium shadow animate (undead)

XP 200

HP 75; **Bloodied** 37

Initiative +3

AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17

Perception -2

Speed 6, climb 4

Darkvision

Immune poison

Traits

► Legless Laughter

This half-a-corpse drags itself with unnatural speed, and its bare skull chuckles constantly at the thought of an imminent meal.

The crawler is prone and cannot stand. It does not grant combat advantage to melee attacks for being prone, and it moves at its full speed. Ranged attacks against it take a -2 penalty.

Standard Actions

☞ **Clamber** ♦ At-Will, Basic

The corpse yanks at your legs, crawls up your body, and pulls you about before you manage to shake it off.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10+5 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 17) and grants combat advantage until it escapes.

✓ **Maddened Glee** (psychic) ♦ At-Will

The skull's eyeless gaze burrows through the crumbling wall of your mind as its laughter reaches a lunatic crescendo.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Will

Hit: The target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage that lasts until the crawler is no longer adjacent.

Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 3 (-2)

Con 15 (+4) **Int** 3 (-2) **Cha** 6 (+0)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** —

Serpent-Maned Lion

Level 5 Brute

Medium shadow beast

XP 200

HP 72; **Bloodied** 36

Initiative +5

AC 17, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17

Perception +2

Speed 6

Darkvision

Traits

☼ **Snapping Fangs** (poison) ♦ Aura 1

A writhing mass of flicking tongues and venom-slick fangs frame the lion's fierce visage.

Any enemy that ends its turn within the aura takes 3 poison damage.

Standard Actions

☞ **A Thousand Bites** (poison) ♦ At-Will, Basic

The lion's teeth dig in, and then countless serpents in its mane bare their fangs and strike.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

☞ **Claw** ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 damage, and the target cannot regain HP until the end of the lion's next turn.

► **Prideful Fury** ♦ At-Will

Requirement: The lion must be bloodied.

Effect: The lion uses a *thousand bites* and *claw*.

Minor Actions

► **Wake the Mountain** (fear) ♦ Encounter

The lion roars, raising the hair on your neck and shaking the trees of the entire mountaintop. A chorus of wails, shrieks, and hisses swirl around you in reply.

Effect: Every enemy within a mile is immobilized (save ends).

Str 19 (+6) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+2)

Con 12 (+3) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 6 (+0)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** —

Hag Wraith

Level 5 Controller

Medium shadow humanoid (undead)

XP 200

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21

Initiative +6

AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18

Perception +3

Speed 6, fly 4 (clumsy)

Darkvision

Resist insubstantial; **Immune** poison; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

► Nightmare Rider

The wraith clings to your back with emaciated arms, riding you and carrying you as she flies through the night.

When the wraith is adjacent to a creature it has dominated, it gains a +3 bonus to all defenses and whenever it moves it takes the dominated creature with it.

Standard Actions

☞ **Kiss of Worms** (charm, psychic) ♦ At-Will, Basic

The wraith forces you into a horrid embrace and vomits worms through your unwilling lips.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Will

Hit: 1d6+3 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

✓ **Rancid Allure** (charm) ♦ Recharge when no enemy is dominated by this power
Your nostrils are thick with the stench of curdled milk poured upon viscera and shit, but to you it is an irresistible perfume.

Attack: Ranged 3 (one immobilized or dazed creature); +8 vs. Will

Hit: The hag pulls the target 3 squares, and the target is dominated (save ends).

Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+3)

Con 15 (+4) **Int** 15 (+4) **Cha** 22 (+8)

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial

Vestige of Death

Level 5 Lurker

Medium shadow humanoid (devil, undead)

XP 200

HP 34; **Bloodied** 17

Initiative +6

AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 15

Perception +3

Speed 2, fly 8

Darkvision

Immune poison; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

► Reaching Through the Veil

Barely able to enter the world in life, this vestige of an otherworldly hooded horror can only reach through the veil long enough to strike and vanish.

The vestige is removed from play when it isn't its turn. It cannot ready actions or delay.

When a creature has one shroud it can see the vestige even when it's removed from play, but cannot affect it. When the creature has two shrouds it can affect the vestige, but its attacks do half damage. When the creature has three shrouds it can affect the vestige normally.

If the vestige is surrounded by a ring of gold (such as if it is grabbed by a golden garrote), it cannot leave play.

Standard Actions

► **Caress of Death** (fire) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Purple fire flickers on the devil's scaled hand as it brushes your cheek. The world darkens briefly as if a veil had been pulled across your soul.

Effect: One creature adjacent to the vestige takes 5 fire damage and gains a shroud.

✓ **Reaper's Scythe** (necrotic) ♦ At-Will

A bone-white scythe appears in the vestige's grip, and it delivers a killing slice.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature with three or more shrouds); +10 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target takes 5d12 necrotic damage.

Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+3)

Con 15 (+4) **Int** 5 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+9)

Alignment Evil **Languages** understands Abyssal

Tactics.

Nevard offers his *look skyward* guidance early and then just tries to stay out of harm's way.

The cackling crawler goes after someone who looks easy to grab, while the serpent-maned lion tries to get into the center of as many enemies as possible. The hag wraith and vestige of death each try to go after targets who aren't in melee. If the whole party is in melee, they strike for Nevard, creating a second front. The spooks just swarm toward the sound of battle, or toward light.

The monsters are all designed to make standing still in the "safety" of the ring of blood actually be a bad idea, so Nevard might suggest that they move. None of the monsters can push, so luring them to the edge of a cliff and shoving them off is a smart move.

Terrain.

Whenever a PC becomes bloodied, mark the square he was in. Those squares, as well as any square of the original ring of blood, counts as difficult terrain for the monsters, since they struggle to resist the temptation of food.

Aftermath.

Once the major monsters are defeated and the sunrod removed, there are no more attacks, though the PCs do get a feeling like something huge and invisible is standing over them, watching their every movement. Then a shooting star streaks across the sky, and the ominous sensation passes.

Nevard suggests, as casually as if he were recommending a coat for cold weather, that it might be a good time to leave. He believes he has seen enough, and he needs to rest to understand what it all means. Also, he asks the PCs pay heed to the vision of the fire dragon at the factory, and see if they can help his nephew Heward (see page xx). With a bright light source like the sunrods drawing attention elsewhere, the hour climb back down is safe.

WHERE'S THE ARSON?

The Arson & Alkahest encounter is in Thread Four, on page xx.

A VISION FOR SKYSEERS.

If a PC in your group has the Skyseer theme, they have the following vision the next time they sleep.

You sit in a field of grass, the night sky overhead, the planets hanging huge and low. Breeze whips the grass across your skin, and a tiger stalks you, somewhere out in the dark.

A light flares overhead, an old blue star called Mishados, and it begins to drift downward. Not to the horizon, but toward the earth. Then other stars rattle, like grains of sand shaken loose from a wet glass, and their descent turns to a plummet, turns to a streaking rain of light.

They fall in all directions, but you know where Mishados will fall, and you know you must catch it.

This vision foretells events that occur in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*. If the PC is curious about Mishados and researches its history, he learns it is named after an incarnation of the dead goddess Srasama. Said to have been a healer, the blue-skinned dog-faced Mishados waits in the heavens for when she'll be called to restore Srasama to life.

DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

Social. Real-Time. Level 3.

Bedlam grips the Macbannin manor as you make your way down the mountain.

The PCs might rush past this scene on their way to the alkahest factory arson. If so, make note of which PCs don't get Macbannin's purification ritual; later Gale will detect the stench of the Bleak Gate on them.

Military Response.

Guards at the rear gate to the manor let the PCs in, but before they get far they're intercepted by Mayor Macbannin and a squad of heavily armed soldiers in green and black night operation uniforms. Led by one **Lieutenant Dale**, the soldiers were ordered up Cauldron Hill an hour ago when a sudden bright light appeared on the top of the mountain. The soldiers have swords drawn and defensive totems strapped to their shields, and they watch the party warily.

Macbannin tries to explain it all as a silly mix-up on his part. He didn't think to notify the military that people would be on the mountain, and he was as surprised as anyone when a bright light suddenly appeared. He asks the PCs to explain everything, and—after checking the party's amulets and convincing Lieutenant Dale that the PCs aren't possessed—he asks them into his manor, where he can purify them of ill energy.

Originally Macbannin planned to have the PCs disarm and disrobe, and then he would "purify" one PC at a time with a soporific poison. Once they were all asleep he'd take them down to his laboratory, slit their throats, and wait for a convenient time to dispose of the bodies.

That plan isn't an option now, so to keep up appearances Macbannin performs an actual ritual—it takes just 10 minutes—to clear away energies of the Bleak Gate. If any PC did take off his amulet and mentions it, Macbannin can also perform a *remove affliction* ritual. Macbannin's too busy to do the normal full suite of precautionary divinations, so a PC who doesn't mention taking off his amulet can slip through and keep his curse active.

Reinforcements.

Lieutenant Dale and his squad are all dressed up with nowhere to go. If the party asks nicely (Diplomacy DC 13) they can get Dale to send along one man with the PCs to check out the arson vision. If they're very convincing (Diplomacy DC 21), all five of them will go along. Treat them as Allied Soldiers (see page xx).



CILLIAN
CREED

Creed served as an overseas operative of the RHC, but took an early retirement after suffering a disfiguring facial wound in the last war. A master of disguise and illusions, Creed chooses to wear his former face in most occasions, now more necessary than before due to a recent change in his "condition."

Willing to follow any orders to defend his homeland no matter how heinous, Creed was recruited by Reed Macbannin to help keep a weapons research program secret. One experiment in refining the essence of the Bleak Gate into an oil form went awry, and Creed was infused with shadow magic. Now he can shift into an incorporeal form of living darkness, or reach out and attack others through their shadows. Several layers of illusions and wards allow him to pass as normal.

If any PC has the Martial Scientist theme, they know of Dale and vice versa. He attended the Battalion academy, and his thesis was *Meditation, Coffee, and Cherry Pie: Unorthodox Salves Against the Supernatural*.

AUDIENCE WITH THE WIND

Exposition. Real-Time. Level 5.

Gale, leader of an organization of fey terrorists, agrees to meet with the party, and can offer critical clues to the real threat to the city.

Some time during the day after Nevard and the party ascend Cauldron Hill, a sudden breeze gusts over them, and a yellow canary flies a circle around them. The breeze speaks with a woman's voice, elegant and tinged with a Danoran accent.

"Your character comes recommended by a dear friend of mine. At his suggestion, I would like to arrange a meeting so you and I may discuss a mutual enemy. Speak to the wind a time that is convenient for you, preferably within the next two days, and my canary will guide you when you are ready. The meeting will occur in my territory, because while I trust my dear friend, I confess I find him a poor judge of character. After all, he associates with me."

The wind lingers for a minute or two, then swirls away and flies off invisibly. The canary stays near the PCs, but isn't a nuisance, and can be stuck in a cage fairly easily. Observation can reveal (Arcana DC 20) that it is a magical effect, and that it's probably remembering what the party is doing, but it will have to return to Gale to deliver the information.

A Convenient Time.

An hour before the time the PCs stated, the canary starts singing and trying to get the party's attention to head out. It guides them to the Cloudwood, down wild trails and up lush hills, before finally stopping at the top of a three hundred-foot high waterfall with a clear view of the eastern horizon. Natives of Flint will recognize the cascade as the *Bridal Veil*, a romantic icon of folk poetry and the site of several famous weddings.

An eladrin woman just over 100 years old, Hana spent most of her life as the property of House Soliogn, a family of Danoran mine owners. Having always felt an affinity to the fey history of Risur, Hana fled Danor a year ago and found her way to Flint, where her innate magical powers awakened. Initially sheltered by druids in the Cloudwood, once she learned to control her gifts she turned them toward revenge upon the Danorans. Gale can fly at will, control winds, and speak with birds, but has no directly offensive magic, so her tactics have relied on stealth and mobility to disrupt industrial endeavors that have backing from Danorans.

Gale has a huge chip on her shoulder and is highly distrustful of strangers. She has increased her attacks lately, ever since the defeat of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale proved to her that Risur's rulers are just minions of Danor. With the aid of fey servants of the Unseen Court she is able to slip into the Dreaming when truly threatened, but so far the Unseen Court refuses to grant her an audience.



HANA
"GALE"
SOLIOGN

FIGHTING GALE

If the PCs attack, Gale leaps off the cliff and down the waterfall. After falling two hundred feet she soars away. She doesn't fight back.

Gale has a larger role and may engage in combat in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*; her stats are not presented herein. If you need something in a pinch, create a level 10 elite skirmisher that can fly.

The river that feeds the waterfall rolls over a eighty-foot wide cliff, spreading the cascade into a thin sheet that at dawn can illuminate the whole valley with the sun's reflection. Wildflowers wreath the cliffs and dot the few boulders that hang near the falls' edge. Hummingbirds flit about, and they seem to pay close attention to the party's presence.

Gale emerges from the treeline on the opposite shore of the waterfall, and she holds out a hand. The canary that guided the party flies to her, and when it touches her hand it disappears. If the party hasn't made any hostile moves, Gale then steps off a high rock and glides a few feet above the surface of the water, stepping on three boulders over the 80-ft. river as easily as if hopping a narrow stream. She lands on the shore by the party, nods to them, and thanks them for coming.

Gale is wary but willing to risk talking. She assumes the PCs know her politics, and she respects them enough not to try to persuade them unless they ask. Instead she devotes her attention to explaining a mutual threat she has discovered.

"I have a contact: a courier to the Unseen Court who lets me call him Ellik. He's an eerie creature, dwells in shadows, but is loyal to the court and has a fondness for this nation which treated his people well for so many years.

"Just over a month ago, when the last new moon was aligned with the planet Nem, Ellik arranged for me to walk with him into the Bleak Gate. I will spare you the details of that journey's emotional toll, but during the few hours that night when I could see into the dark side of the world, I discovered something.

"There is activity in that mirror image of Flint. Not much. I never saw anyone other than my guide. Most of the buildings are hollow, like abandoned shells of dead sea creatures. But there are no echoes, and no wind blows, so you can hear footsteps from miles away. And in the distant gloom I saw torches and lanterns, lights that the denizens of that world would never need. Their path ran along the canal, to the still analogue of Parity Lake, and then up toward the Nettles. I did not have the time to get close, but I heard churning there, and saw smoke and steam drifting into the starless sky.

"They are working, assembling something, hidden right where we can't see it, on the other side of our shadow. My Nilasa found a clue. I sent her on a mission, and she found the truth, and they killed her for it. I am furious at her murderers, but Nevard has made me realize that this conflict is larger than my selfish desire for revenge.

"Unfortunately, I can't return to the Bleak Gate, nor show you what I saw. The same alignment with Nem will not repeat for decades, and I have not yet found another way into that world. But I do have proof of my own."

She produces a tiny vellum book from her belt and offers it.

"This is a copy of a ritual that will detect various energies, though you have to have been exposed to what you're seeking. It's worthless to most people, but I have been to the Bleak Gate, and I believe that when you were with Nevard so did you, or at least you touched the veil.

"I've flown across this city, trying to find sources. In some place the stink of it bleeds through naturally, especially on Cauldron Hill, but I've followed trails. The night after Nilasa was murdered, I found a strong source at the consulate,

and I tracked it across three districts before I lost it. And too often I've found it clinging to factories, or in the foyers of rich businessmen.

"There is a conspiracy afoot. The Danorans are involved, and industrialists in this city, and some third force in the Bleak Gate. They've already killed to protect their secrets. We need to find out what their goal is."

The book contains the ritual Detect Planar Energy (see page xx).

What's Next?

Gale believes this conspiracy is a mutual enemy, and she wants to make an alliance with the party. If they can help her find out who killed Nilasa and why, she'll do her best to calm her people and stop the attacks on industrial targets. Eventually she hopes to be of service to the city, and perhaps earn an audience with Governor Stanfield to press for formal negotiations.

Gale knows that she likely won't be able to convince the nation to abandon technology altogether, but she wants to do anything she can to protect some people and places from its effects.

She wants to build trust, but she doesn't intend to meet face to face any time soon. To help the PCs in their investigation, and to let them share information with her, she gives them a *messenger wind* (see page xx). She keeps one feather for herself so she can call and receive messages.

In the meanwhile, she asks that the party look out for Nevard. He will be hosting his rally soon, and she worries that his revelations might threaten those who killed Nilasa.

Vekesh Mission.

If any PC has the Vekeshi Mystic character theme, now is an opportunity to fulfill the mission (see page xx), though she would be wise to be discreet when delivering a gift to a so-called terrorist, from a so-called murder cult.

Gale accepts the gift cautiously, and if she has a chance to speak with the PC she asks for more information. She wants to know if she's expected to be an assassin, or just to remove threats. So far she has tried not to kill people who aren't a direct threat, and she won't promise to obey orders from a faceless court.

Give the PC a chance to sway Gale one way or the other. If the PC does nothing, at the end of the adventure news will break of Gale abducting wealthy industrialist Guy Goodson in the middle of his wedding, carrying him off to the Cloudwood after sabotaging and sinking the steamship



the man uses to get to and from his island villa. If the PC's position is in favor of violence, instead the news mentions the abduction, and then Gale trapping Goodson inside his steamship before sinking it.

If the PC's position is against violence, the news is about how Gale snuck into the wedding as a guest, then after congratulating the couple and delivering a gift flew away, leading to speculation that Goodson is in cahoots with the terrorist.

Making Nice with Criminals.

If the PCs don't try to arrest Gale, when they file their report with the RHC, their boss Stover Delft is less than thrilled to hear about it. He ultimately trusts his constables, but that won't spare them from some exasperated shouting.

If they don't mention the meeting, eventually Delft will want to know what they've been up to. The next adventure includes an audit of the PCs' activities by the Constabulary, and it could be interesting to see how the party manages lying to their superiors and co-workers.





THREAD THREE: THE DOCTOR

This act details what the PCs can discover as they track and investigate the foreign doctor, Wolfgang von Recklinghausen.

PERSON OF INTEREST

Puzzle. Montage. Level 3.

The party pursues a foreign fugitive through the chaotic streets of Flint.

The details of this scene vary depending on if the party sets out after Wolfgang immediately, or if they follow the lead later. In either case the doctor has a several-hour lead on the party, but whom the party comes across and what they know depends on the time.

There's not much of a ticking clock, and several paths can all eventually lead to their quarry, so give the party plenty of leeway on how they want to track Dr. von Recklinghausen.

Case File.

If the party acquired the doctor's case file from the Danoran consulate (page xx), they learn he was staying as a guest at a hostel called The House of Blue Birds in North Shore. Of his two references, Dr. von Recklinghausen listed his primary contact as a local surgeon named **Dr. Barnaby Camp**, and he listed his secondary contact as **Lynn Kindleton**, a professor of human biology at Pardwight University.

The PCs can also obtain a record of the doctor's address in the Malice state of Arrovia and a brief bio that lists his educational background across three different countries and his practice as a surgeon.

House of Blue Birds.

The staff here recalls 'the doctor with the foreign accent,' and remember him rushing in, claiming he was coming back from a surgery, and asking for water and a towel to wipe blood from his hands. Then he hurried to his room and a few minutes later exited through a back door.

An hour afterward (and so possibly just a short while before the PCs show up), a man with a pencil thin mustache came to the hostel and asked about the doctor. He showed a police badge with the name **Officer Roger Porter**, so they let him into the doctor's room. After five minutes of flipping over mattresses and pulling any stray personal item into a small bag, the officer handed over a few hundred gold coins as a bribe and left.

(The hostel staff do not mention the bribe unless the party presses them hard for information.)

One of the cleaning staff noticed him wince in pain a few times, and thought she noticed a bandage and dressing on his chest. She didn't see any blood, but when he left his shirt did have an odd black stain there, and he smelled oddly like scorched engine grease. The same cleaning woman took a blackened rag from the doctor's room after he left, before the officer showed up. Examination (Arcana DC 9) reveals small quantities of oil used to maintain a sword, plus a large amount of black fluid that possesses shadow energy. With a few hours and access to alchemical tools, it's possible to identify the black fluid as a strange mix of burnt oil and human blood.

This was actually Cillian Creed, magically disguised in the aftermath of his fight with the doctor, and the rag was from the doctor wiping his sword clean. Because Creed already cleaned out all of Wolfgang's personal possessions, there are no clues in his room. However, the hostel does still have the forms the doctor filled out when he arrived, and the letter of recommendation from Dr. Barnaby Camp, who vouched for the doctor to stay for a few weeks.

Rundown.

It's difficult but possible to track Wolfgang's movements from the hostel. By spending an hour checking the streets a PC can make a Streetwise check (DC 20) to find people who recall seeing a man matching Wolfgang's description. If the party can succeed this check three times (or if they call in a favor to get cops to help for a few hours), they can recreate his trail.

The doctor fled in an erratic southward route from North Shore to Parity Lake. He started to head toward Bosum Strand, then went deeper into the industrial district. The last anyone saw of him was in a very bad part of town, near the turf of local crime lord Lorcan Kell.

He is Altering the Deal.

Wolfgang made contact with a representative of Lorcan Kell's thieves guild, and paid for bodyguards and a safe haven, with a promise to pay more if they could get him travel papers into Ber. By nightfall the doctor was holed up in an abandoned Clergy church in The Nettles.

The next few days Wolfgang writes letters to Dr. Camp and Professor Kindleton, trying to find other solutions to his problem. By the 5th of Summer he realizes that Kell's men are trying to extort him for more money, and are ready to sell him out if he can't pay extra for a Beran visa. On the 7th day Kell's people sell him out and Cillian Creed takes him into custody, unless the party intervenes.

Doctor Camp.

The party can find Dr. von Recklinghausen's sponsor, Dr. Barnaby Camp, either at his residence, or teaching at a surgical theater, both of which are in North Shore. Camp is a portly, curly-haired man who had Wolfgang as a student many years ago. They had kept in touch with occasional letters, and a few months ago Wolfgang referenced some marital troubles and a desire to travel alone to Ber, so Camp arranged for his residence in Flint.

Like at the hostel, Camp has already been contacted by Cillian Creed posing as "Officer Porter" by the time the PCs find him. Camp says he

offered to let one of his students treat the man's injury for free, in exchange for letting the class watch, but the officer rudely refused.

Camp is a bit of a dead end until the 3rd of Summer, when he receives a new letter from the doctor, who is in hiding. The letter asks Camp to try to arrange safe passage out of the city for him, and alludes that he has made deals with criminals in order to avoid a monster that he thinks is chasing him. Wolfgang directs Camp to contact Lynn Kindleton at Pardwight University, who will know how to get in touch with him.

Camp normally would just want to stay out of trouble, but he was unsettled by "Officer Porter," and so he hands the letter over to the PCs and asks them to take care of the problem.

Professor Kindleton.

The "campus" of Pardwight University weaves through many streets and occasionally shares buildings with other offices in Central District, and Professor Lynn Kindleton meets with students every morning in her office above a butcher shop, then teaches class in a hospital morgue a few streets over.

Unlike Camp, Lynn is much more loyal to Wolfgang. They studied and worked together, and years ago he tried to get her to move to Arrovia with him.

Creed, in the guise of Officer Porter, visits Lynn the night of the 1st of Summer, right after she finishes her class. She claimed she knew nothing, but she's a terrible, nervous liar, so Creed has her under surveillance. She receives her first letter from him the morning of the 2nd, delivered by a boy from the Nettles. Thereafter every day she leaves a letter at the downstairs butcher shop, and a messenger comes from the Nettles, delivers a letter from Wolfgang, then takes Lynn's letter and a supply of meat and other foods back to the doctor. The messages do not go directly, though, and instead transit through Lorcan Kell's men, who read and reseal them.

On the 6th of Summer, a letter comes asking Lynn to help Wolfgang flee, since he no longer trusts his bodyguards. On the 7th, she is captured with him unless the PCs intervene.

In the meantime, Lynn will lie and claim she hasn't heard from Wolfgang since before he went missing. Since she's already been visited by another officer, and Wolfgang warned her that he's being followed, she won't trust the PCs unless they go a little overboard, such as by taking her to the RHC office to show her that they're legitimate constables. Even then, at best she'll want to arrange a meeting with Wolfgang in private, though the party could possibly follow her. When she tries to go to The Nettles, though, her guide takes her to Parity Lake, where Kell takes her captive as additional leverage over the doctor.

The Hard Way.

By spending eight hours scouring The Nettles, hiking up and down hills and through narrow streets filled with petty thieves and swarms of beggars, a PC can make a Streetwise check (DC 25). A failure yields only rumors about another group of people also looking for the doctor, which has the locals on edge and nervous about talking. A success produces a few leads of spots where criminals might be hiding out, based on where messengers are going in and out of the district.

It then takes another eight hours and a successful check (DC 25) to find a group of burglars who have heard about Kell's thieves protecting a foreign on the run from the Danorans. They can point to the right hill, but it takes another eight hours and another check (DC 25) to find the actual church where he's hiding.

HOW DOES THE SMUGGLING PLOT WORK?

Reed Macbannin used his knowledge of the paths to the Bleak Gate to craft a series of partial portals under the bridges of the Stanfield Canal, which runs from Bosum Strand to Parity Lake. Subtly embedded in the steel beneath the bridges are rusted iron bars etched with ritual spells.

Whenever an object passes under these bridges, if it has the proper sigil stenciled on it, the ritual pulls the object closer to the Bleak Gate. There are six of these bridges, and after passing beneath the sixth bridge, the item vanishes and plunges into the water in the Bleak Gate analogue of the canal. If it doesn't go through all six within an hour, the magic fades and soon it's impossible to notice anything amiss.

Cillian Creed delivers lists of items needed to Kell, who has his people either directly steal it and pack in crates, or arranges to trade it for protection. The crates are then stenciled and sent down the canal. None of Kell's people ever travel with the crates, so they assume someone else picks them up at the other end, which is close to true. When the crates splash down in the Bleak Gate, Leone Quital's people recover them and take them to Cauldron Hill. In the real world, people just assume some items were stolen in transit.

THEATER OF SCOUNDRELS

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

A powerful crime boss, Lorcan Kell, might provide the party with the doctor's location, but only if they can entertain him.

Most likely the party will have to go through Lorcan Kell to track down Wolfgang. Cillian Creed already has a long-standing relationship with Kell, because Kell's men handle the smuggling of industrial goods. Kell knows Creed is looking for Wolfgang, but in his opinion the existing business arrangement doesn't include sharing all his secrets. When he gets word the PCs are asking questions too, he decides to solve both problems at once.

Kell's goal is to bring the PCs to him, have a little cruel fun at their expense, then extort them to pay for information on the location of the doctor. Then when they're on the way, Kell will notify Creed so he can catch the PCs in an enclosed environment.

The Lure.

If the party is working in small groups, one of Kell's skilled agents get in touch with the PCs and asks them to meet him in east Parity Lake, and from there he'll guide them to where Wolfgang is hiding in The Nettles. He's trying to lure them into a trap (Insight DC 24), and if caught in his lie he confesses that he doesn't know where Wolfgang is, hoping he can still get the party to come to Kell's turf in search of answers.

If the party asks around and does some research, they can hear tales of Kell's operations, and how he likes to treat outsiders. A group that makes arrangements with a third party and brings a gift to the crime boss gets a much more pleasant reception. But if the party just breezes in expecting to be in charge, Kell will make their visit painful.

The Bait.

Kell's center of power is in eastern Parity Lake, where some of the slightly better-off factory workers live, paying protection money to Kell's thieves guild. It's still a seedy neighborhood, and if the PCs come here,

it's obvious they're being watched. Their guide leads them to the heart of the area, which PCs with the right background might recognize.

Then just before they turn onto a new street they hear angry threats, a man's grunt of pain, and a woman scream. A hundred feet down the side road sits a stopped carriage, its driver reeling on the ground from an apparent blow to the head, its single horse nervous. A woman kneels over the driver, screaming "Someone stop them!" and pointing down the street. Two thugs wearing bright red scarves look over their shoulder as they sprint away.

All in this staged scene, as well as most of the onlookers on the street, are Kell's people. The plan is that the PCs give chase to the thieves, who run down a street and then duck into an alley at just the right pace to keep the PCs able to follow. Then in the alley they open a door into the back stage of Kell's Theater of Scoundrels, luring the PCs onto the stage, where the lights will come up, revealing an audience all leveling guns and crossbows at them while Kell applauds from a high box seat.

If the PCs seem hesitant, the woman improvises and adds, "They kidnapped my baby! Stop them!" If that doesn't work, she tries running after the men herself, hoping the PCs follow. There's enough amiss about the scene—the perfect timing, how unsurprised some of the people peering out street windows appear, how the bright scarves make it easy to follow the thieves—that PCs can reasonably see through the trap (an easy insight check, or a moderate one if the players aren't at all suspicious).

In that case, the thief-actors fess up, and a moment later one of Kell's lieutenants—an athlete named **Rufus Hammerton** who bounces a leather football on the ground as he talks—invites the party to join his boss inside the theater to talk business while taking in a show. To emphasize the 'politeness' of the request, a dozen men come out of the buildings and form a loose wall behind the party.

Now in his fifties, the grizzled Kell grew up an enforcer for local gangs, then eventually murdered his way into a position of leadership. He does, however, possess a great knack for instilling loyalty in intelligent minions who can run operations for him. Now he feigns gentility, dressing in elegant clothing that conceals no fewer than eight blades at any time.

Kell is unpredictable and hot-headed, confident he can kill anyone who's a threat, and when people try to stand up against him he takes it as an opportunity for entertainment. For him, nothing's better for him than taking self-righteous do-gooders down a few pegs by showing off his power.

His seat of power is a theater in Parity Lake where scum is welcome and decent people are turned away. Kell's guild of thieves practice their lies and legerdemain in the form of stage plays, often improvisational and with life-or-death stakes. Actors practice disguises and assuming unique personas, all the sorts of subtle techniques Kell personally never bothered with. He enjoys the shows, but his favorite game is to drag in a pair of random townspeople, and give one of them the choice of who of the two will receive a beating.

Kell is aware of the encroaching Family presence in his city, but he expects his "intelligent minions" to come up with a plan against them, not realizing that most of those minions are being wooed by Morgan Cippiano.



LORCAN
KELL

By the time the PCs have gotten into this neighborhood they're horribly outnumbered, so any attempt at starting a fight would quickly result in an overwhelming force of thieves and scum surrounding them. If they insist on fighting, they'll end up overwhelmed, beaten to within an inch of their lives, then dumped naked in the lake near a sewer drain. Rufus insists that talking to his boss is much less pleasant than declining his invitation.

Star Attraction.

Kell invites the party to his box, supremely confident they won't try to touch him. He tells his people to "put on a comedy," then eats a sandwich without offering any food to the party. There aren't even chairs in the box for them to sit down.

Kell says that he knows they're looking for "that northerner doctor," and that his men are sitting on the man, waiting for a way to make a profit on him. He's willing to take them to Wolfgang for the low price of 1,000 gold pieces. Then they can have the doctor, with no resistance from his men. Kell has appraisers handy to gauge the value of the PCs' magic items and suggest which ones could be handed over.

Should the PCs decline, Kell insists they stay for the show and make a counter proposal.

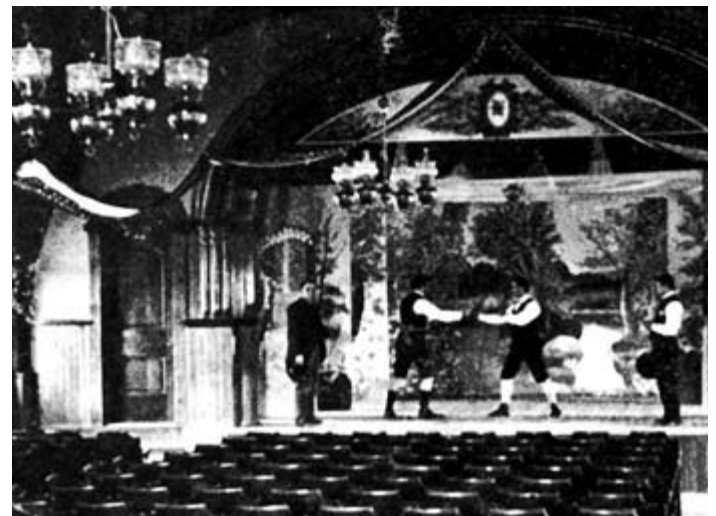
When the "comedy" Kell requested starts, a drunk and confused docker is pushed out on stage, and a scandalously dressed seductress flirts with him and makes a show of picking his pocket while he's distracted by her advances. Then another thief pretending to be a jealous boyfriend makes an appearance, and after chasing the docker with various humorous objects—eliciting guffaws from the crowd—the seductress and her "boyfriend" take turns beating him.

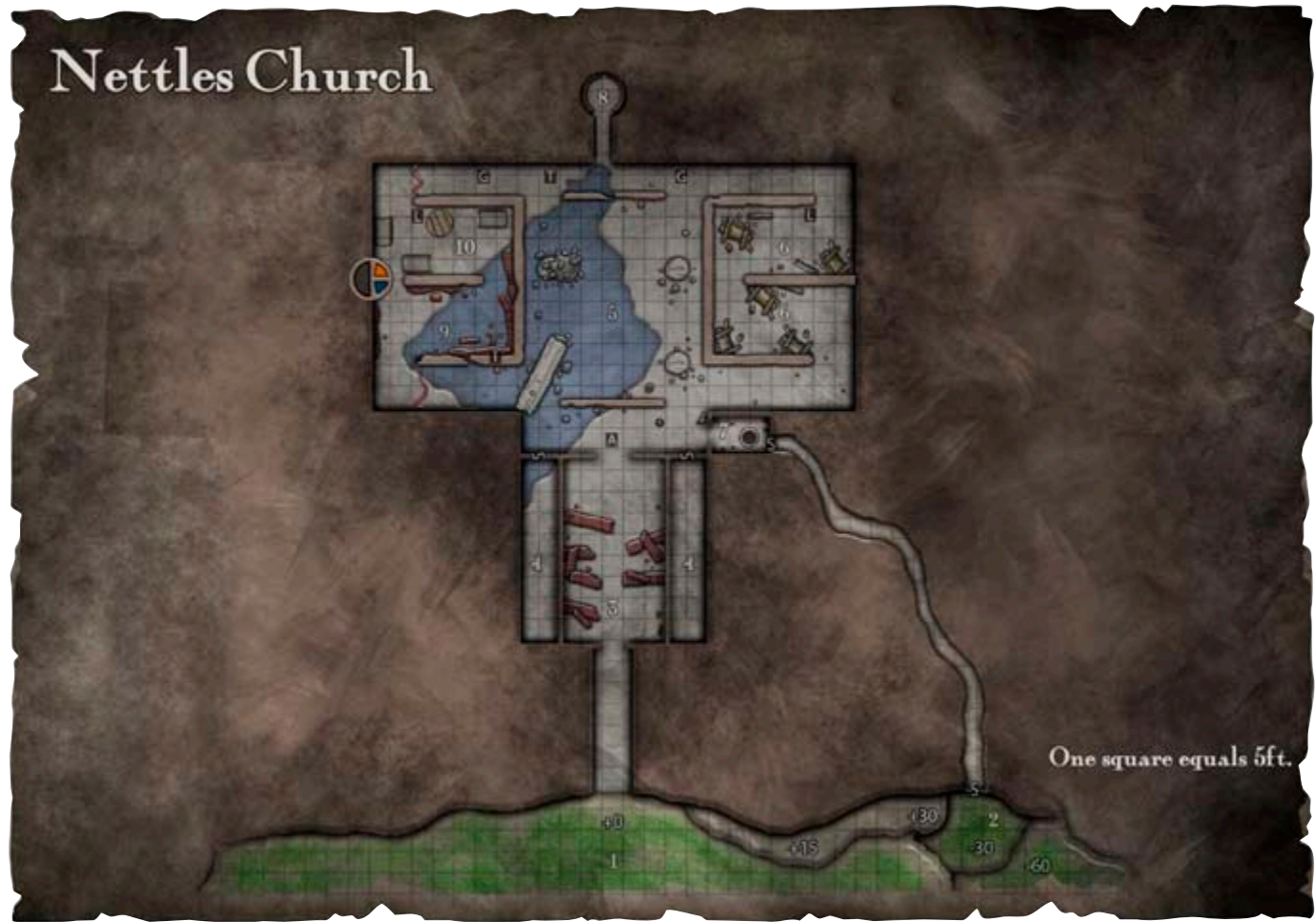
Kell considers the PCs reactions, and says he'll let the man go if they pay up for Wolfgang. If the PCs still refuse, be as vicious and cruel as you think your players are comfortable with. Lorcan Kell will get his comeuppance later, but for now he's in a position of power that he loves to abuse.

Aftermath.

If the PCs pay up, Kell sends out a runner to tell his thugs guarding Wolfgang to prepare to stand down, then has a guide take the party into The Nettles. Once the PCs leave he sends a second runner to alert Cil-lan Creed.

If the party declines, or avoids this encounter, they have other ways to find Wolfgang, but he'll be better defended.





OLD FAITH

Action/Social. Tactical. Level 5.

The doctor has turned an abandoned church's catacombs into a trap-filled lair.

Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen has taken refuge within an abandoned Clergy church built into a rocky cliff face in The Nettles. The church's keepers left decades ago when the swell of poor factory workers moved in; their adherence to the Old Faith overwhelmed the Clericists who had lived on this hill.

Using scrounged items and some tools from his surgical kit he has assembled traps to defend himself, though if the party has made a deal with Lorcan Kell, the doctor's bodyguards will disable the traps before the party arrives.

Hallowed Halls.

Within the church, creatures who are dying and fail three death saving throws instead stabilize. Creatures can still die from hit point loss, but a latent blessing protects the mortally wounded.

Layout.

Unless noted, rooms inside the church are in total darkness.

1. Plateau Façade.

The front of the church shows years of neglect, and you could walk by without noticing the place through the tangle of brush, vines, and

tumbled stones. Out of some sense of respect, the locals have given the church some space. The nearest homes are a hundred feet from the entrance, though if you ascend a cliffside staircase, the next tier of the hill is clustered with slum housing.

2. Latrine Cliff.

Effluvium once flowed from the church's latrine to this concealed cliff. The passage into the back of the privy is a tight squeeze, but disuse has left the place relatively clean.

3. Chapel.

Broken and tattered pews lie around this room. The 20-ft. high arched ceiling once reverberated the sound of singers, but now just echoes eerily. Whisper holes to the Song Galleys along the sides of the room let people hear activity through the walls.

The doorway to Area 5 no longer has a door, and the hallway is cluttered with debris. When the party arrives, six slum-dwellers sit in the tunnel, paid by Kell's men to discourage curious visitors.

If the party arrives early in the week, a woman is waiting outside with her husband, who is holding his severed thumb in a bloody cloth. The man lost his thumb earlier in the day in an industrial accident, and the woman has heard there's a doctor here, so she's trying to get the slum-dwellers to let her in so she can have the doctor to reattach the thumb. This is well within Wolfgang's talents, but his bodyguards are keeping him from helping hard luck cases to keep news of him from spreading.

If the party comes closer to the end of the week, there's actually a line outside of people with sick children or injured family members, shouting

for the doctor to come out and help them. All the people, including the slum-dweller look-outs, scatter quickly at the first sign that a fight might be coming.

4. Song Gallies.

Monks would once stand in these two hallways and sing during services.

5. Common Area.

Once the center of activity for the church's monks, this room was shaken in the recent tremors, creating a broad flooded sump. Of the four pillars that held up the roof, one crumbled and one toppled.

Wolfgang hid the documents he took from Nilasa in this room. Above the crumbled pillar there's a hollow in the ceiling. Wolfgang placed the documents in his water-resistant surgeon's bag, then tucked it in that hollow. His bodyguards on loan from Lorcan Kell didn't see him hide the bag, and aren't aware of where the documents are.

- ♦ **Alarm:** An alarm trap, marked **A** on the map, triggers if anyone enters this area. A trip wire (Perception DC 20) yanks a weight that rings a cluster of small bells, alerting everyone in the church to intruders.
- ♦ **Traps:** Additionally, two bonesaw traps, marked **T** on the map, protect the approach to Wolfgang's hiding spot. Anyone who steps in the trapped squares is attacked.
- ♦ **Gates:** Spaces marked **G** on the map have iron gates that hang from the ceiling, hinged so that when released they swing down. They are easy to spot, and aren't hard to disable (Thievery DC 13). Levers, marked **L** on the map, can be pulled as a minor action to trigger the nearby gate. Any creature in the gate square is attacked: +10 vs. Fortitude. A hit deals 1d6 damage and slides the creature 1 square in the direction away from the associated lever.

Thereafter, the heavy gate blocks its square, though it can be lifted with a combined Strength score of 15. A creature holding up a gate clears the square, but grants combat advantage.

- ♦ **Secret Doors:** Two secret doors (Perception DC 13) lead to Area 4.

Bonesaw Trap	Level 2 Obstacle
Trap	XP 125
<i>The stones underfoot crunch, and a wire twangs. Before you can react, a serrated blade swings into your shin and is pulled sideways, digging into flesh and bone.</i>	
Perception	
♦ DC 20: There's a bit more rubble here than seems randomly possible, almost like its hiding something.	
Trigger	
When a creature enters the trapped space, the trap attacks.	
► Attack	
Opportunity Action; Melee 1	
Target: Triggering creature	
Attack: +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8+4 damage, and the target is knocked prone, and is slowed (save ends).	
Special: When a creature leaves the trapped space, the trap resets.	
Countermeasures	
♦ Athletics DC 10: A character can hop over the rubble as part of a move, which avoids triggering the trap.	
♦ Thievery DC 13: A character adjacent to the trap can disable it. Failure by 5 or more triggers the trap, and it attacks the character.	

6. Sleeping Quarters.

Of the sleeping quarters, only scattered bits of furniture remain.

7. Privy.

A wooden seat over a bucket was the best available in The Nettles, which has no plumbing. The door leading to Area 2 is hidden (Perception DC 20) behind a tattered old curtain displaying a pleasant pastoral scene. Wolfgang and his bodyguards still haven't noticed it.

8. Cloister.

This small room was used for private prayers. Rows of bookshelves line the walls, empty from old looting.

9. Storage.

A recently-erected curtain blocks out light so the fire in Area 10 isn't visible in Area 5. Kell's men brought a few bags of supplies with them, and regular deliveries have provided food and lantern oil.

A small well in one corner of the room is fed by rainwater. If the stones behind the well were knocked loose, it is possible to climb the chimney up 30 ft. (Athletics DC 20) to the next tier of the hill.

10. Kitchen.

Wolfgang and his bodyguards usually stay here, relying on either the fireplace or a lantern for bright light. As in Area 9, a curtain blocks light, and a secret chimney behind the fireplace leads up and out.

Fighting Wolfgang.

Kell can arrange for Wolfgang's bodyguards to disable the traps, then leave and let the PCs in to take the doctor, who doesn't resist if he sees how outnumbered he is. Alternately, very persuasive PCs might get Professor Kindleon to convince Wolfgang to meet and talk. If the party just comes unannounced, though, Wolfgang and his guards put up a fight.

Setup.

- ♦ 2 Bonesaw Traps
- ♦ 3 Kell-Guild Thugs
- ♦ Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen

Kell-Guild Thug	Level 2 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, half-elf	XP 125
HP 40; Bloodied 20	Initiative +1
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 12, Will 13	Perception +1
Speed 6	Low-Light Vision
Standard Actions	
☞ Jagged Shortsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic	
<i>The blade digs past your armor and snags your flesh.</i>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6+6 damage, and if the target leaves its space before the end of the thug's next turn it takes an additional 6 damage.	
Minor Actions	
☞ Kidnap ♦ At-Will	
<i>The thug grabs you and uses you as a human shield.</i>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 12). Until the target escapes, the thug can use the target as cover.	
Str 15 (+3)	Dex 8 (+0) Wis 8 (+0)
Con 16 (+4)	Int 8 (+0) Cha 8 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Primordial	

Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen Level 2 Elite Skirmisher (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 250

HP 78; Bloodied 39

Initiative +7

AC 16, Fortitude 13, Reflex 14, Will 13

Perception +4

Speed 6

Saving Throws +2; Action Point 1

Traits

► Surgical Precision

The doctor wields his rapier like a scalpel.

If a creature is granting combat advantage to Wolfgang and he hits the target with his *malice-wrought rapier*, the attack is a critical hit, and Wolfgang can choose to either slow or weaken the target (save ends).

► Pendant Defenses

If Wolfgang is wearing the *canary in a coal mine pendant*, he gets a +5 bonus to all defenses during a surprise round. He also gains this bonus at the start of any encounter; it lasts until he takes his first turn.

Standard Actions

☞ **Malice-Wrought Rapier** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

The sword is just a keenly sharpened piece of metal, nothing fancy.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 damage, plus ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Effect: If the target is bloodied, the target automatically fails its first save against any conditions Wolfgang inflicts this turn.

Special: Once per day, if the rapier critically hits a creature whose origin is not natural (i.e., if it's aberrant, elemental, fey, immortal, or shadow), the target cannot perceive Wolfgang until the end of the encounter, or until he attacks.

Minor Actions

✓ **Stop Your Heart** (lightning) ♦ At-Will (1/round)

The doctor taps your chest, and your body spasms.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d6+5 lightning damage and the target is dazed until the end of Wolfgang's next turn.

► Geometric Footwork ♦ At-Will

Angling his blade to drive your attack away, the doctor steps cleanly past your guard.

Effect: Wolfgang shifts 1 square.

► Physician (healing) ♦ Recharges when first bloodied.

With a touch of the doctor's hand, the wound closes.

Effect: One ally adjacent to the doctor can spend a healing surge. If used on the Kell-Guild Thug, this heals 10 HP.

► Heal Thyself ♦ Recharges when first bloodied

Blue lightning limns the doctor's hand, and suddenly his ailment passes.

Effect: All conditions affecting the doctor that a save can end or that would end within a turn end now.

► Pendant Flight ♦ Daily

Effect: If Wolfgang is wearing the *canary in a coal mine pendant*, he can use this power to gain a fly speed equal to his speed until the end of his next turn.

Triggered Actions

► Cheat Death Yet Again (healing) ♦ Encounter

The doctor's limp body surges with electricity, and he stands in a sudden burst of life.

Trigger: The doctor starts his turn unconscious or dead.

Effect (No Action): The doctor heals 19 HP and stands up. All conditions affecting him end.

Skills Arcana +10, Bluff +5, Heal +15, Religion +10

Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+3)

Con 15 (+3) **Int** 18 (+5) **Cha** 9 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Dwarven, Giant, Primordial

Equipment *malice-wrought rapier, canary in a coal mine pendant*

Tactics.

If the alarm triggers, one thug grabs a burning brand from the fireplace to use as a torch, then runs from Area 10 to Area 6. He splashes through the water to avoid the bonesaw trap, which produces enough noise to hopefully draw attention after him. He plans to wait by the lever in Area 6, and drop the gate to stymie pursuit. If he thinks people are focused on him, he'll run for the exit. Otherwise he'll come back and aid Wolfgang and the other thugs.

Meanwhile, the other two thugs wait by the curtains in Areas 9 and 10, each with torches of their own. Wolfgang hides in Area 10, ready to move if his guards say there's a clear path. If a fight breaks out, the thugs fall back into area 10, hoping to draw the PCs into a spot where Wolfgang can surprise them with his *stop your heart* power. Then the thugs will gang up on the stunned target.

Wolfgang won't believe PCs who claim to be law enforcement, so he fights until knocked out. Once his *cheat death yet again* power triggers, he might try to flee, but likely will just surrender.

Aftermath.

A combat encounter immediately follows this scene, but the enemies won't attack until the party tries to leave. The easiest way to keep the party from leaving right away, before they get a chance to heal, is to knock out at least one PC. That forces a short rest to get everyone on their feet, so when the party leaves they'll be ready for another combat.

Failing that, you might have Wolfgang say that the documents he was given are hidden nearby, and that they shouldn't leave without them, but that he won't reveal where they're hidden until he knows he can trust them. Don't try to make the stalling too obvious, lest the players feel rail-roaded.

It takes some work for the PCs to convince Wolfgang he can trust them. Initially, rather than handing over the documents he'll tell his story from his perspective, then explain what he found in them, trying to suss out from the party's reactions whether they're sympathetic or hostile.



**DR. WOLFGANG
VON RECKLING-
HAUSEN**

A distinguished, intelligent, and poised gentleman in his late 30s, Dr. von Recklinghausen speaks elegantly with a hard-to-place accent. He appears fairly innocuous, though his sharply-groomed goatee and the rapier at his hip give him a hint of menace.

Born into wealth in a minor nation in the Malice Lands known as Arrovia, Wolfgang pursued medicine and magic, learning surgery in Danor and spellcraft in Risur. But as the dwarven writings of Heid Eschatol became popular in his homeland, Wolfgang became convinced this focus on death was short-sighted in a world where resurrection was a known—if exceedingly rare—occurrence.

After years of intense study and experimentation, his marriage in tatters and his fortune nearly depleted, Wolfgang finally achieved his goal of combining medical knowledge with sorcery in order to restore a corpse to life. The specifics of this event and its tragic aftermath are explored in more detail in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*, but suffice it to say that six months ago Wolfgang fled his estate and made for Risur. Traveling on a Danoran visa, the doctor hopes to reach Ber, and keep traveling as long as possible.

Treasure.

Wolfgang wields a *malice-wrought rapier* and wears Nilasa's *canary in a coal mine pendant*. The PCs can recover these items if they defeat him, and if he is taken captive in the Hiding in Plain Sight encounter, Wolfgang drops his sword. If the party hands him over to Leone in the A Weight of Crumbling Stone encounter, Wolfgang gives the party these items before leaving.

WHAT'S IN THE DOCUMENTS?

First, there are numerous reports and notes written by Security Chief Julian LeBrix, which reference financial irregularities of Danoran-owned factories. He posits that there's a campaign of smuggling that explicitly targets Danoran enterprises, though the huge number of reports—covering hundreds of witnesses from dozens of factories—makes it hard to synthesize an accurate narrative from all the data.

If the party get their hands on the documents, with a cursory read-through it's possible to determine that all the smuggled items might be going to a single construction project, probably something like a large warship.

If they manage to hold onto the documents, with a few days of work and the aid of some RHC staff with more financial know-how, they can determine that many of the factories that have lost items to this smuggling operation were recently acquired by a variety of buyers. The buyers have no history of entrepreneurship, but a few actually have criminal records. If the party looks into their finances, they see that they were all paid shortly before they purchased the factories.

Should the party put the right effort in, this can be one way for them to discover that Reed Macbannin is behind the whole operation. By cross-checking different accounts and perhaps bribing some bank officials to share their books, they can find proof that the payments to acquire the factories were funded by Macbannin.

Second, there is a detailed report of LeBrix visiting factories and discovering flasks of strange black oil with floating motes of white light in them. It was soon after finding these that his investigation was shut down.

When telling his story, Wolfgang says that he recognizes the substance. It is called witchoil, and various alchemists have learned to refine it from the energy of the Bleak Gate that bleeds into this world. Normally they can only create a few ounces, nowhere near the pint or more LeBrix discovered. The oil, if burned, can stand in for ritual components, but no moral man would use it, since it is composed of souls that were awaiting their final rest.

If asked how he knows about it, Wolfgang looks a bit haunted and says that in his homeland, magic normally cannot be used, but witchoil is a reliable power source, so power hungry men find it easy to overcome their qualms.

WOLFGANG AS AN ALLY

After the last encounter, Wolfgang should have revived with 19 hit points. He'll fight alongside the party as long as possible, but he's Creed's first target. If the party bargained with Lorcan Kell to get Wolfgang without a fight, he'll be at full health, and a much stronger ally.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Action. Tactical. Level 5.

Lurking enemies emerge from the shadows of the Bleak Gate to ambush the party, retrieve the documents, and abduct the doctor.

The steelshaper Leone Quital has brought allies from the Bleak Gate to help Cillian Creed recover Wolfgang and the documents. They wait nearby in a trio of carriages pulled by wraith horses, partially in the Bleak Gate and invisible to normal eyes. After the PCs enter the church they set their trap in motion.

Leone uses his steelshaping powers to embed a dozen steel bars (which he brought on the carriages) into the church's outer doorway. They can be pried free (Strength DC 16 each), but at least three must be removed before it's possible for a Small creature to squeeze out, or at least six for a Medium creature to squeeze through. Of course, Leone and his allies won't stand by and let the party free themselves without a fight.

Creed and a small strike force all wear temporary magical amulets that let them phase through the bars. Creed has a spare amulet that he intends to put on Wolfgang so they can abduct him.

The strike force enters the church and waits in Area 3. Creed eavesdrops, wanting to get as much information as possible from Wolfgang before striking. When it sounds like the party is about to leave, Creed and his squad sneak in. They disable the alarm and other traps in their way, if they are still active, and get as close as possible to the party. Characters with Passive Perception 16 or higher are not surprised.

Setup.

- ♦ 2 Skulking Nethermancers
- ♦ Cillian Creed, Shadow Operative
- ♦ 2 Skulking Knife-Fighters

Skulking Nethermancer

Level 2 Controller

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 125

HP 35; Bloodied 17

Initiative +1

AC 16, Fortitude 14, Reflex 14, Will 14

Perception +2

Speed 6

Darkvision

Standard Actions

☞ **Orb Conk** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

The mage's obsidian orb orbits around her and smashes you if you come too close.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+5 damage, and any light sources the target carries are suppressed until the end of the nethermancer's next turn.

▶ **Shatter the Light** (cold) ♦ At-Will

Black tendrils crackle within the mage's obsidian orb, and then your sunrod explodes with frigid energy.

Effect: Choose a target within 10 squares that is carrying a light source. That light source is destroyed unless it is magical. Magical light sources are suppressed until the end of the encounter. The target and each creature adjacent to it take 5 cold damage.

✓ **Ray of Enfeeblement** (necrotic) ♦ Encounter

An invisible lance from the mage's orb pierces your chest, and your limbs grow weak.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: 3d4+6 necrotic damage and the target is weakened (save ends).

Skills Arcana +9, Stealth +6

Str 9 (+0) Dex 10 (+1) Wis 13 (+2)

Con 11 (+1) Int 17 (+4) Cha 9 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Primordial

Cillian Creed, Shadow Operative

Level 5 Elite Lurker

Medium shadow humanoid, human

XP 400

HP 96; **Bloodied** 48

Initiative +10

AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18

Perception +5

Speed 7; **Resist** insubstantial

Darkvision

Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits
► Hide in Shadows
The silhouette of the shadow man merges with the gloom around him, and he vanishes. Suddenly, your own shadow seems reach out for you.

Creed can make a Stealth check to become hidden when he has concealment instead of needing total concealment. While Creed is adjacent to any enemy, he is invisible.

► Hideous Reveal
Light burns away the man's matte black skin, revealing for a moment raw muscle and sinew and weeping rivulets of blood before his cloak of shadowy flesh reforms.

Radiant damage ignores Creed's insubstantial trait. Whenever Creed takes radiant damage, he loses insubstantial and *hide in shadows* until the end of the next turn of the creature that dealt that damage.

► Quickdraw

Once per round as a free action Creed can draw, stow, or swap weapons or similar items.

Standard Actions
☞ Eclipse Claw (necrotic) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Shadowy claws lash out from across the room, dig into your eyes, and unleash a gush of blood.
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+4 necrotic damage and the target takes ongoing 5 damage and is blinded (save ends both).

☞ Chrome Pistol (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

The shadow aims a pristinely polished chrome pistol in its black talons.
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+2 damage, or 2d6+14 on a crit.

Special: Load minor.

► Blinding Skirmish (necrotic, weapon) ♦ At-Will

Effect: Creed uses *eclipse claw* and *chrome pistol* in any order, and can move 2 squares before, after, or between them.

✓ Chrome Syringe (poison, weapon) ♦ Recharge on miss

Light gleams off a metal needle as it plunges into the flesh of your neck.
Requirement: Creed must be hidden from the target.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target takes 3d10+7 poison damage and is dazed and takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both). This damage cannot kill a creature, only render it unconscious.

Aftereffect: The target is dazed until the end of Creed's next turn.

Minor Actions
► Deceptive Veil (Illusion) ♦ Encounter

Effect: Creed assumes the appearance of any medium humanoid creature. He can end this effect as a free action. An Insight check (DC 22) lets an observer notice that Creed is disguised by an illusion. When he's disguised with his original face, which he wears normally, the DC increases to 32.

Triggered Actions
☞ Torrent of Shadows (necrotic, psychic) ♦ Encounter

The shadow man growls in pain, and as his blood strikes the ground your own shadow comes alive and thrashes in shared agony.
Trigger: Creed is first bloodied.

Attack (No Action): Close Burst 10 (creatures in burst); +8 vs. Will

Hit: The target is immobilized (save ends).

Effect: Creed ends any immobilized or slowed condition affecting him, and gains phasing until the end of his next turn.

Skills Arcana +9, Bluff +12, Insight +10, Stealth +11

Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+5)

Con 12 (+3) **Int** 14 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Primordial

Skulking Knife-Fighter

Level 2 Brute

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 125

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21

Initiative +3

AC 14, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12

Perception +2

Speed 6

Darkvision

Standard Actions
☞ Slashing Flurry (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

The knife-fighter slices you a half dozen times before you realize you've been hit.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 6d4 damage.

☞ Pistol (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6+3 damage.

Special: Load standard.

Skills Stealth +8, Thievery +8

Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+2)

Con 12 (+2) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 9 (+0)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Tactics.

The nethermancers strike first, trying to suppress the party's light. Creed moves adjacent to Wolfgang and tries to inject him with the syringe, intending to drag an unconscious Wolfgang out while avoiding a fight, using his spare amulet to pull him through Leone's barrier of bars.

If the fight goes long, the strike team assumes they can take the party, but Creed is cautious. When he is bloodied he flees to Leone.

Leone is accompanied by three additional nethermancers, six additional knife-fighters, three non-combatant carriage drivers, and three horse-shaped wraiths that pull the carriages. They dramatically outnumber the party, and if any PC tries to get through the barred entrance, the knife-fighters outside take turns shooting at him, three per turn. It should be obvious to the PCs that they're pinned down.

Aftermath.

The strike team works docks security in the Bleak Gate, so they know that there is activity in the shadow plane, but they know nothing about the construction facility or the colossus. They're sternly secretive, and they know about Leone's back-up plan, so if captured, they expect to be handed over as hostages. If the strike force fails to drag out Wolfgang, or if Creed gets the doctor but not the documents, Leone prefers not to waste any more men. He switches to his back-up plan, detailed below.

If Creed and company manage to defeat the party, they leave them for dead and scour the church until they find the documents. The church's hallowed aura keeps the PCs from dying, and about an hour later they awaken when a slum-dweller tries to loot one of their bodies.

Treasure.

Wolfgang wields a *malice-wrought rapier* and wears Nilasa's *canary in a coal mine pendant*. The PCs can recover these items if they defeat him. If he is taken captive in the "Hiding in Plain Sight" encounter, Wolfgang drops his sword. If the party hands him over to Leone in the "A Weight of Crumbling Stone" encounter, Wolfgang gives the party these items before leaving.

A WEIGHT OF CRUMBLING STONE

Social. Real-Time. Level 13.

Should the ambush fail, a foe with daunting power bars the party's escape and poses escalating threats until they cave, or are caved-in.

If the strike force is defeated or driven off and Leone does not have both the doctor and the documents in his possession, he orders two of the carriages away, keeping the third in case he needs to make a quick escape. One goes to fetch a hostage, the other to retrieve enough firedust to collapse the cliff face. If either the doctor or the documents have been retrieved, Creed stashes them in the remaining carriage.

He directs his remaining men—six knife-fighters and three nethermancers—to cover the entrance. He then telekinetically pulls a metal folding chair from his carriage, as well as a metal case that contains his favorite bromago cheese and a bottle of wine from his own vineyard in Crisillyir (marked with a wax seal that a wine expert could recognize as matching Quital wine). He sits down to relax, using his telekinetic control of metal to hover a platter of cheese and cut slices as he enjoys his bottle, all while keeping an eye on the exit.

If the PCs are careful they can overhear him talking with Creed, who wears his disguise as Officer Porter, but still drips a bit of black blood. Creed says that “according to Kell,” there’s only one way in or out of the church, and that the air vents are too small to climb out through. (This is not accurate.) Leone nods and tells him, “go tell your boss that the situation is under control.”

Leone wants to talk to the party, and if no PC comes to the exit, after he finishes his first cup of wine he’ll call out that he wants to parlay.

From the barred exit, the party can see Leone sitting out in the open. His nine allies wait by the cover of the carriage, or stand out of direct line of sight, but can be heard moving about and occasionally yelling at the locals that they should keep away if they know what’s good for them.

Stage One: The Easy Way.

Leone Quital introduces himself and explains that he doesn’t see any reason to shed more blood. He says that he just came to get the doctor and the documents in his possession. Once he has both of those, he’ll depart, and the PCs can take their time prying loose the steel bars.

If the party tries to offer other terms, Leone explains that this isn’t a negotiation. If

they try to stall, he says that in an hour the easy option goes away, and things get much less pleasant. He then pulls out a pocket watch, checks the time, and smiles.

If the PCs claim they don’t have the documents, Leone says he’s confident they’re in the church somewhere. He suggests they look quickly before their hour is up. As for Wolfgang, he doesn’t want to be handed over; he thinks they should prepare a defense for when the enemy tries to dig them out, or possibly send smoke signals through the kitchen fireplace.

If the party agrees, Leone does not keep his word. He’ll bend the bars to let Wolfgang or the documents out, then close them to keep the PCs from getting any ideas. Once he has what he wants, he tells the party to wait. Skip stage two, and move to stage three.

Stage Two: Hostage.

If the party waits for an hour, a carriage arrives, and an additional nethermancer is inside, along with a hostage. This might be Lynn Kindleton, Heward Sechim, or a friend or contact of the PCs’. The person had been shadowed in preparation of this scenario, and was caught unaware by a magical sleep effect, then tossed into a carriage, bound, and blind-folded.

Leone walks the hostage to within view of the entrance and lets the party talk with them to prove that it’s not an illusion. Then he revises his offer. Hand over what he wants within an hour, or he kills the hostage. He holds up his pocket watch, smiles, and then pours a cup of wine for himself and his hostage.

Wolfgang doesn’t trust Leone, and would need to be convinced to trade himself for the life of someone else. If the party agrees, it goes much as above, except he puts the hostage inside the church with the party.

If the party refuses, Leone makes a show of counting down, having his men hold the hostage as he prepares to slit the hostage’s throat. When the countdown reaches zero, Leone slashes open the person’s jugular and tosses them to the ground in front of the entrance.

Move to stage three.

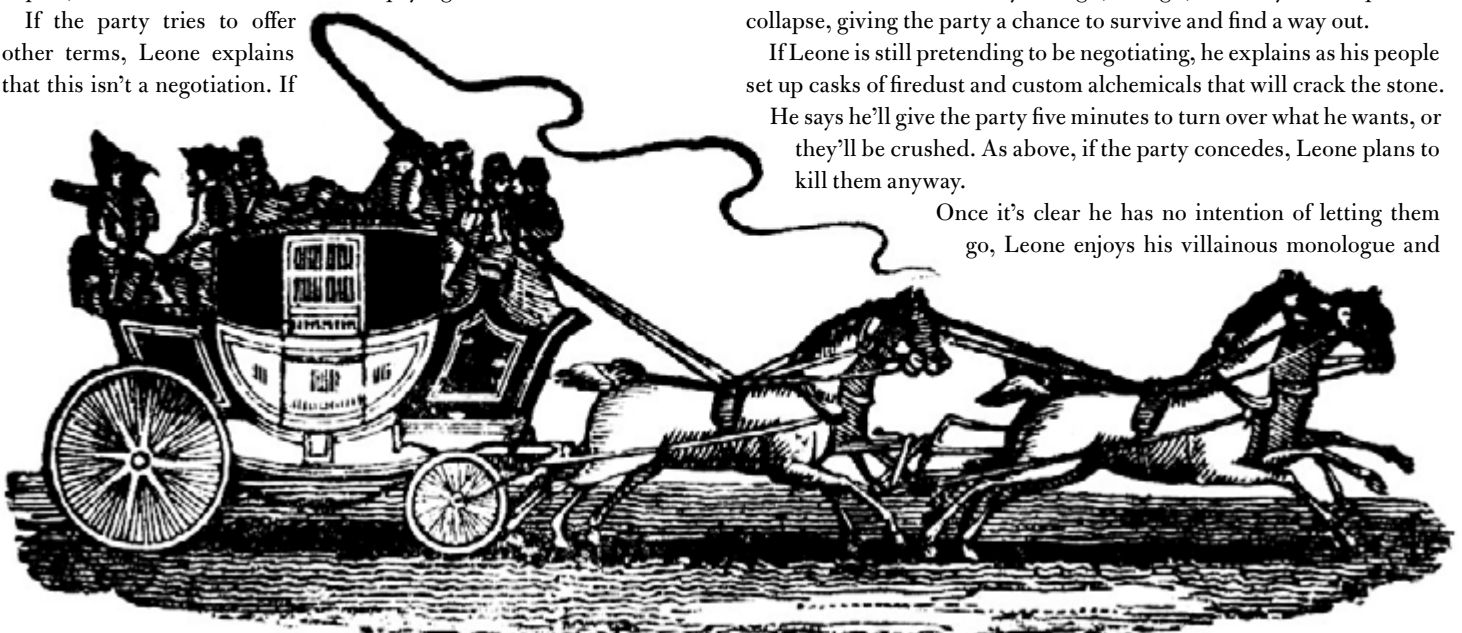
Stage Three: Death.

Eventually the other carriage arrives, bearing the materials necessary to set off an explosion and collapse the cliff face. Leone assumes this will either crush the party directly, or seal them in until they suffocate or starve. The hill is sturdy enough, though, that only the chapel will collapse, giving the party a chance to survive and find a way out.

If Leone is still pretending to be negotiating, he explains as his people set up casks of firedust and custom alchemicals that will crack the stone.

He says he’ll give the party five minutes to turn over what he wants, or they’ll be crushed. As above, if the party concedes, Leone plans to kill them anyway.

Once it’s clear he has no intention of letting them go, Leone enjoys his villainous monologue and



FIGHTING LEONE

Leone makes another brief appearance at the end of Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, then plays a larger role in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*, before finally meeting his end in Adventure Seven, *Schism*. His stats are not included herein. If you need something in a pinch, use a level 15 elite artillery, and give him powers with a magnetism theme.

assures them that the local slum-dwellers will definitely remember their heroism. The charges are all set in locations the PCs can't see from inside the church, and after only a few minutes Leone and his force withdraw, unspooling 30-ft. fuses. They load into the carriages, and Leone triggers the fuses at range. The carriages pull away, and thirty seconds later the charges detonate.

Anyone in Area 1 or 3 when the explosion goes off is killed instantly. Otherwise, the party is unharmed, just assumed dead.

Sneaking Out.

The party might try to sneak away, either out the chimney or latrine tunnel during negotiations, or perhaps tearing open the exit at the last second after the fuses are lit and getting out of range before detonation.

If the PCs go out the latrine tunnel, they must succeed Stealth checks (DC 10) to avoid being noticed by one of Leone's men, which would set off a chase through The Nettles. The PCs have an advantage here, since the locals have a strange fondness for the doctor, and will interfere with the pursuers.

Sneaking out the chimney easily avoids detection. If the party runs out the front entrance, one of the carriage drivers spots them fleeing, but Leone decides getting away before people investigate the explosion is more important.

Aftermath.

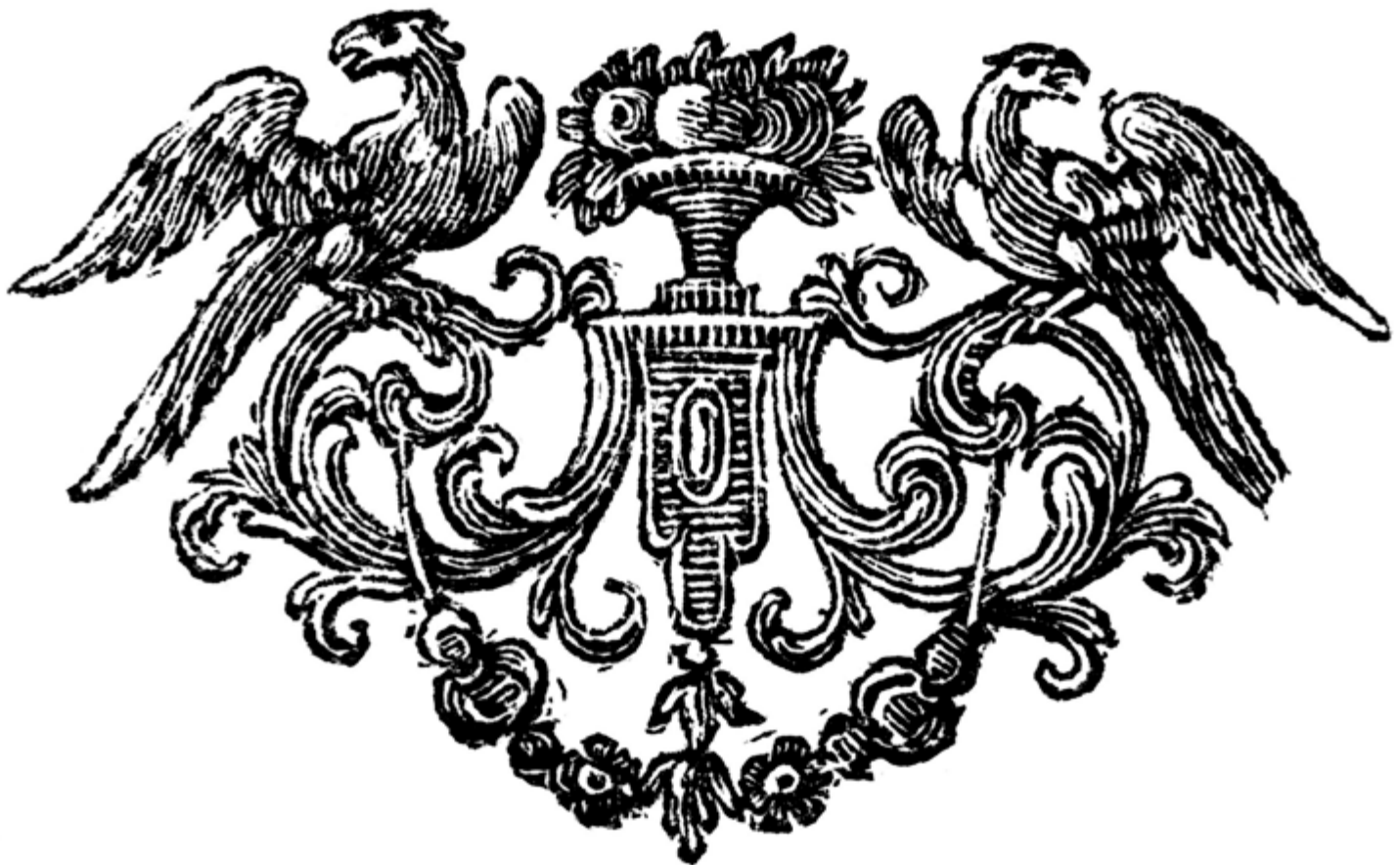
If nothing else, the party can survive the collapse, then be rescued by police who dig them out. Stubborn or suicidal parties can prevent the villains from getting Wolfgang or the documents, which gives them a slight leg-up on figuring out that Macbannin's their target. If the party loses both the doctor and the documents, it's a set-back, but should motivate them to finish the case.

When the PCs finally do return to Macbannin's manor and explore his underground laboratory, they will find Doctor von Recklinghausen, if he was taken captive.



LEONE QUITAL

Leone plays a limited role in this adventure, and the key traits he should demonstrate are his fondness for fine bromage cheese, his mastery of steelshaping and telekinetic control of metal, and his feigned romantic notion of honor, which should be easily revealed as false when he tries to bury the party alive. Leone has a larger presence in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*.





THREAD FOUR: CONSPIRACY

This act details events that occur after the party visits Cauldron Hill, as Reed Macbannin attempts to silence anybody he thinks might know about the conspiracy. These events might occur during the same days as events in the other threads, depending on when the party resolves each thread.

FACTORY AFLAME

Action. Tactical. Level 5.

It's a race against time to stop arsonists before the fire spreads out of control.

This encounter occurs after the party escorts Nevard the sky-seer to Cauldron Hill's peak, shortly before sunrise of the next day. Whether the PCs rush down the mountain or take time to call in reinforcements, when they arrive the arsonists are still in the process of setting up. Only if the party truly dallies will the fire start without them.

Two dragonborn brothers, Eberardo and Valando, have been setting fires throughout Flint for months, on orders from Cillian Creed. He met in person twice, using the guise of a nondescript businessman, then communicated solely by letters. Payments were through dead-drops. The brothers still have a few of the letters, because they're careful to check the hand-writing of new missives to make sure they're not being deceived. When they're not out burning, they have a lair in an old tunnel underneath a firegem depository in Parity Lake.

The fires have helped Lorcan Kell acquire factories from distressed owners, to smooth the flow of material to the colossus. The brothers don't know the reason for their jobs; they just enjoy lighting fires.

After the party came to Macbannin to go up Cauldron Hill, the mayor had Creed arrange for the brothers to burn down Howard Sechim's factory. When the party actually goes up the hill, a messenger delivered a letter to the brothers, setting them into action. Now, with four human allies in tow, they begin setting up accelerants and long-burning firegems around the edge and roof of the factory.

Wildfire.

The brothers excel in burning out buildings without causing their fires to spread. However, the brothers aren't aware that a factory next door to Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings sifts firedust, which are volatile enough to go off due to nearby heat.

If the party doesn't intervene, the fire starts shortly before sunrise, burns down through the roof, and then eats out the innards of the building. But rather than leaving a husk, the heat causes the next door factory to combust, and as it burns out of control the fire spreads throughout the whole district.

The city will do its best to put out the blaze, a massive operation that takes two days before the fire is contained. In the aftermath, not only will dozens of factories and hundreds of homes be destroyed, but thousands of factory workers will perish because they were locked in by their bosses. Then, rather than a low rumble of protests, the city will erupt in violent riots almost as destructive as the fires themselves.

Arson in Progress.

Most likely when the party arrives, they'll notice torches in the alley between Sechim's factory and the adjacent firedust factory. The small protests outside the two adjacent factories have dispersed this late at night, but a pair of sleepy guards stand in front of the chained doors of each. They're disinterested in the arsonists, who came with a wagon full of supplies, making them look like they were delivering material to Sechim's factory.

Valando, the pyromancer brother, has climbed to the roof and is setting up a pulley to lift the supplies. Eberardo, the warrior brother, coordinates his minions on the ground. They're fairly easy to sneak up on, and the arsonists assume people who don't come into the alley are on other business.

If the PCs approach without immediate violence, Eberardo engages them in conversation, trying to gauge their forces while encouraging them to leave and avoid a fight. Valando hides above (Perception DC 13), waiting to strike in case a fight breaks out.

Flint Arsonist

Level 5 Minion Brute

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 50

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion

Initiative +3

AC 16, Fortitude 17, Reflex 16, Will 15

Perception +1

Speed 6

Traits

► Fire Ward

As the arsonist runs through the flames, a pendant around his neck flares white and crumbles to ash. For a moment, at least, the arsonist seems unafraid of the flames.

The arsonist has resist 10 fire for the first time he would take fire damage. The wards are temporary creations and lose their magic within a few hours if not used.

Standard Actions

☞ **Arsonist's Short Sword** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

The arsonist slices at you, and whenever you try to extinguish the flames on your clothes, the man does his best to keep you burning.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 6 damage, and the target cannot save against ongoing fire damage as long as it is adjacent to the arsonist.

Str 15 (+4) Dex 12 (+3) Wis 8 (+1)

Con 10 (+2) Int 9 (+1) Cha 10 (+2)

Alignment Chaotic Evil

Languages Common, Primordial

Valando, Dragonborn Pyromancer

Level 5 Elite Artillery

Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn

XP 500

HP 102; **Bloodied** 51

Initiative +3

AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 19

Perception +3

Speed 6

Resist 5 fire

Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

☼ **Staff of Arson** ♦ Aura 3

Valando's allies within the aura deal an extra ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends) on a critical hit.

Standard Actions

☞ **Quarterstaff** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8+6 damage.

► **Draw Fire Mana** (fire, implement) ♦ At-Will

The dragonborn thumps his staff on the ground, and the air suddenly glows red hot. The heat and light coalesces into a burning mote atop the dragonborn's staff.

Effect: Creatures within 3 squares take 10 fire damage, and Valando's encounter powers recharge.

✱ **Arson Bolt** (fire, implement) ♦ Encounter

A bead of shining fire flies from the crown of the dragonborn's staff and ignites the ground at your feet.

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (creatures in burst); +9 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8+6 fire damage.

Effect: The burst becomes a zone of fire until the end of the encounter. Any creature that enters the zone or starts its turn there takes 5 fire damage.

◀ **Torchstep** (fire, implement, teleportation) ♦ Encounter

The scaly wizard teleports to safety in a blinding conflagration.

Attack: Close Burst 1 (creatures in burst); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8+12 fire damage, and the target cannot see anything farther than 3 squares away from it until the end of Valando's next turn.

Effect: Valando teleports 5 squares.

► **Flaming Wall** (fire, implement) ♦ Daily

The wizard swings his staff, and an arc of fire rises up into a burning wall.

Effect: Valando creates a zone (wall 8 within 10 squares), up to 4 squares high. The wall lasts until the end of his next turn. Any creature that starts its turn adjacent to the wall takes 7 fire damage. Any creature that enters the wall or starts its turn there takes 15 fire damage. Entering a wall space requires 3 extra squares of movement. The wall blocks line of sight.

Sustain Minor: The wall persists.

Minor Actions

◀ **Dragonborn Breath** ♦ Recharge when first bloodied

Flames burst from the dragonborn's mouth, and they cling and crawl across you like living things.

Attack: Close Blast 3 (creatures in blast); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6+6 fire damage and the target takes ongoing 5 fire (save ends).

Triggered Actions

► **Dragon Tail Style** (weapon) ♦ Encounter

In a surprisingly elegant move, the dragonborn pivots to track your movement and smacks you with his quarterstaff.

Trigger: An enemy moves to a position where it flanks Valando.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Valando uses *quarterstaff* against the triggering target. If he hits, he pushes the target 1 square and knocks it prone.

Skills Arcana +11, Athletics +10, Bluff +9, Insight +9

Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+3)

Con 15 (+4) **Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 15 (+4)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Primordial

Eberardo, Dragonborn Arsonist

Level 5 Elite Soldier

Medium natural humanoid, dragonborn

XP 500

HP 134; **Bloodied** 67

Initiative +5

AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 17

Perception +9

Speed 5

Resist 5 fire

Saving Throws +2; **Action Point** 1

Traits

► **Defender Greatsword**

Eberardo's greatsword lets him know the conditions affecting his allies who are within 20 squares, and whether they are bloodied, unconscious, dying, or dead.

Standard Actions

☞ **Arsonist's Greatsword** (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

You're too busy avoiding the dragonborn's massive greatsword to worry about putting out that little flame slowly burning you alive.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12+6 damage.

Effect: The target cannot save against ongoing fire damage as long as it is adjacent to Eberardo.

✂ **Dragon Fangs** (fire) ♦ At-Will

The dragonborn pulls you to his face and clamps his fangs into your shoulder. Fire flickers in the wound and sears through your veins as he tosses you to the ground.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d12+6 damage, and the target is slid 2 squares to a space adjacent to Eberardo, then knocked prone. The target takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Minor Actions

◀ **Dragonborn Breath** ♦ Recharge when first bloodied

Flames burst from the dragonborn's mouth, and they cling and crawl across you like living things.

Attack: Close Blast 3 (creatures in blast); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6+6 fire damage and the target takes ongoing 5 fire (save ends).

Triggered Actions

► **Cut the Curse** ♦ Daily

As the massive greatsword slashes you, you see the effect of one of your previous attacks undone.

Trigger: Eberardo hits a target with an attack using his greatsword.

Effect (Free Action): One condition that was created by the target struck and that is affecting one of Eberardo's allies ends.

► **Dragon Tail Style** (weapon) ♦ Encounter

In a surprisingly elegant move, the dragonborn pivots to track your movement and smacks you with the flat of his blade.

Trigger: An enemy moves to a position where it flanks Eberardo.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Eberardo uses *greatsword* against the triggering target. If he hits, he pushes the target 1 square and knocks it prone.

Skills Athletics +13, Bluff +8, Insight +9, Intimidate +8, Perception +9

Str 22 (+8) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+4)

Con 19 (+6) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Primordial

Terrain.

Street gaslights illuminate 3 squares in each direction. The roof of Sechim's factory has four vents that has a miasma of noxious gas floating around them. A creature that enters or ends its turn in one of these squares takes 5 acid damage. A water tower on top of the building could be knocked over (20 damage, or Strength DC 15), causing a torrent that would put out fire below and knock creatures in its path possibly over the edge of the building.

Factory District



The various levels of Sechim's factory and the adjacent factories can be reached by exterior ladders. If the fight ends up inside, both buildings are cluttered with dangerous terrain.

Infamous bandits from Ber, the dragonborn brothers were run out of their country and came to Flint, lured by the prospect of a city powered by steam and fire. Valando has turned youthful pyromania and a knack for spellcraft into a grand talent for arson. Eberardo, meanwhile, embraces the natural might of his race, and indeed most people assume he's a dull brute, when in truth he's nearly as clever as his wizard brother.

A smooth-talker, Eberardo comes across as a charming leader, but he's willing to sacrifice allies without qualm in order to get himself and his brother out of trouble. Valando prefers to keep quiet and watch from afar, both on missions and when working with potentially treacherous criminals. After years dodging the law together, they've done pretty much any heartless thing to stay alive, but they'd never betray each other.



EBERARDO



VALANDO

Tactics.

As soon as possible, Valando creates a *flaming wall* in the alley, making sure to include the space their wagon occupies, and if possible to curve the wall to block off the PCs from his brother. The wall's flames set off the materials in the wagon, and they will burn fiercely for hours unless put out with massive amounts of water or cold damage. He tries to sustain the wall each round, and then he and his brother flee.

The minions, thinking that Eberardo is huge and imposing, expect him to stay and fight, so they're a bit slow to follow, which is exactly as the brothers plan, since it gives them more protection.

If either brother is slowed or trapped, though, both will stay and fight until they have an opening to run. Then they shout to each other in Draconic, and continue to flee.

Aftermath.

It's likely that, especially after surviving Cauldron Hill, the party won't be able to take the brothers. Thankfully, they don't want to press their luck, so the party may have to find another way to track them down. A man-hunt could turn up their lair, or the party could get help from Morgan Cippiano.

If called upon, the Family leader would use his network of criminals to offer the brothers a quick job and enough money that they could safely flee the city. He then would tip the party off to the location, so they could wait in ambush. This gives you an opportunity to use any locations that the party otherwise avoided, perhaps repurposing Danisca Waryeye's shop as another random building. If you need a new location, Morgan would really love to burn down Lorcan Kell's theater.



If the party captures the brothers, they resist talking at first. Then, when you feel it's time for the party to discover Macbannin's role, the brothers break. The threat of execution looms, and they are willing to sell out their boss in exchange for being deported to Ber. Failing that, they at least want to be imprisoned somewhere away from Flint, so they don't have to worry about the families of arson victims.

They don't know Macbannin himself was involved, but they have letters Creed delivered, and they know the courier who delivered them, a freelance carriage driver named **Albert Eccleston**. Eccleston heard enough gossip to know that the man who gave him the letters took carriages to and from Cauldron Hill, and that various carriage drivers managed to figure out there was one guy wearing various disguises going on different missions.

Alternately, the PCs might use a ritual like Magic Map to track the writer of the letters. Either way, after the party defeats the arsonist brothers, it's only a matter of time before they get pointed to Macbannin.

SCREAMS AND SECURITY

Puzzle. Montage. Level 3.

Unnatural energies signal a possible threat to Skyseer Nevard's imminent rally.

The evening after the party takes Nevard up Cauldron Hill, word spreads that the old skyseer is gathering a rally, to be held the next afternoon. He has called in all his favors to help increase attendance, and he claims his vision is critical to protecting Flint from disaster. The rally will occur in Bosum Strand at Dawn Square, a beautiful grassy park that can comfortably hold ten thousand people.

Depending on whether the party stopped the arsonists, this scene could occur with the backdrop of an out of control fire and wild riots in the streets. Even if there is relative peace, Gale asked the party to protect Nevard. And if that's not enough to motivate them, their boss Stover Delft orders the party to attend the rally, because if a riot breaks out, the police are too disliked to quell it, but Nevard at least trusts them.

This Warrants Investigation.

The morning before the event, one or more of the party's contacts in Bosum Strand (or someone from Thinking Man's Tavern, if they need a contact) comes to the party with strange news. People are reporting an intense uneasy feeling in a several-block area, not far from Dawn Square, and the air smells like burnt engine grease. The oddity just started last night.

If the party investigates, Spirit Mediums can hear dozens of screaming voices echoing through the streets, but that still only narrows down the

search a bit. Perceptive PCs might notice odd slicks of oil in the streets which burn to the touch. The party might just search door to door, but the fastest method is to use the ritual Gale provided to detect energy from the Bleak Gate. This leads them to a gated warehouse. There are three doors, but two are blocked from the outside with barrels and crates. The third is pad-locked, but accessible.

The warehouse contains large amounts of munitions, and is normally guarded by military forces, but they were dismissed overnight, and their replacements were never notified. If the party asks around, some kids saw a group of men wheeling crates filled with jaguars into the warehouse around midnight, then leaving and sealing it up from outside.

The situation is that Macbannin is worried Nevard might have had a vision that could warn the Unseen Court of the colossus and ruin the secrecy of their project. But the old skyseer is being careful to hide his location until the speech, so Macbannin has approved the creation of horrific creatures, infused with witchoil, that can slip through the veil from the Bleak Gate and attack during Nevard's speech.

The warehouse has been set-up as a short-term laboratory. By the time Nevard's speech begins, the place should be deserted, but the party has a chance to learn about the plan and get clues of how to disrupt it.

Monsters, Inc.

Inside the warehouse, eight technicians who work in the subterranean laboratory on Macbannin's manor have just finished infusing a bunch of poor jaguars with necrotic energy that rotted their flesh and left them constantly bleeding rivulets of witchoil. Tattered leather collars around their necks make them obey the commands of Cillian Creed, who holds an attuned leash.

A rusted iron ring sits on the floor of the warehouse, and it acts as partial portal between the two worlds. Inside Macbannin's laboratory, the technicians and Creed passed through a set of similar rings while wearing amulets, allowing them to shift into the Bleak Gate. They then traveled, accompanied by a golem that carried their supplies, to the warehouse's analogue in that world. By stepping into the iron ring and using the golem as a focus, they were able to shift partially back into this world.

They then performed their procedures on the jaguars, which were firmly in this world. The technicians transferred their amulets to the cats, which let them shift slightly into the Bleak Gate when they stepped into the rusted ring. Cillian Creed took the cats, now in the veil between worlds, and headed for Dawn Square to prepare the attack on Nevard.

When the PCs arrive, the technicians are stuck in a half-state, only partially in this world. They plan to clean up the monster-making studio, then step through the ring along with the golem, letting them shift enough into the Bleak Gate that they could sneak unseen back to Cauldron Hill. The PCs need to stop them before they destroy all the useful evidence.

Sneaking In.

The one door that is easily accessible, of course, is warded with a ritual alarm spell that alerts the technicians. The two back doors and the windows 20 ft. up are not alarmed, and the technicians are very distracted (Passive Perception 5). The golem won't attack until the techs come under attack or give it orders.

Bleak Golem

Level 3 Solo Controller

Large shadow animate (construct)

XP 750

HP 184; Threshold I 123; Threshold II 62

Initiative -1

AC 18, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 14

Perception +1

Speed 4

Darkvision

Resist 5 necrotic

Saving Throws +5; Action Points 1

Traits

► Infused with Decay

A bleak golem has two HP thresholds. When its HP are reduced to certain thresholds, it gains some powers and loses access to others. It counts as bloodied when it is reduced to 123 HP or below.

► Bleak Aura

The golem's attacks smear its target with witchoil and unleash the energy of the Bleak Gate.

A creature affected by *bleak aura* gains ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).

Whenever the affected creature takes this damage, each creature within 3 squares of it takes 5 necrotic damage.

► Hulking (Stage 1 & 2)

When a bleak golem is subjected to forced movement, reduce the number of squares moved by 1. If it would be knocked prone, it can make a saving throw to remain standing.

Due to its immense metallic weight, if it climbs a surface less sturdy than stone (such as wooden crates), it instead destroys that terrain.

When the golem is reduced to 62 HP or below, it loses this trait.

► Witchoil Ward (Stage 1)

Dull etched runes in the golem's torso hold in gallons of witchoil, and disrupting those wards is hazardous.

If the golem starts its turn dazed or stunned, the runes flash with crimson light, and each creature within 3 squares is dazed until the start of the golem's next turn, as overwhelming wails of the spirits in the witchoil assault those nearby. When the golem is reduced to 123 HP or below, it loses this trait.

☼ Howl of Souls ♦ Aura 3 (Stage 2)

The howl of a hundred trapped souls pour from the golem's breached armor.

The golem gains this trait when it is reduced to 123 HP or below. Any creature that ends its turn within the aura is dazed until the end of its next turn. When the golem is reduced to 62 HP or below, it loses this trait.

► Hollow Stalker (Stage 3)

Combat damage has torn away plates of armor and cracked the husk's torso, leaving only a lean skeleton of rusted steel. The husk still drips black oil as it speeds across the battlefield.

The golem gains this trait when it is reduced to 62 HP or below. The golem's speed increases to 6, it gains a Climb speed of 6, and at an Initiative count 10 higher than its own initiative it can take an additional move action. If it is dazed, stunned, immobilized, or slowed at that point, instead of moving it can make a saving throw against each of those conditions.

Standard Actions

☒ Witchoil Fist (necrotic) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Black oil leaks between the rusted joints of the golem's iron fist, and after it smashes you, droplets wither your flesh and emit waves of rotting energy.

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 4d8+4 damage.

Effect: If the golem has 124 HP or more, the target is affected by *bleak aura* (see above).

✦ **Hurl Object** (weapon) ✦ At-Will, Basic

The golem hefts a crate as large as a man and hurls it at you.

Effect: The golem picks up a crate or similar object in an adjacent space. After the attack, the crate's space is empty, and the targeted area becomes difficult terrain.

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 5 (creatures in burst); +6 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6+4 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Move Actions

► **Clear the Way** ✦ Encounter

The golem thrashes its limbs, knocking aside creatures and obstacles.

The golem moves its speed and can enter the spaces of Medium obstacles (Medium creatures, or objects of similar size). When it enters an obstacle's space, it pushes that obstacle 1 square. It cannot push obstacles into occupied squares (but can push diagonally to get obstacles out of its way). If it cannot push an obstacle, it cannot enter that obstacle's space. Entering a creature's space in this way does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Triggered Actions

► **Witchoil Leak** ✦ Encounter

The cracked steel flesh of the golem seeps oil and flickers with light the color of blood. The howl of a hundred trapped souls pour from the breached armor, and a geyser of black oil sprays from its latest wound.

Trigger: The golem drops to 123 HP or fewer.

Effect (No Action): The creature that last hit the golem is affected by a *bleak aura* (see above). Any negative conditions or effects affecting the golem end. The golem rolls a new initiative, its *clear the way* power recharges, and it gains another action point. The golem loses the *witchoil ward* trait and gains the *howl of souls* trait.

► **Witchoil Breach** ✦ Encounter

The crimson runes on the golem flicker and die. No longer able to hold in the roiling black oil, the golem's torso shatters, and the horrible fluid explodes outward. The golem teeters, falls, but catches itself on one mangled forelimb. Scraps of metal that were once its fist scrape the ground like claws, and it begins to lope toward you with sudden agility.

Trigger: The golem drops to 62 HP or fewer.

Effect (No Action): The golem pushes each creature within 5 squares one square.

Those creatures are affected by a *bleak aura*. Any negative conditions or effects affecting the golem end. It rolls a new initiative, its *clear the way* power recharges, and it gains another action point. The golem loses the *howl of souls* and *hulking* traits, and gains the *hollow stalker* trait. The golem then makes a charge attack.

Skills Athletics +14

Str 24 (+8) **Dex** 6 (–1) **Wis** 10 (+1)

Con 14 (+3) **Int** 3 (–3) **Cha** 6 (–1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** understands Common



Terrain.

The warehouse is full of crates which can be climbed to get out of the golem's reach, and catwalks above that. A chain fence cordons off the area just inside the entrance, and the gate into the rest of the warehouse is locked (Thievery DC 20). Another chain fence surrounds the monster-making operation and the rusted ring, and it has a latch, but is not locked. The area within the laboratory fence is brightly lit by three torches; the rest of the warehouse is dimly lit.

Creatures on the opposite side of a fence are treated as having cover from projectiles or ray-like attacks, or total cover from thrown weapons.

Tactics.

The golem tries to keep the party away from the laboratory fence, and after it hits a few times it should become obvious that standing and fighting it in melee is a losing proposition, and that clustering together makes them vulnerable to its *bleak aura*. If the PCs take to high ground the golem does its best to knock their perch down, or use *hurl object* if they get to the catwalk.



Meanwhile the technicians scramble to set fire to documents and destroy supplies. Once they've caused enough havoc, the technicians will take turns waiting in the center of the rusted ring, ready to flee. When the golem starts its turn, its internal structure flickers with white light, and one technician in the circle disappears, slipping back into the Bleak Gate. A PC in the ring is unaffected, since the technicians are already partially in that shadowy plane.

The techs all have defenses of 10, and 1 hit point. If injured, they fall and can be interrogated, but after an hour the magic keeping them in this world fades, and they vanish into the Bleak Gate.

After all the techs are gone, the golem will try to step into the ring itself and vanish at the start of its next turn. If the party destroys the golem, they can stop the techs from escaping.

Aftermath.

If the party takes any technicians alive, they know they will fade into the Bleak Gate, so they aren't worried about being arrested, but threats can get them to talk. They were all recruited from universities and independent laboratories to work on what they were told was a project for the Risuri military, overseen by Reed Macbannin. They know nothing about the colossus, and assume their work is going toward weaponizing witchoil and creating monsters.

Additionally, depending on how soon the party stops the techs from escaping, they can get different levels of information.

- ♦ **Round 8+.** The party can sift through burnt documents and find a sketch of a jaguar ribcage, with marks of where to attach a chest plate with screws.

MORE VILLAINY, PLEASE.

If you want to spin Macbannin and his crew as more overtly evil and less "shades of gray," you could, for example, have one of the technicians be aware of the target of their work. Then, as the other captured techs profess their ignorance, the lead tech can chuckle and mock the party, saying they'll never be able to protect the "foolish old man." Ideally, a PC will do the melodramatically appropriate thing and grab the lead technician by the collar and interrogate him, demanding answers as the technician sneers and fades into the Bleak Gate.

- ♦ **Round 7.** Some documents weren't burnt, providing a precise description of how the chest plate protects the witchoil vial.
- ♦ **Round 6.** Supplies for enchanting the collars survive, plus a note that anyone who holds the collar and says "Obey" can then give that cat commands.
- ♦ **Round 5.** A checklist is still held to one cage by a magnet. It lists key steps of "sedate cats, extract blood, remove heart, implant witchoil, attach collar and amulet, perform ritual; if error, shatter witchoil vessel; if successful, attach chest plate."
- ♦ **Rounds 1 to 4.** Clear documented evidence survives, written in Macbannin's hand, explaining a ritual to replace the cat's blood with witchoil, and mentioning to "take the same precautions you would at the manor reservoir."

DAWN SQUARE

Action. Tactical. Level 7.

As thousands gather to hear the skyseer's vision, the party tries to defend him from unnatural assassins.

Nevard is scheduled to start his speech at noon; by the time the PCs finish with the monster laboratory, the square is crowded with over three thousand people. Nearly a hundred local police officers lurk around the edges to watch traffic from the dozen streets that lead to the square. Hawkers sell food from wagons throughout the square, while poets and musicians perform wherever people have clustered under trees for shade.

A large part of the turn-out is from the new docker's union Thames Grimsley has organized, which had the knock-on effect of luring hundreds of sailors whose ships are stuck in port until their cargo is loaded. Large groups chant about throwing out Danorans, and a few people scuffle as different camps argue over whether the problem is the Danorans who brought the factories, or the Risuri who are running those factories. The densest crowds, of course, cling to the handful of bars along the periphery of the square.

Depending on how Nevard's speech goes, Grimsley is prepared to march his people and whoever else will join down to the shore near the governor's mansion, to make the protest more visible. The police, in turn, plan to withdraw and set up a blockade ahead of the march so they can beat people down and force them home.

Layout.

The square is ½ mile long, and its original checkerboard grid of stone and greenery has grown mottled with grass through years of poor maintenance. Islands of trees provide shade in grassy areas, while fountains and statues dominate the stone squares. The west end feeds into the docks of Bosum Strand, while a now-stagnant man-made lake forms the east edge.

For major events like this one, a wooden stage stands near the lake. A sputtering old fountain lies behind the stage, surrounded by three towers capped with braziers, which provide light for night-time events. The majority of the crowd is located off the west end of the map.

Chaotic Assassination.

Creed is hidden in the veil between the Bleak Gate and the real world, able to watch but not influence. He is not willing to strike openly in such a large crowd, so he leaves the murder to his new pets. He only needs a ring of rusted iron to send them back to the real world for their attack.

Creed has infiltrated ten undead skeletons into the crowd, disguised in archaic white robes and porcelain masks some druid sects wear in their ceremonies. They walked in pulling a pair of ornate wagons, and the police assumed they were part of Nevard's group. The wagons each contain a hinged ring of rusted iron, which looks fairly innocuous when collapsed.

In the half hour before Nevard arrives, the skeletons drag their wagons near the corners of the stage, at the front of the crowd (west side of the map). Then at noon, Nevard and an entourage of a dozen (non-combatant) druids will march through the crowd and up onto stage, all while the crowd applauds and sings classic druidic chants. Once Nevard is on the stage, the skeletons will pull out the rings, snap them to full size, and drop them on the ground, at which point one flayed jaguar will step through each ring. The monsters' appearance will trigger a panic, and thousands of fleeing people will clog the streets so police cannot come to Nevard's aid.

Creed has stationed the other three flayed jaguars near the fountain behind the stage, which has an old iron lining, long-since rusted. With attention focused on the two in front, he'll send the other three through to charge up the stage and kill Nevard.

Averting the Attack

When the party reaches the square, they likely have little time to make plans or look for threats, and they only have a narrow window to speak with Nevard, since he stays hidden until just before noon. Even if the PCs warn Nevard as he makes his way through the crowd, he says getting his message out to as many people as quickly as possible is more important than his own life. He trusted the party to protect him once before, and he'll trust them now.

The party might try standing guard on the stage, or scouring the crowd like they did while preparing for the king's arrival in Adventure One. The white-clad skeletons are easy to spot so close to stage, but only by interacting with them is it possible to tell they're not just very slender humans. If the party attacks the skeletons before they get a chance to deploy their rings, Creed can still send all five jaguars through the fountain, though the last two show up a round after the first three.

Very canny parties might check the fountain and notice its age and rust. By smashing the iron they could keep Creed from using the fountain as a portal, but they'd have to time things precisely to disable all three potential portals quickly enough to keep Creed from using at least one.

Nevard's Speech

Nevard takes the stage and holds up his hands to quiet the crowd. When he speaks, everyone in the square can hear his voice at a conversational level, courtesy of a ritual by Gale.

He begins with a preamble about how the skyseers used their visions to guide Risur, and though the clarity of their future sight has faded in recent years, they believe they can still guide with their wisdom, to mediate between the conflicting forces of a changing nation. But, he says, he sensed danger was approaching, and so he sought guidance,

climbing atop Cauldron Hill to once again bask in the rhythm of the heavens. And he has had a vision.

"I saw a dark figure, standing atop Cauldron Hill, towering over our city. The sun set, and he cast a shadow across Parity Lake, stretching northwest, into the sea, beyond the horizon. And also—"

It's at this point that people start screaming in the crowd just in front of the stage as a pair of fleshless jaguars dripping black blood snarl into view from beside the wagons. Two people get mauled immediately, and the crowd breaks. Terror spreads like a ripple in a pond.

NEVARD'S VISIONS

Once the party stops the monsters from attacking, or if they speak to him after the attack, Nevard can share the full extent of his vision.

"I saw a dark figure, standing atop Cauldron Hill, towering over our city. The sun set, and he cast a shadow across Parity Lake, stretching northwest, into the sea, beyond the horizon. He is born in our city, but his ultimate goal is elsewhere. And also things moved in his shadow—indeed, his shadow moved before he did, for while he was mighty, he was controlled by others."

"I saw smoke hiding his face, for he was made mighty by industry. In my vision, a king chased him out to sea and defeated him by slicing him free from his shadow. But the cauldron had already shattered, and many thousands were drowned and devoured in its roil."

"I saw three birds alight on the peak, the first of black silk, the second of black steel, both weeping blood. But the third was made of stars, and it sang many songs."

"I tell you this: Cauldron Hill is not safe. Twice will danger arise, and twice will we be deceived into thinking it is safe to return, but we must avoid the place and avoid being tricked. I have arranged shelter in the Cloudwood, where people can be safe until the darkness passes."

Nevard also saw other visions, but he's less certain what these mean, so he did not plan to tell them to the public.

A woman sat on a leather couch in a waiting room, surrounded by red curtains. She held a gold coin and rolled it across the back of her fingers. A pick lay against the side of the couch. He asked her what she was waiting for, and she answered in a language he didn't know, saying, "The place I'm going isn't here yet."

A trumpeter carried a lantern onto the stage of a darkened theater, and the people gathered for his performance applauded, then lit lanterns of their own. The theater never got bright enough for him to see their faces.

One man tore himself in two, and his twin selves fought over a woman, tearing her into three, who ran away. Mice skittered around them, collecting cheese fallen amid the rails of a trainyard. Then a train roared down the track past him, but it had no conductor driving it. In the distance it derailed, and crushed two of the women, but he couldn't which of the three survived.

A man carrying a bronze staff with three keyholes is assailed by swords and arrows and fire, but nothing kills him. He began to take off his robes, revealing tiger fur beneath them, while stars fell from the sky all around him. Then the sky was dark, and when the sun should have risen, instead a pale glowing cloud floated in the dark.

Finally, he saw a tyrant and murderer in prison, hanging from twelve chains and hooks that pierced her feet, her legs, her thighs, her shoulders, her arms, and her hands. But the thirteenth hook that sealed her mouth swung loose, and it fluttered in the breeze as she whispered a map that led everywhere.

Setup.

- ♦ 5 Flayed Jaguars
- ♦ 10 Disguised Skeletons

Flayed Jaguar

Level 6 Skirmisher

Medium shadow beast

XP 250

HP 68; **Bloodied** 34

Initiative +9

AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18

Perception +4

Speed 8

Darkvision

Resist 5 necrotic

Traits

► Corrupted Blood

You deliver a wretched wound to the flayed, unnaturally strong flesh of the jaguar. Its black blood sizzles and releases a horrid stench where it stains the ground.

Whenever an attack hits the jaguar, if it is bloodied after the damage, the square it is currently occupying is corrupted until the end of the encounter. If the damage kills it, the jaguar's space and each adjacent square becomes corrupted. When a creature enters a corrupted space or starts its turn there, the creature takes 5 necrotic damage.

► Witchoil Vessel

A steel plate is bolted directly into the ribcage of the poor creature, and black oil leaks in pulses, like the beating of a heart.

As a standard action, a character adjacent to the jaguar can make a Strength check (DC 10) to tear free the steel plate over its chest. The character takes a –1 penalty to this check for each square the jaguar moved on its last turn, unless the jaguar is immobilized or prone. If the plate is removed, the jaguar takes ongoing 10 damage, and any attack that hits it kills it.

► Command Collar

A tattered leather collar hangs around the monster's neck.

If a creature successfully grabs the jaguar, it can say the command word "Obey." Thereafter the flayed jaguar treats that creature as an ally and will obey its verbal commands.

Standard Actions

☞ **Claw** ♦ At-Will, Basic

You can see the muscles of the skinless jaguar flex as it swipes a claw at your leg and trips you.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6+7 damage. If the jaguar hits the target with this power as an opportunity attack, it knocks the target prone.

✓ **Maul** ♦ At-Will

Requirement: The target must be prone.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 3d6+8 damage, and the target cannot stand up until the end of the jaguar's next turn.

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +12

Str 12 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+4)

Con 12 (+4) **Int** 2 (–1) **Cha** 6 (+1)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —



Disguised Skeleton

Level 1 Minion Brute

Medium natural animate (undead), human

XP 25

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion

Initiative +3

AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12

Perception -1

Speed 6

Darkvision

Immune poison

Standard Actions⚔ **Overwhelming Rush** ♦ At-Will, Basic

The slender druid charges toward you, and as it slams you to the ground, its mask slips loose, revealing a skull daubed with blue sigils.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 4 damage, and the target is pushed one square. If the skeleton charged, the skeleton and the target are both knocked prone.

Str 15 (+2) Dex 16 (+3) Wis 8 (-1)

Con 13 (+1) Int 6 (-2) Cha 6 (-2)

Alignment Unaligned Languages —

Noncombatants.

Hundreds of people are waiting in front of the stage, and a few behind, but they fle as soon as combat begins. Nevard (stats on page xx) and a retinue of twelve people stand on the stage. Nevard's retinue are essentially noncombatants—all have 1 hit point and defenses of 10—but they stay on the stage unless ordered otherwise. Indeed, though they have no chance of harming the cats, they resolutely stand between the monsters and Nevard, hoping to protect him.

Nevard is no longer under the effects of the ritual that protected him on Cauldron Hill. A single hit might lay him low.

Terrain.

Place the two wagons by the western corners of the stage. Each is 2 squares long and 1 square wide.

The high ground of the stage is easily defensible, but the cats can climb up the scaffolding (Athletics DC 10) if the stairs are blocked.

Three 40-ft. tall spires form a triangle around the fountain. Each spire is capped with a gaslight lantern. Each spire just consists of a wooden truss and a thin metal pipe, and they are hazardously easy to break (Strength DC 15). If broken, the tower crashes sideways like a sawed tree, and a geyser of flame shoots out of the ground where the spire stood. Any creature entering the square or ending its turn there takes 15 fire damage.

Aside from its role as portal for flayed jaguars, the ring of trees and the fountain are relatively mundane. Fleeing off the map is possible, but it's another three hundred feet in any direction before reaching armed allies, and the cats are faster than Nevard by far.

Tactics.

The skeletons' last order from Creed is to ram their wagons into the spires, with the expectation being that the fire hazard will discourage Nevard from fleeing down the stairs. If possible, one skeleton makes a Strength check (DC 15) while the other four aid, for a total of a +10 bonus. Thereafter they split into groups of two or three to attack people who try to help Nevard.

The jaguars swarm the stage, but if Nevard gets away (or if the PCs manage to create a convincing fake to lure them off), the cats give chase.

Ten rounds after combat starts, police officers who managed to force their way through the panicked crowds start to reach the scene, one per round. Use the stats for Allied Officers (page xx).

Dawn Square

One square equals 5ft.

Aftermath.

The experiments on the jaguars will kill them within a few hours. Even if the PCs figure out some way to keep them alive, no, the RHC will not let them keep the creatures as pets.

If Nevard is killed, treat him instead as mortally wounded beyond what the PCs can possibly heal. He clings to life long enough to touch a PC's face, close their eyes, and impart a vivid memory of his vision, before finally perishing.

If Nevard survives the immediate threat, the strain on his heart is still severe. He'll be able to stagger to a place to lie down, and after assuring everyone he's alright, he'll ask to speak with the PCs. His voice grows weaker as he recounts his visions, and he might have enough time to offer a bit of advice before fatigue overcomes him, and he slips away.

Nevard has already sent letters with his vision to newspapers and gazettes in Flint and beyond, so the next morning the entire city will know his warning. People living in the slums of Cauldron Hill will begin packing up and leaving, and a day and a half after the attack, the hill will be a veritable ghost town.

CREED'S OFFER

Social. Real-Time. Level 5.

Knowing the investigation is near its end, Cillian Creed appeals to the patriotism of his enemy.

This scene only occurs if a PC has the Yerasol Veteran theme or has made a point of being vocally patriotic toward Risur. Some time during this thread, when they're close to figuring out Macbannin is responsible, perhaps even moments before the attack on Nevard, an urchin approaches the PC in question with a note. He says a scary shadow man told him to deliver it.

The note reads:

You are a patriot. Already once you have defended our kingdom against enemies within its borders. Know that what you are about to reveal will damage our nation. I cannot tell you more, but if you can convince your companions to abandon this investigation, soon you will understand. I have taken no joy in conspiring to thwart you, so I give you this last chance to leave with your life.

If the party does indeed decide to give up, the earthquake still occurs, which could draw them up to Cauldron Hill for the climax.

LOOSE ENDS

Puzzle. Montage. Level 4.

If any enemies have escaped or clues have gone undiscovered, the party must redouble their efforts to solve the mystery.

Most likely the party will have discovered that Macbannin is behind the beasts that attacked Nevard, and thus he is implicated, if not heavily involved, in the pursuit of Dr. von Recklinghausen, and therefore he must be up to something nefarious—something revealed in the documents Nilasa stole from the Danoran consulate. The party might have the documents themselves; if so, though it's a bit complicated, it does back up Macbannin as the villain. Or perhaps the PCs captured and interrogated the dragonborn arsonists, and back-tracked their contacts to Cillian Creed and then Reed Macbannin.

On the other hand, if the PCs are a little lost, it may be because there's a loose end they need to tie up. If the arsonists got away, perhaps Family spokesman Morgan Cippiano arranges a sting to give the party a chance to capture them. If the party never went to the warehouse laboratory, perhaps the police have managed to arrest one of the lab technicians—in this case, the tech got separated from the group and eventually slid back into the real world in an impossible place.

Do what's necessary to make sure the PCs can put all the pieces together without putting the pieces together for them. Then they can decide how to deal with Macbannin. Stover Delft wants the party to at least recuperate after the fight with the cats, which will give him time to acquire a warrant to search Macbannin's manor and give the PCs time to call in a favor and get some back-up. If the party rushes in, they run the risk of getting overwhelmed and giving the villain a chance to escape. As a precaution, Delft recommends the party stay at a safehouse tonight.

The recommendation is smart, because if Creed knows where the PCs are, he might try to kill them in their sleep. But he's wary, and won't walk into a trap. Naturally, we don't actually recommend ending the adventure with each PC being coup de graced and injected with deadly poison—that'd be bad form.

As for Macbannin, the mayor suspects he might be exposed, but he's not going to run and look guilty. He knows Governor Stanfield will cover for him, and that it's easy enough to eliminate evidence or silence witnesses. Plus, the tremors have gotten stronger since Leone Quital came over to help recover Dr. von Recklinghausen, so Macbannin wants to stay and tend to the witchoil reservoir beneath his manor. However, these same tremors will ruin his chances of keeping things quiet.



CLIMAX: MACBANNIN'S MANOR

In this act, the party's attempt to take down Mayor Reed Macbannin is interrupted by an earthquake.

MACBANNIN'S SURRENDER

Social. Real-Time. Level 6.

You don't think he's really going to surrender, do you?

Macbannin goes about business as usual, though he calls in a few more bodyguards than usual, including a few on Lorcan Kell's payroll. When the PCs arrive, guards greet them at the gate and try to stall for a few minutes until Macbannin gives approval. The PCs might negotiate, threaten, or sneak in (Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Stealth DC 23), and so catch the mayor unaware while he's in the underground laboratory.

Otherwise Macbannin has time to prepare, and he makes a showing of coming out of his main manor and greeting the party in his garden. Cillian Creed lurks in the house, in his normal butler guise, watching through a window.

Preposterous.

Macbannin asks what they want, and after hearing their claims his expression darkens.

"So you found me out?" He shakes his fist melodramatically, "And when I was so close to finally unlocking this *mountain's dark power!*"

Then he grins. "Come on, be serious," he says, with the tone of someone who's done humoring small children's fantasies. He continues in the tone of someone who's entreating others to be reasonable: "You haven't told anyone about this yet, have you? You seem like good people—and good officers, too, I'm sure—and I wouldn't want to see you get in trouble for," he chuckles, "jumping to *wild* conclusions. I appreciate your diligence... but I have nothing to hide!"

At this, he spreads his hands wide. "Here," he says, decisively. "I'll show you I'm not up to anything. Allow me to give you the guided tour! Take as long as you want to look for anything amiss. Do we want to start in the basement? That's where the villain's always getting up to his nefarious deeds of ill import, right? Or the attic? Isn't that where the villain is always stashing the evidence of dark goings-on? What's your pleasure?"

Allow the interaction to go on for a little while, during which the PCs notice house staff watching from windows and balconies, and a few gardeners not doing any work, just tense and waiting for a cue to fight. Just before tensions reach a head—when someone announces their intention to attack, or the PCs agree to take the tour (which would lead to an ambush), or Macbannin is caught in a lie—the ground begins to tremble. If a PC just spontaneously opens hostilities, the earthquake erupts at the end of the next turn.

EARTHQUAKE

Action. Tactical. Level 6.

As Cauldron Hill shakes itself apart, the party must stop Macbannin from escaping.

A titanically strong colossus lies beneath Cauldron Hill in the Bleak Gate, and of late it has strained at its bonds. In an effort to use witchoil as fuel, Macbannin has begun to pump huge amounts of the substance from a subterranean reservoir in the Bleak Gate, into the colossus' 'heart.' Soon after the PCs arrive, the amount of witchoil causes the colossus to spasm in pain. This shakes the mountain from within and triggers an earthquake.

Several seconds of deep rumbling precedes a deafening crack as a fissure cuts its way directly through Macbannin's manor house. The rear half of the house heaves upward 10 feet, and the rest sways and crumples, threatening to collapse completely. The hiss of fluid under pressure comes from within the damaged structure, followed by the horrified screams of dozens of workers. A moment later the wretched stench of burnt oil wafts through the garden in a thin, visible fog, and flowers begin to wilt.





Macbannin's eyes widen with shock, but he recovers with amazing aplomb. Almost casually he shouts to the window where his butler is watching. "Creed, check the reservoir. Everybody else, kill these people for me."

The Kell-Guild guards take the distraction as a cue to attack the party, and the house staff follow their lead.

Setup.

- ♦ Mayor Reed Macbannin
- ♦ 22 Macbannin house staff
- ♦ 2 Kell-Guild scoundrels

Mayor Reed Macbannin

Level 7 Controller (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 300

HP 76; **Bloodied** 38

Initiative +4

AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 21

Perception +6

Speed 6

Traits

► Scholar of Hexes

"I have to warn you guys," Macbannin says. "I'm not much of a fighter, but I happen to have studied about a thousand different curses, and there's a little situation over in my garden shed I need to deal with. I'm not going to take it easy on you."

Macbannin can hex creatures (see *hex touch*). Whenever a hexed creature attacks Macbannin, Macbannin curses that creature with one of the curses listed below. He can use each of these curses only once per encounter. If he has already used all three, the creature instead takes 10 psychic damage.

☼ Abjuration Mastery ♦ Aura 5

Macbannin sighs as his house crumbles behind him. "I've been keeping this city safe from evil forces for decades. Now a couple of chumps with badges come and start messing with my staff and, I gotta say, it's kinda rubbing me the wrong way."

Whenever a creature makes an attack roll against one of Macbannin's allies within the aura, the creature rolls twice and takes the worse result.

Standard Actions

☞ Hex Touch (psychic) ♦ At-Will, Basic

A dull black sigil floats in front of Macbannin's hand, and he holds it warily at you, trying to fend you off.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8+2 psychic damage, and the target is hexed until the end of the encounter.

✧ Tolling of the Bleak Bell (psychic) ♦ At-Will

The world darkens and you hear a distant hollow bell, calling you toward the end of existence.

Attack: Area Burst 1 within 10 (enemies in burst); +10 vs. Will

Hit: 1d8+2 psychic damage, and the target is insubstantial, slowed, and weakened until the end of Macbannin's next turn.

Minor Actions

► Break Enchantment ♦ At-Will, 1/round

With a wave of his hand, Macbannin dismisses an unpleasant effect.

Effect: Macbannin ends one curse affecting a creature within 10 squares, or grants himself or an ally within 10 squares a saving throw.

Skills Arcana +12, Bluff +14, Diplomacy +14, Insight +11, Nature +12, Religion +12

Str 8 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+6)

Con 12 (+4) **Int** 18 (+7) **Cha** 18 (+7)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Giant, Primordial

MACBANNIN'S CURSES

► Curse of the Cacophony ♦ Encounter

Once again the mad song of mountain-top surrounds you, louder than ever before, shrieking and screaming in sadistic glee until your ears bleed and you lash out at anything just to make it stop.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, the target is deafened, grants combat advantage, and treats all creatures as enemies. It must take opportunity attacks if possible.

At the end of the target's turn it can make a Perception check (DC 23) to recognize the cacophony as illusory and end the curse. Any creature adjacent to the target can spend a standard action to make a Religion check (DC 23) to chant a prayer that will nullify the curse until the end of that creature's next turn.

► Curse of the White-Eyed Doppelganger ♦ Encounter

Your voice chuckles quietly from behind your ear. You spin and see an exact duplicate of you, except for the eyes, which are flat white.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever the target makes an attack, he repeats the attack against himself, and perceives his doppelganger attacking him. The doppelganger only exists in the target's mind, and nothing can damage or affect it.

At the end of the target's turn it can make an Insight check (DC 23) to recognize the doppelganger as illusory and end the curse. Any creature adjacent to the target can spend a standard action to make a Religion check (DC 23) to chant a prayer that will nullify the curse until the end of that creature's next turn.

► Curse of the Writhing Cauldron ♦ Encounter

"Last chance!" Macbannin shouts. "Surrender or I'll hollow him out!" Sudden agony streaks up your throat, and you vomit a black centipede. The pain only grows, and you feel a mass writhing in your stomach, devouring you from within.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever the target performs a standard action it takes damage equal to its bloodied value. If the target is dies, it erupts into a harmless swarm of centipedes.

Any creature adjacent to the target can spend a standard action to make a Religion check (DC 23) to chant a prayer that will nullify the curse until the end of that creature's next turn.

Macbannin House Staff

Level 2 Minion Lurker

Medium natural humanoid, human

XP 31

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion

Initiative +5

AC 14, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 14 **Perception** +2

Speed 6

Standard Actions

☒ Makeshift Weapon (weapon) ♦ At-Will, Basic

Some of them have sickles, some have rakes, and some just hoist a hefty brick and get ready to bash you.

Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 10 damage

Effect: The staffperson's weapon is destroyed or lost. He or she must spend a standard action to acquire a new weapon from the surrounding environment.

Skills Stealth +6

Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 10 (+1) **Wis** 13 (+2)

Con 10 (+1) **Int** 13 (+2) **Cha** 13 (+2)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

Macbannin's Manor

One square equals 5ft.

Medium natural humanoid, human

Level 4 Brute

XP 175

Initiative +3

Perception +8

Standard Actions

You're not sure where he hid all those things, but he doesn't seem to be running out of blades.

Attack: Melee 1 or Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8+6 damage. If the scoundrel is grabbing the target, he can slide it 1 square.

Minor Actions

✂ **Kidnap** ♦ At-Will

The scoundrel grabs you and uses you as a human shield.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is grabbed (Escape DC 15). Until the target escapes, the scoundrel can use the target as cover.

Skills Bluff +11, Perception +8, Stealth +8

Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+3)

Con 15 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+4)

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial

The two Kell-Guild scoundrels tend to the garden, trying to look innocuous (Insight DC 21) while maneuvering behind the cover of hedges or benches. The garden is surrounded on three sides by a covered walkway. Pillars support balconies on the second floor, and the house staff are split between these balconies and the open windows of first floor rooms.

Between the gate and the manor's entrance, the garden is a 100-ft. square, if you include the walkways. To represent the upheaval caused by the earthquake, each round at initiative count 0, roll a d20 and count from the west a number of squares equal to the roll, then repeat and count down from the north. This is the nexus of a sinkhole.

The sinkhole nexus and each adjacent square collapses into a 5-ft. deep pit. Any creature in the central square falls into the pit, and creatures adjacent can make an Acrobatics check (DC 10) to shift 1 square away and fall prone. Otherwise it also falls into the pit.

Repeat this each round, and whenever you create a new sinkhole, the last sinkhole begins to flood with witchoil. A creature that enters or ends its turn in a witchoil-flooded square takes 5 necrotic damage.

If you create a sinkhole in a space that already has collapsed, instead a geyser of witchoil sprays into the air. Any creature that enters or ends its turn within 2 squares of a geyser takes 5 necrotic damage. If a creature enters the geyser's square it takes 10 necrotic damage and is pushed to the nearest open space.

If a sinkhole opens in a space with a column, creatures on the balcony above fall, and those below take 10 damage and are restrained (Escape DC 15).

After ten rounds, the quake dies out.

Tactics.

When the earthquake begins, the Kell-Guild scoundrels advance on the PCs to keep them off Macbannin. Macbannin sees this as an opportunity to silence the PCs, so he moves to defend as many of his allies as possible while hindering, hexing, and cursing the PCs.

The house staff on the balconies use ranged attacks until they see any balcony section collapse, at which point they hurriedly climb down. The house staff on the ground level make ranged attacks as they emerge from the house, then charge and try to take down the party with force of numbers.

Aftermath.

If Macbannin and his crew defeat the party, they leave them for dead in the face of advancing slicks of witchoil. Some kindly house staff who weren't in the fight might pull the party to safety while Macbannin runs to the laboratory beneath his garden shed.

If the party triumphs, Macbannin will bargain for their help. He says that if the flow isn't stopped in his laboratory, the whole mountain will collapse, releasing all the evil spirits trapped within. He's exaggerating (Insight DC 24), but if pressed he explains that he has truly gargantuan quantities of this deadly oil in his basement, and if the pressure isn't relieved it will erupt, flow down the mountain, and kill everything in its path. Of course, only he knows how to adjust the flow to avert that. He's still exaggerating (Insight DC 24).

INDUSTRIAL DISASTER

Action/Puzzle. Tactical. Level 7.

A torrent of soul-devouring witchoil threatens the city, and the party must either stop or divert its flow while Macbannin's forces try to silence them.

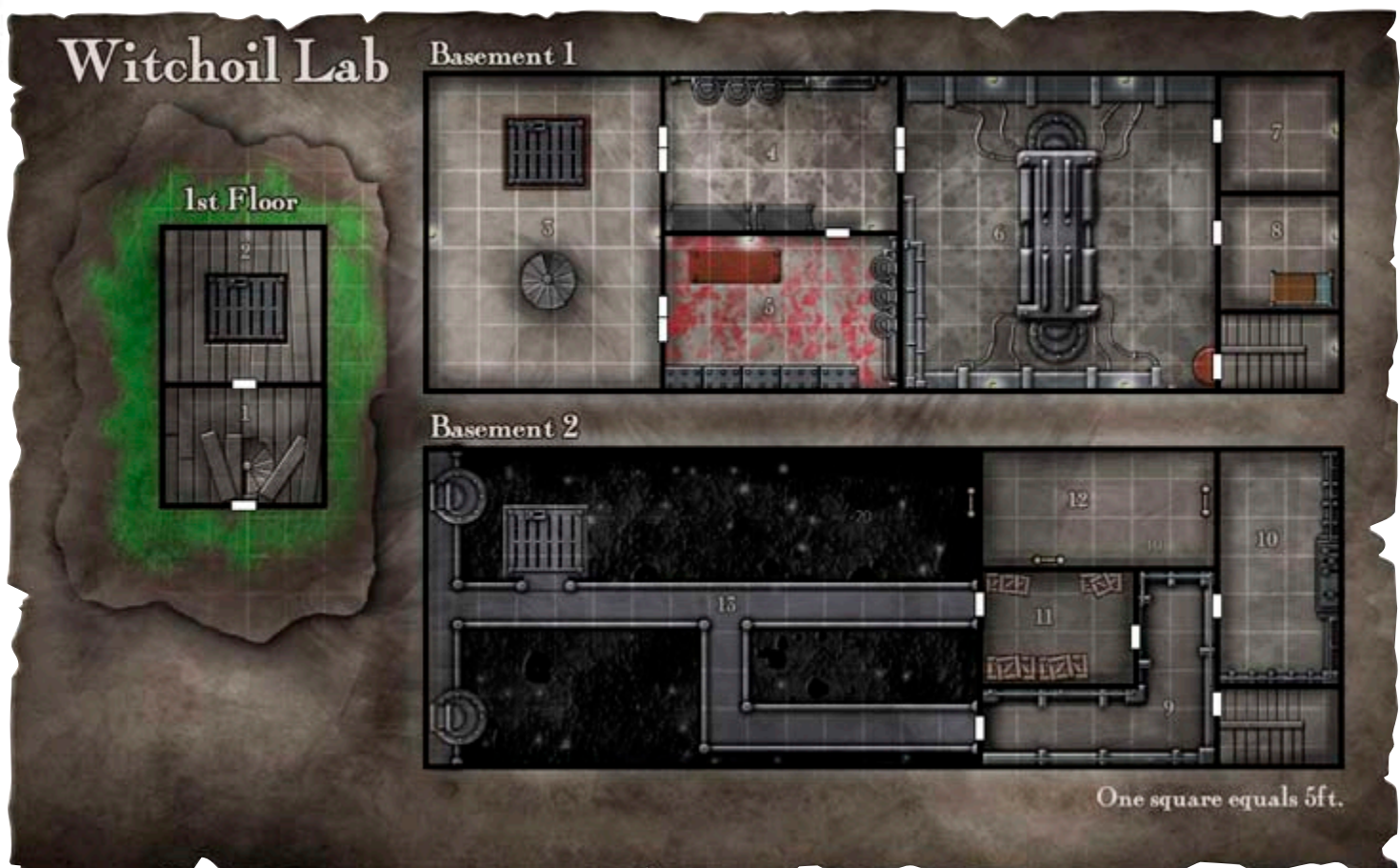
Macbannin's workshop and laboratory is hidden under his garden shed. It lies partially in the Bleak Gate, and rusted ring gates restrict access so only people wearing the appropriate amulets can see and enter it.

Macbannin has spent the past several years crafting an eldritch machine to refine witchoil on a massive scale, and designing an engine suitable for the colossus which uses the oil as fuel. Secondary experiments used witchoil in the creation of golems and monsters, and at the bottom of the lab is a huge reservoir of the substance.

Now the earthquake has damaged key components, and the laboratory is minutes away from erupting in the worst industrial disaster the world has ever seen.

Layout.

Rooms inside the laboratory Basement Level 1 are in total darkness, but when the engine in Area 6 is turned on, bright lights come on. Basement Level 2 is in total darkness, and its lights have been destroyed.



1. Shed Entrance.

When the party enters, the planks covering the secret entrance have been removed, revealing a rusted ring and a seemingly solid floor of stone. However, a woman lies dead here, clutching an armful of amulets, her body half in the ground. Her head was crushed by a falling piece of the ceiling right as she came up a spiral staircase. If the PCs put on the amulets, they can see and pass through the rusted ring.

2. Lift.

A primitive elevator here can descend into the basement, but it too passes through a rusted ring, and so requires passengers to have amulets. It has no walls, just an open floor and a lever to control ascent or descent. If a character spends a minor action to control the level, at initiative count 0 the lift travels 5 ft. in the desired direction.

3. Laboratory Foyer.

Toppled blackboards here list experiments scheduled in the lab. There's enough discarded paper and supplies to suggest a good dozen people managed to flee here in the past few minutes. The air stinks of burnt oil, and snarls come from the door to Area 5.

4. Golem Lab.

Oil stains the floor, the mark of experiments that created the Bleak Golem and others like it. Spare machine components sit on shelves, and pipes on the north wall dribble witchoil through tiny fissures.

5. Monster Lab.

Fresh blood streaks the floor amid dismembered bodies. Three flayed jaguars broke free from their cages during the quake, and they had no command collars, so they quickly mauled the technicians. Only one remains in this room, and it attacks madly as soon as someone opens the door.

♦ Flayed Jaguar (page xx)

6. Experimental Engine.

This huge device powers the lower level control room. It is currently off. The other two flayed jaguars prowl here, pawing at the door to Area 8. They are attracted to sounds of combat, though.

The floor in front of the stairway leading down has a pressure plate. A lever on the wall can toggle the pressure plate, but if it isn't turned off, a creature that steps into the square triggers a cleansing spray of air and fresh water. This grants the triggering character a save against each effect affecting him, and deals 10 damage to any creature with the shadow origin (such as the jaguars or Cillian Creed).

♦ 2 Flayed Jaguars (page xx)

7. Infirmary.

This room contains medical supplies, surgical tools, and anesthetic.

8. Temporary Cell.

With no better place to keep him, Macbannin locked up Wolfgang in this room, normally used by scientists sleeping in the lab overnight. The doctor is groggy, having just awoken. The mask that pumped anesthetizing gas slipped free in the quake, but his memory is still fuzzy. He just recalls being asked a lot of questions about his philosophical stances. He

was being tested, at the suggestion of Nicodemus the Gnostic, for possible recruitment to the cause. (This thread will resurface in later adventures.)

The door to the room is locked and trapped. Instead of having a normal knob or lever, there is a slot one must reach into, such that you slip your forearm fully into the wall. At the far end is a lever that releases the door's locking mechanism. It also, if not disabled, tries to sever the person's arm.

Attack: +14 vs. AC. Hit: 2d12+6 damage and make the following attack.

Secondary Attack: +14 vs. Fortitude. Hit: The target's arm is severed above the wrist. The target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

The trap's blade is hard to spot (Perception DC 23) but easy to guess. Disabling is also a cinch (Thievery DC 12). If someone does lose their arm, Wolfgang says he just needs a surgery kit and some ritual components and he can fix that before the limb gets cold.

If Wolfgang was not captured, instead a terrified tech hides inside from the jaguars; in this case, the trap is not activated.

9. Manual Feed Hall.

This tunnel is lined with pipes. If someone were very familiar with the system, it is possible to adjust the flow of witchoil from here, but the PC will need to use the control room in Area 10. From here the PCs can hear the irregular bubbling of backflowing oil, but above it all rings a shrill alarm bell from inside Area 10, incurring a -2 penalty to Perception checks.

10. Control Room.

Until the engine in Area 6 is turned on, this room just consists of a lot of dead dials and frozen levers and knobs. An alarm rings, but it can be turned off with a switch.

The northwest end of the room has no wall, but rather is open to Area 12. A ladder descends, but when the PCs arrive the area below is overflowing with witchoil.

11. Supply Room.

Here the party can find pipe covers, tools, and lanterns. The north end of the room has no wall, and is open to Area 12.

12. Eldritch Machine.

The walls of this lowered room are completely covered with sigils, runes, and prayers to control the tiny device at its west end. Near the edge of the platform, overlooking the basin of Area 13, a section of pipe sits on a metal frame. Oil flows out one end, despite there being no source of oil from the other direction. A simple control panel manages the speed of the witchoil flow. When the PCs arrive, however, this area is flooded 5 ft. deep (15 ft. deeper than the normal depth listed on the map), making the device inaccessible.

13. Reservoir.

Catwalks, normally 20 ft. above the pool of oil, now rise only 5 ft. over the perilous sludge. Giant pipes on the west end direct oil to two possible outflows. The lowest platform level of the lift stops here. The catwalks have firm railings, so creatures gain a +5 bonus to saves to avoid being pushed off the edge.

On the west end, two huge pipes dribble witchoil from their seams. The north one is labeled "Down," and the south one is labeled "Relief."

DISASTER AVOIDANCE FOR DUMMIES.

In addition to the general hazards of the laboratory, there are four main laboratory components with which the PCs can interact. If they can control these machines properly, they might avert a cataclysm. Characters with the Technologist theme automatically understand how these mechanisms function upon seeing them. Others must work through trial and error.

Unless otherwise noted, skill checks mentioned below require a standard action to perform.

- ♦ **General Hazards.** A creature that ends its turn submerged in witchoil takes 10 points of necrotic damage. It is possible to swim through the oil (Athletics DC 10).
- ♦ Wards prevent a cascade explosion from stray sparks, at least within the lab, but if an attack deals fire damage to a square of witchoil, that square and each adjacent to it release a burst of wailing spirits, which blinds creatures in that square until the end of their next turn. It also turns the damaged square into a viscous tar, immobilizing creatures in the square (save ends).
- ♦ **Experimental Engine (Area 6).** Macbannin and his technicians have devised a massive internal combustion engine that runs on witchoil. This engine must be running in order for the control room (Area 10) to work. It also provides power for the lights in Basement Level 1. The quake shut down the engine, and to restart it, first you must prime it (Intelligence DC 10), then align the energized throttle with the flow from the reservoir (Arcana DC 24), then pull the start cord (Strength DC 10).
- ♦ Unfortunately, the quake also damaged some valves, which can be spotted with a close inspection (Perception DC 15). Starting the engine without first repairing them sprays the whole room with witchoil, dealing 5 necrotic damage whenever a creature ends its turn in the room. Turning off the engine is a standard action.
- ♦ Supplies to effect repairs are in Area 11, and it takes a total of five successful Intelligence checks (DC 10) to repair the engine with proper supplies. The engine functions fine even if its leaks aren't repaired.
- ♦ **Control Room (Area 10).** Various pipes, valves, and pumps can be monitored from here once power is restored. Also, the PCs can activate the pumps as a standard action, and adjust the flow to off, slow, medium, or fast. They default to off.

- ♦ At slow, 1 ft. of oil is pumped out per minute (reducing the depth of the oil flood by 1 ft.). Medium pumps 1 ft. per round. Fast pumps 5 ft. per round. If the pumps are on *and* the eldritch machine in Area 12 are both on, their effects might partially offset each other.
- ♦ **Eldritch Machine (Area 12).** Macbannin used an eldritch machine to slice open the veil between this world and the Bleak Gate, then refine the leaking energy into liquid form. The eldritch machine, shaped like a pipe with glowing red runes, functions as an endless spigot of witchoil.
- ♦ The eldritch machine sits at the edge of the ladder down to Area 13. A creature next to it can as a minor action adjust the flow to off, slow, medium, or fast. The controls are easy to operate, and a red warning latch keeps people from shifting to "fast" by accident. At the start of the encounter, the eldritch machine is set to medium, but is actually submerged in 5 ft. of oil, making it nigh inaccessible.
- ♦ At the current flow rate, the oil will get 1 ft. deeper every minute. At slow it's 1 ft. every 10 minutes. At fast it's 1 ft. per round.
- ♦ If the machine is set to off, a character can spend a standard action to try to seal the rift (Arcana DC 24), which cuts off the flow permanently. Moving or smashing the machine (200 hp) also closes the rift.
- ♦ **Witchoil Reservoir (Area 13).** Hundreds of thousands of gallons of the oil sit in a reservoir at the bottom of the laboratory. Small pipes run from the reservoir to various experiments upstairs and also deep into the mountain.
- ♦ On the west wall, the large north pipe, labeled "Down," leads hundreds of feet deeper into the mountain, feeding into the colossus assembly hangar. The south one, labeled "Relief," leads sideways to vent onto the north face of Cauldron Hill, uphill from hillside slums. A heavy steel wheel on the wall can be rotated (Strength DC 10) to switch the flow between the two pipes.
- ♦ When the reservoir got too deep, a fail-safe sealed the Down pipe and opened the Relief pipe, but the quake collapsed the part of the mountain the Relief pipe runs through, which has blocked flow. Now the reservoir is 15 ft. deeper than the normal level, which is marked on the map.
- ♦ If a character cares to commit suicide, the reservoir's bottom is 40 ft. below the listed oil level.

The Problem.

The eldritch machine is pumping oil into the reservoir, but the outflow Relief pipe is crushed and blocked. If untreated, in five minutes the laboratory will be unsalvageable. Half an hour later oil will start to bubble to the surface, and Macbannin's manor will eventually turn into a perpetual fountain of deadly oil, pouring down the side of the mountain and into Parity Lake.

The PCs have to be careful if they try to fix this mess. If they turn on the engine without repairing it, they might kill themselves. When the engine turns on, pumps try to purge the overflow witchoil down the Relief pipe, which creates dangerous pressure that could eventually explode the mountain face. And even if they do things right, Cillian Creed is waiting to attack while they're distracted.

The Solutions.

The party can solve things several ways.

Ideal Solution.

This procedure ends the flow of witchoil completely with no risk of further damage.

- ♦ Fix the engine's leaks, then turn on the engine. (Area 6)
- ♦ Switch the oil outflow from the Relief pipe to the Down pipe. (Area 13)
- ♦ Turn on the pumps. To quickly drain the reservoir, set them to fast. (Area 10)
- ♦ Once the oil level goes down enough, switch the eldritch machine to off. Destroy or disenchant the eldritch machine. (Area 12)
- ♦ Turn off the pumps. (Area 12)

Dangerous Pressure.

If the party turns on the pumps without switching the oil outflow, pressure builds up in the Relief pipe, and oil seeps into the cracked stone of the mountain face. After 5 ft. of oil is pumped down this pipe, the pipe begins to shudder and an alarm rings again. After 10 ft. of oil is pumped down this pipe, metallic screeching comes from the walls, and a handful of sparks start to fly as pipes crack and scrape stone. If 15 ft. of oil is pumped out this way, the underground pumps explode, and the entire reservoir of witchoil catches on fire.

Twenty rounds later, fire travels down the pipe and the northern cliff face explodes in a cloud of screaming spirits and a rain of burning necrotic tar.

Trigger Another Quake.

If the party does switch to the Down pipe, but doesn't turn off the pumps, the reservoir is emptied, which causes a horrible accident deep in the colossus construction hangar. The colossus is angered by the continued spray of witchoil, and it shakes again, provoking an aftershock. If the PCs don't turn off the flow downward, the quake continues for a minute, at which point the laboratory collapses on itself.

It's worse if they do this and don't turn off the eldritch machine, in which case after the laboratory collapses, the witchoil flows down the hillside forever.

Battle Below.

Cillian Creed arrived here before the earthquake finished, and he ordered the lab technicians out. When the flayed jaguars got loose he withdrew as well, then hid at a spot on the surface where he could observe the manor's main gate and the laboratory entrance. The technicians who escaped assured him the witchoil was safe, so Creed switched to his other goals: kill the PCs and help Macbannin escape.

If the PCs head to the lab but don't take Macbannin with them, Creed tries to rescue the mayor, at which point Macbannin insists they head into the laboratory to make sure the eldritch machine is shut off. Macbannin may be the villain, but he doesn't want to see his city suffer if he can avoid it. Alternately, if Macbannin defeated the PCs, they might come upon Creed and Macbannin mere rounds after they have cleared out debris and reached Basement Level 1.

In either situation, Macbannin's magic lets him control the flayed jaguars, so he, Creed, and the jaguars form a challenging Level 7 encounter. Add three house staff minions for every quarter of Macbannin's HP he is missing; if he was knocked out, he starts at only one-quarter (19 HP).

More likely, though, the party has Macbannin in tow, cuffed so he cannot use magic against them. He can still run, though, and shout warnings to his allies. In this case, the party confronts the three flayed jaguars first. Then before they have a chance to rest, Creed and two Kell-Guild ambush the party, preferably after they turn on the pumps, when the noise makes it harder to hear them sneaking up.



The scoundrels descend the stairs and try to shove the PCs off ledges into witchoil, while Creed clammers down the lift cable to the platform in Area 13, and tries to attack the party from behind. Alternately, Creed might use a belt to tie the lift's handle in the down position, causing it to descend to Area 13 and draw the party's attention while he and his allies approach from behind.

Unlike his previous encounters with the party, Creed will not flee until his enemies are silenced, or he himself is dead.

Aftermath.

By the end of this encounter it should be clear that Macbannin was working with or for some other entity. His *geas* magically prevents him from talking about the rest of the conspiracy controlled by Leone, but it's obvious that Macbannin was pumping witchoil *somewhere*. No one else at his manor knows where it was headed, though a few suspect it was for a military project, sanctioned by the king himself.

If the party failed to shut down the witchoil flow, there's either an ongoing industrial disaster as oil pours into the lake, or a short-duration one from an explosion that wiped out huge swaths of slums downhill of the manor. Luckily, the people of The Nettles heeded skyseer Nevard's warning, and everyone had evacuated beforehand.

Police and military reach the manor within a half hour and help the party take people into custody. Though PCs are notorious for their tenacity, they're just one cog in the machine of justice, and so requests to stay with Macbannin will be refused. The mayor will be held in a top-security cell in the main courthouse in Central district, but he is owed legal counsel without the presence of authorities.

The manor building itself has caught fire, and continues to burn into the night, a beacon visible as far as The Ayres.

SUMMONS TO COURT

Social. Real-Time. Level 5.

The party is called to testify on the events of their case, but Macbannin's ultimate fate just poses more questions.

We don't expect you to drag the party through legal proceedings, but Stover Delft tells them to get their stories straight immediately, because they'll be called to testify. Macbannin had a lot of powerful friends, and though the evidence seems overwhelming against him, any inconsistencies could sink the case.

As early as the next morning, the party is summoned to court to speak with a judge, while city governor Roland Stanfield is in attendance. A full hearing is scheduled, with as many witnesses as can be found being brought in to clear things up. Reporters and crowds of angry factory workers or disbelieving Nettles residents throng outside. Elite abjurors are present to protect the gathered officials in case Macbannin somehow attempts to use magic.

Then, when the hearing is set to begin, Macbannin is late. There's a bit of a commotion, and if the party doesn't rush to the cell themselves, the police call for them. In a secure room, past guards and dozens of witnesses, Macbannin lies dead, having smashed his head repeatedly into the wall until his skull cracked. Mingled with the smell of fresh blood is the rich smoke of leaf of Nicodemus.

The horrified guards who were watching him say he had seemed fairly amicable, as if he was looking forward to the trial. But then he swayed, slumped onto his cot, and started whispering to himself for a few minutes. They were wary in case he was trying the 'sick prisoner' trick, but they knew the cell would stop him from using his magic.

A bit later he nodded, stood back up, and asked one of them if he could borrow a cigarette. He smoked slowly, and didn't talk to them again until he finished. Then he thanked them, stretched his shoulders, and killed himself.

If a Spirit Medium tries to talk to his ghost, his spirit is not present.


What Happened?

Governor Stanfield contacted Nicodemus the Gnostic, head of the Obscurati, and informed him of the incident. Nicodemus traveled in spirit form, slipped through the walls of the courthouse, and possessed Macbannin's body. In a brief conversation, mostly internal between the two minds, Nicodemus offered Macbannin a chance to join the ghost council of the Obscurati. Then, with Macbannin's approval, he ended the body's life, then fled, carrying Macbannin's soul with him.

CONCLUSION

With the key suspect dead, the trial is wrapped up fairly quickly. The PCs are in the spotlight in Flint, but they manage to avoid retribution from Macbannin's allies. There are still threads of leads in the case, but the head of the Flint branch of the RHC, Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby, assigns that to other agents, claiming she wants the party to take a break so their notoriety doesn't disrupt the investigation.

As they'll learn in Adventure Three: *Digging for Lies*, this is just a way of killing the case, but the party will have enough bureaucratic red tape to keep them busy for months. The city puts out the fires, but can't yet rebuild the damage on Cauldron Hill. The Nettles grow more restless and lawless, and its new mayor serves from an office in Central. Violence between factory workers and bribed police intensifies. The Ragman takes another few victims.

But at least one day, a week after Macbannin commits suicide, the city holds a moment of silence. Thousands attend Nevard's state funeral, and if the PCs walk through the procession to view his body, they can spot Gale, observing and approving from afar. That night, the sky over Flint is clear, and the stars shine brightly, as if promising there is still a future yet unknown. 



DM QUICK REFERENCE

NPC QUICK REFERENCE FOR DMS

- ♦ **Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft.** Party's boss. Chews tobacco. Cane. Spits. Good-natured.
- ♦ **Nilasa Hume.** Dead, but formerly upbeat, spirited, pretty. People wanted to impress her.
- ♦ **Consular Security Chief Julian LeBrix.** War veteran. Squinty and cautious. Wears a pistol. Too curious for own good. Investigated Danoran factories, but was told to stop by superiors.
- ♦ **Thames Grimsley.** Grizzled sailor. Leads docker union. Dislikes police. Oratorical, theatrical speech patterns. Pause for dramatic effect a lot.
- ♦ **Morgan Cippiano.** Leads Flint branch of Family. Bald. Gravelly voice. Wears hook pendant of the Clergy. Talks fashion. Very reasonable and friendly. Wants to "trade favors."
- ♦ **Heward Sechim.** Alchemist and tinkerer. Heavy gloves with acid burns. Owns factory where Nilasa lived. Quirky and charmingly reckless, but generous to his workers. Harassed by criminals.
- ♦ **Skyseer Nevard Sechim.** Days away from dying of old age. Too old to waste time sparing people's feelings. A bit rascally. Blind in bright light. Chest-length beard. Remembers a century of history, but prefers to talk about the future. Asks people what they look forward to.
- ♦ **Mayor Reed Macbannin.** Politician. Phenomenal liar. Likes to feign anger or shock, then switch to a winning smile to defuse situations with a laugh. Wears defensive necklace relic. Master of defense against the dark arts. Knows curses from Cauldron Hill witches. Under the effect of a powerful ritual that prevents him from talking about colossus plot.
- ♦ **Cillian Creed.** Former spy. Experiment-gone-awry infused him with Bleak Gate energy, melted his face. Hides behind magical disguises, but can attack through shadows. Usually incorporeal. Flees early in an encounter. Patriot who'd kill his own mother to protect Risur.
- ♦ **Hana "Gale" Soliogn.** Eladrin with wind magic. Flies constantly; supposedly impossible by most theories of magic. Was owned by a Danoran family with mining wealth. Uses terror and sabotage to hinder influence of Danor in Risur. Seeks approval of the Unseen Court.
- ♦ **Lorcan Kell.** Leader of thieves' guild. Ugly face. Fancy clothes and top hat. Lots of hidden knives. Torments 'good' people by threatening to harm them if they try to stop innocents being tortured. Not too clever. Relies on minions to run his guild.
- ♦ **Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen.** Surgeon-mage from malice state of Arrovia. On the run from a monster he created. Deadly precise with a sword. Goattee. Well-dressed. Apologetic and distrustful.
- ♦ **Leone Quitall.** Crisillyiri aristocrat. Head of colossus construction. Telekinetic control of metal. Clothing woven with metal strands. Savors fine cheese, particularly bromago. Arrogant. No sense of honor.
- ♦ **Eberardo.** Dragonborn arsonist warrior. Deep voice. Red scales. Huge sword. Not too proud to run. Loyal to brother Valando.
- ♦ **Valando.** Dragonborn arsonist pyromancer. Raspy voice. Red scales. Muscular for a wizard. Always keeps an eye out for an escape route. Loyal to brother Eberardo.

INVESTIGATION GUIDE FOR DMS

- ♦ **Timeline.** The adventure begins on the 1st day of summer. Keep track of how much time the PCs spend because some events occur on set days. The wand smuggler meeting, for instance, occurs the night of the 4th, and the villains find Wolfgang on the 7th if the party hasn't yet. If the party dallies, the earthquake atop Cauldron Hill strikes on the 10th.
- ♦ **Main Villains.** Reed Macbannin refines witchoil as fuel for the colossus. Witchoil is liquid essence of the Bleak Gate, and it captures souls of those who die nearby, then releases them when burnt. Macbannin's butler Cillian Creed is former spy, master of disguise, and does Macbannin's dirty work.
- ♦ **Minor Villains.** Lorcan Kell runs thieves' guild, smuggles to aid Macbannin. Leone Quital handles construction of colossus in Bleak Gate. Both get come-uppance in later adventures.
- ♦ **Danoran Consulate (page xx).** Nilasa killed by Creed while trying to fly out fourth-floor window, suggesting connection to Gale. Dr. von Recklinghausen fled with documents Nilasa stole, but Danorans pretend no such documents exist. Alchemical examination of Nilasa's effects points to Waryeye's Alchemicals. Nilasa's boyfriend knew she frequented Thinking Man's Tavern. Her criminal history lists her residence as Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings, and mentions accomplices in Goodson's Estuarial Reformatory.
- ♦ **Thinking Man's Tavern (page xx).** Jered Lawman, halfling bard, visited Cloudwood brigands with Nilasa. Hennet Rinus, philosophy/archaeology student, wrote letters for Nilasa to Morgan Cippiano about arranging business meetings.
- ♦ **Goodson's Estuarial Reformatory (page xx).** Nilasa's accomplices know about 'House Elf' smuggling contact, and that Nilasa was acquiring weapons for Gale.
- ♦ **Waryeye's Alchemicals/House Elf (page xx).** Married gnome couple provided magic for Nilasa's activities. They know location of wharf smugglers will set out from, and when.
- ♦ **Smuggler's Night (page xx).** Ship sets out from Pine Island to meet in Ayres with Crisillyiri merchant ship. Picks up cache of stolen wands, which would be split with Family and Gale.
- ♦ **Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings (page xx).** Heward Sechim knew Nilasa was getting into trouble. He wants the party to talk with his uncle, skyseer Nevard in the Cloudwood, since the old man might be able to talk down Gale. Sechim also has been harassed lately by criminals offering 'protection.'
- ♦ **Cloudwood Brigands (page xx).** Involved in turf war with Lorcan Kell's gang. Hostile to outsiders.
- ♦ **Skyseer Nevard (page xx).** Sick and dying. Knows Gale, but won't betray her. Wants to spend night on cursed Cauldron Hill to seek vision. If party helps, he'll arrange meeting with Gale.
- ♦ **Cauldron Hill—Take One (page xx).** Nettles district mayor Reed Macbannin lets PCs up, but plots their demise. Seemingly-innocuous smoking courier at his manor when PCs visit; this is secretly Nicodemus, the campaign's main villain. Macbannin doesn't notify military of PCs' ascent.
- ♦ **Arson (page xx).** Creed hired arsonists to endanger factories so Lorcan Kell's proxies could buy them and help smuggle materials. The night the party goes up Cauldron Hill, Creed sends the arsonists to burn down Sechim's factory. Arsonists have letters that can be traced back to Macbannin's manor.
- ♦ **Chasing the Doctor (page xx).** Creed, disguised as police officer, gets to people before the PCs. Hostel staff saw doctor flee in a hurry. Dr. Barnaby Camp, old mentor to Wolfgang, got a letter saying he was in trouble with Lorcan Kell's guild. Professor Lynn Kindleton, old love interest of Wolfgang, knows he's hiding out in The Nettles. Messages passed by Nettles children. Lorcan Kell wants to sell PCs location of doctor, then tells Creed to take them all out.
- ♦ **Nettles Church (page xx).** Wolfgang hid documents in hole in ceiling. Creed tries to abduct him and get documents. If he fails at either, Leone Quital barricades PCs in and tries to pressure them into handing over what they want. At the end of negotiations, Leone uses explosives to collapse church entrance, but secret exits give PCs chance to survive and escape.
- ♦ **Stolen Documents (page xx).** Dense financial information that, when examined, implicates Macbannin in plot to smuggle Danoran industrial material. Also details discovery of witchoil flasks in factories; this was an original test of the substance to see how well it captured souls of workers who died.
- ♦ **Nevard's Vision (page xx).** Nevard calls rally to share visions of danger centered around Cauldron Hill. Macbannin creates monsters to attack Nevard during event. Temporary lab in Bosum Strand, from which psychic screams emanate, has documents and technicians who can finger Macbannin.
- ♦ **Cauldron Hill—Take Two (page xx).** Macbannin has witchoil laboratory under his manor. During his arrest, an accident triggers an earthquake. Even if captured, Macbannin tries to fix damage to lab before a flood of witchoil pours out. If PCs mess up efforts to fix the problem, it can cause an explosion that tears off part of the mountain's north face. Creed tries to ambush party to finish them off during the chaos.
- ♦ **Abortive Trial (page xx).** Nicodemus comes in spirit form, possesses Macbannin, offers to let him join Obscurati ghost council. Then he shatters Macbannin's skull and absconds with his soul, so there is no evidence of the plot.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.



Hana “Gale” Soliogn. According to an interview she gave when she first arrived in Flint a year ago, Hana is an eladrin woman just over 100 years old. She spent most of her life as the property of House Soliogn, a family of Danoran mine owners. Having always felt an affinity to the fey history of Risur, she fled and found her way to Flint, where she was sheltered by druids in the Cloudwood. Soon she manifested the ability to fly, a power latent in the dead magic zone of Danor.

She professed a hatred toward Danor, and shortly thereafter witnesses began to place her at scenes of factory and ship sabotages, a massacre of railroad surveyors, and a botched assassination attempt against tax collector Kane Westman. After Duchess Ethelyn’s treason against the king three months ago, Gale sent a letter to several papers supporting the duchess, and condemning Danor, but also denying her responsibility in the surveyor massacre. Since then her acts of sabotage have increased in frequency.



Thames Grimsley. A grizzled sailor, still with a full head of hair in his early 50s, Grimsley acts as head of a new dock workers union in Flint. Though he only worked the docks in his youth, Grimsley spent decades sailing—primarily as captain of a ferry service in Flint’s harbor, but with a stint in the navy during the last Yerasol War. He took a gash from a policeman’s knife on the side of his face in the last big docker riot. He has a very stylized public speaking voice, one full of unnecessary, melodramatic pauses.

Recently he tried to speak with Governor Stanfield about improving dockers’ conditions. Grimsley is alleged to be negotiating with Parity Lake factory workers to develop a union for them.



Lorcan Kell. Alleged head of a thieves’ guild based somewhere in eastern Parity Lake. Once a simple enforcer, he recruited allies and established himself as a power player. The Kell guild is said to be responsible for great amounts of industrial smuggling, petty theft and extortion, burglary, and murder for hire. His guild has no reported history of arson, so the current best suspect of the recent spate of fires is Gale.



Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft. A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft is your direct superior. He chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.

CRIMINAL FILE OF NILASA HUME.

Person of Interest Information Request

Request No.: 3217

Customer: Royal Homeland Constabulary

Name: Nilasa Hume

Birthdate: 26 Spring, 471

Criminal ID #: 24680

Jurisdiction: Flint Division of Peace and Order

Race: Mularbora (human/elf)

Sex: Female

Height: 68 inches

Accent: Flinter

Hair: Black

Eyes: Green

Spellcaster: No

Known Aliases: None

Present Place of Residence: 47 Magazine Street, Parity Lake, Flint. Sechim's Alkahest & Etchings. Factory—workplace and home.

Past Places of Residence: (1) (Alleged) 3.6 miles east on Batata Road. 0.4 miles south on Flogging Lagoon trail. Cloudwood. Greater Flint County. Flogging Lagoon musician commune—transient lodging (departed Spring 499). (2) 82K Fogwall Street. Parity Lake. Flint. Shared building—mother's home (demolished Winter 495).

Arrest Record Follows:

- ♦ Juvenile Records. Juvenile records forgiven in accordance with Stanfield's Matriculation Act of 328. Juvenile record notes "various petty thefts, confidence capers"; details lost during Parity Lake central office relocation.
- ♦ Supporting Criminal Activities. (Misdemeanor.) Case No. 8176. (85 Spring, 500.) Released on bail, sponsored by Heward Sechim—47 Magazine Street. Parity Lake. Court date set for 4 Summer, 500. Suspect was picked up in a raid of a known den of criminals, located 12 Oxen Street, Parity Lake. Suspect in presence of two men whom the arresting officer recognized as former accomplices—Ford Sorghum and Travis Starter. Lack of official records detailing affiliation prevented holding of suspect. Alleged accomplices pled guilty to various warrants and were remanded to Goodson's Estuarial Reformatory.

ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS IN FLINT.



SHIP GUIDE.

These rules provide a quick way to run ships in your game. These rules only cover skirmishes and boarding actions, not the full scope of chases, shipboard weapons, and advanced ship design. For those rules, see our upcoming sourcebook, *Admiral o' the High Seas*, coming in 2012.

Ship Basics.

In combat, ships function somewhat like massive creatures. Out of combat, it can be a challenge to survive a storm, reach an imperiled base in time, or flee a pursuing fleet. Characters on a ship can fill different roles to aid both combat and non-combat endeavors.

Character Roles.

There are seven ship's roles, but only two matter for these quick-play rules—piloting crew and captain.

Piloting Crew. Every ship has a Piloting Crew entry, which is the number of sailors the ship needs to maneuver. Most crew on larger ships will be minions, leaving the PCs free to handle more important duties, but any character can act as piloting crew by spending a standard action. Generally you can act as piloting crew from anywhere on the deck of a sailing vessel, or in the engine room of a steam ship.

Captain. The captain has final decision on how the ship moves, but he's powerless if the crew is unwilling or unable to carry out his orders.

On the ship's turn, the captain moves the ship. He does not need to be in any particular location to do so, nor does he need to spend any actions. He just needs to be able to communicate with the rest of the crew. Indeed, a captain can spend a standard action to count as crew if needed.

If the ship has insufficient crew, or if the captain cannot communicate with the crew, the ship drifts on its turn. When a ship drifts, it moves in a straight line, traveling a number of squares equal to the distance it moved on its last turn.

The captain can spend a minor action to transfer his role, letting an ally act as captain in his stead. If the captain is incapacitated or unavailable, an ally can spend a minor action to take command. Of course, if the crew doesn't recognize the authority of a captain, the captain can't control the ship.

At the DM's discretion, the captain of a ship short on crew might be able to perform maneuvers every two or three rounds, with the ship drifting on its other rounds.

Ship Combat.

With smaller ships the best way to defeat an enemy vessel is usually to target its crew, while larger ships that mount cannons and magical weapons can cripple enemy vessels from afar and force surrender. Powers and tactics that are useful in small-party skirmishes might be pointless in ship-to-ship combat.

OVERVIEW.

Ships in these quick-play rules require 2 crew (15 for a big ship, half as many for a steam ship). Being crew takes a standard action. It helps to have minions. Ships require a captain. Being captain is a free action. Declaring an ally to be the new captain is a minor action.

At initiative count 0, all ships move, but only forward or diagonally forward. If there's no captain or not enough crew, they drift at the same speed they moved last round. Ships can turn 90 degrees after moving forward 3 squares (7 squares for a big ship).

OTHER ROLES.

These quick-play rules only cover situations likely to crop up in this adventure, so the following roles are not detailed.

Bosun. The boatswain or bosun directs the piloting crew to efficiently accomplish the captain's orders.

Engineer. The engineer hastily repairs damage or retrofits the ship to grant it temporary traits. On larger ships, the engineer directs crew in these tasks.

Gunnery Crew. Gunnery crew load, aim, and fire the ship's weapons.

Look-Out. The look-out provides warnings of ill weather, hazardous shoals, and hostile vessels, and can watch enemy actions to predict what course their ships will take.

Navigator. The navigator reads wind, wave, and sea charts to determine the ideal course for the ship.

Initiative.

To represent the simultaneity of multiple ships maneuvering at once, all ships act at Initiative count 0. Each ship's captain should add together his or her Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma modifiers to get a Command Rating. The ships move in order of lowest Command Rating to highest, giving the most canny and commanding captain an advantage.

Speed.

When a ship takes its turn, it moves its speed. The captain can choose to have it move fewer squares, but if there is no one in command or if the ship lacks sufficient crew, the ship drifts the same number of squares it moved last round. The ship can only move forward or diagonally forward.

Close-combat maneuvers force ships to move at less than their full speed, so a ship's speed entry does not accurately reflect how fast it travels over long distances. These ship-based tactical combat rules assume that ships are moving at less than their full speed in order to be able to better avoid obstacles and engage their foes. (Also, a ship traveling at speed 20 would go off the edge of a typical battle map in a round or two.)

If a ship is stationary and fully crewed for two consecutive turns, it can switch between moving forward and backward. Ships move backward at half speed.

Turning and Maneuverability.

When the captain decides to turn his ship, the vessel must move a number of squares equal to half the ship's length, after which it will have rotated 90 degrees. For instance, a cutter that is 35 ft. long (7 squares) would have to move 3 squares before it could turn, while a barquentine that is 75 ft. long (15 squares) would have to move 7 squares before it could turn.

Very long or slow ships might have to move for several rounds before they can turn. Movement during turns when the ship is short-manned don't count. A ship's axis of rotation can be any square along the aft line of the vessel's space. If the arc of the turn would hit an immobile object, it cannot turn. (In the advanced rules, such turns will be possible, but will count as collisions.)

Some ships have maneuverability traits that adjust how they turn.

Hit Points.

In this adventure, it's infeasible any ships will sink from damage, so don't bother tracking it. Likewise, ships are nonliving and huge, so conditions won't affect them, at least not from the PCs at their current level.

Ship Terrain.

Many spaces on a ship will be difficult terrain, crowded with spare lines, barrels of supplies, and the various tools used to keep ships in working order. Characters should be encouraged to use these in improvised attacks.

Rigging can be entered from any space adjacent to the edge of the ship, or adjacent to any of its masts. Most rigging can be climbed with an Acrobatics or Athletics check (DC 10). For ease of play, assume that characters can occupy any space above the ship, up to the maximum of the rigging's height.

Falling overboard is a great risk, so most ships have railings along their edges. If forced movement would take a creature through the railing and off the ship, that creature gets a +5 bonus to its saving throw to avoid being thrown overboard.

Climbing up the side of a ship in steady waters requires an Athletics check (DC 10).

Boarding.

Most naval engagements in the world of ZEITGEIST are resolved from afar with canons and other ranged attacks, but we want to ease the players into the idea of naval combat in this adventure, so the ships involved purposefully don't have any armaments. At some point the PCs will likely board or be boarded.

Since these quick rules ignore collisions (and ramming wouldn't do enough damage to sink a ship anyway), you can easily begin a boarding action by having one ship move adjacent to another. When two ships first make contact they are immobilized on their next turns as hull grinds against hull. Thereafter the two ships can move normally, though intrepid sailors might toss grappling lines to hook the vessels together.

Stuck. If two ships have connected in such a way that neither ship can move straight or turn, the crew will have to reverse their ship.

Sample Vessels.

The PCs should choose either the Excise Cutter or Steam Cutter as their starting ship. In later adventures they'll be able to acquire enhancements for their ships, or trade up to larger ships.

Rowboat.

Most Huge or larger ships have at least one rowboat. Length ranges from 1 to 3 squares.

Rowboat	Level 0 Vehicle
Small Vehicle	Cost 50 gp
HP 40	Space 1 square by 2 squares
AC 5; Fortitude 10, Reflex 5	Piloting Crew 1
Speed special	Command Rating —
Resist 5 all	
Traits	
► Oars	

A character sitting in a rowboat can spend a standard action to make an Athletics check (DC 20). On a success, the boat moves 2 squares. On a failure it moves one square. The rower can turn the boat 90 degrees instead of moving one square. One creature can row per round for each square of length.

Excise Cutter.

The traditional fore-and-aft rig of a cutter has a single mast supporting a mainsail and two or more headsails attached to a bowsprit. Excise cutters—which often serve as harbor patrol and law enforcement—add a topsail for extra speed.

Excise Cutter	Level 3 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	Cost 680 gp
HP 70	Space 3 squares by 7 squares
AC 4; Fortitude 12, Reflex 4	Piloting Crew 2
Speed 4	Command Rating —
Resist 15 all	
Traits	
► Fore-and-Aft Rigged	

An excise cutter's rigging is 40 ft. high.

An excise cutter can turn in place. It must spend 3 squares of movement before it can turn, but it only needs to actually move 1 square forward. It can use any square in its space as its axis of rotation.

► Swift	
If an excise cutter has 3 or more piloting crew, it can run. This increases its maximum speed by 2, but it grants combat advantage, and attacks by creatures on the ship against targets not on the ship take a –5 penalty.	

Steam Cutter.

Designed to fill the role of sailing excise cutters, steam cutters can more easily travel against the wind, but are louder and must rely on fuel, which somewhat limits their long-distance uses.

Steam Cutter	Level 3 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	Cost 680 gp
HP 70	Space 3 squares by 7 squares
AC 4; Fortitude 12, Reflex 4	Piloting Crew 1
Speed 4	Command Rating —
Resist 15 all	

Traits

► Steam Powered

Carries fuel for 500 miles.

The captain of a steam cutter gets a +5 bonus to his Command Rating to determine initiative.

A steam cutter must spend 3 squares of movement before it can turn.

► Swift

If a steam cutter has 2 or more piloting crew, it can run. This increases its maximum speed by 2, but it grants combat advantage, and attacks by creatures on the ship against targets not on the ship take a –5 penalty.

The *Silvo*.

A traditional cutter, the *Silvo* runs a fore-and-aft rig, which gives it good maneuverability in any wind while only requiring two people to pilot. Deorn Feldman serves as its captain.

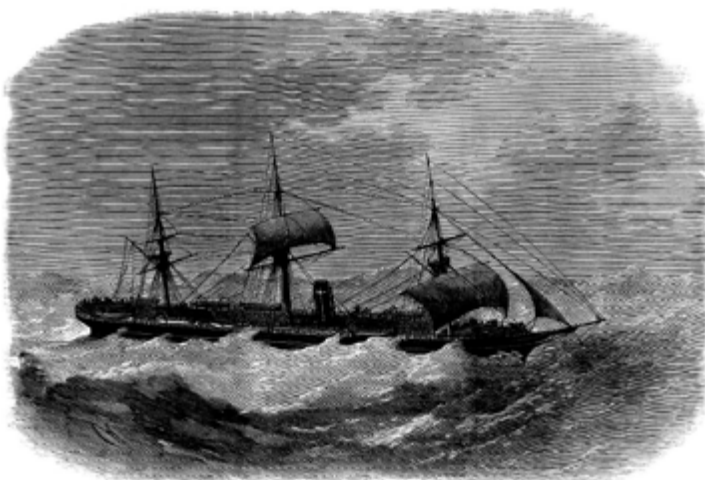
Silvo, Smuggler's Cutter	Level 2 Vehicle
Large Vehicle	Cost 520 gp
HP 70	Space 3 squares by 7 squares
AC 4; Fortitude 12, Reflex 4	Piloting Crew 2
Speed 4	Command Rating +8
Resist 15 all	

Traits

► Fore-and-Aft Rigged

A cutter's rigging is 30 ft. high.

A cutter can turn in place. It must spend 3 squares of movement before it can turn, but it only needs to actually move 1 square forward. It can use any square in its space as its axis of rotation.



Li Grifoni Grinyande.

This barquentine from Crisillyir measures 75 ft. long by 25 ft. wide. Designed for long ocean voyages, the *Grifoni* carries mostly legitimate cargo—mostly textiles, dyes, and wood finishes. Three-masted, with a complex rigging of multiple sails per mast, it requires a crew of 15 to operate.

The *Grifoni* lacks cannons since most pirates would try to board before they'd try to sink it. To scare off pirates, most of the crew have crossbows. A total of fifty sailors serve aboard, but only fifteen really think of themselves as combatants. In the event of a battle, most of the sailors would keep to their sailing duties or get out of the way. Captain Amba Bandia, a woman who wears her blond hair in elaborate high curls, brings a criminal's toughness to the typically dreary merchant existence.

Li Grifoni Grinyande, barquentine	Level 4 Vehicle
Huge Vehicle	Cost 840 gp
HP 130	Space 5 squares by 15 squares
AC 3; Fortitude 16, Reflex 3	Piloting Crew 15
Speed 4	Command Rating +6
Resist 20 all	

Traits

► Rigging

Three masts, 50 ft. high. A barquentine must spend 7 squares of movement before it can turn, but can use any square in its space as its axis of rotation.

The *R.N.S. Impossible*.

This clipper, captained by Rutger Smith, is the fastest ship available to the Royal Homeland Constabulary. Its crack crew is capable of out-running any foe, which is handy, since this ship carries no weapons. It primarily serves as a courier or transport for secret missions.

RNS Impossible, Clipper	Level 10 Vehicle
Gargantuan Vehicle	Cost 5000 gp
HP 130	Space 7 squares by 32 squares
AC 1; Fortitude 20, Reflex 1	Piloting Crew 30
Speed 10	Command Rating +20
Resist 20 all	

Traits

► Rigging

Three masts, 70 ft. high.

The *Impossible* can turn in place. It must spend 16 squares of movement before it can turn, but it only needs to actually move 4 squares forward. It can use any square in its space as its axis of rotation.

► Swift

If the *Impossible* has 45 or more piloting crew, it can run. This increases its maximum speed by 2, but it grants combat advantage, and attacks by creatures on the ship against targets not on the ship take a –5 penalty.

Ship Guide

Excise Cutter
(Silvo)



Steam Cutter



Li Grifoni Grinyande



Rowboat



One square equals 5ft.

Aeriad Bracers Level 6 Uncommon <i>Made from the shafts and fletching of arrows, these bracers give you slight control over objects in flight.</i> Price: 1800 gp Arm Slot Property: When you fall, you may land in any square adjacent to where you would normally fall. If you deliberately jump down, you may shift 1 square for every 10 ft. you fall. Property: You gain a +2 item bonus to damage with a bow or crossbow.	Defender Weapon Level 5 Uncommon <i>Leather straps around the crossguard hold beads representing your allies, and you can sense their condition as they clack against your fingers.</i> Lvl 5 +1 1,000 gp Lvl 20 +4 125,000gp Lvl 10 +2 5,000 gp Lvl 25 +5 625,000gp Lvl 15 +3 25,000 gp Lvl 30 +6 3,125,000gp Weapon: Any. Critical: +1d6 damage per plus. Property: During a rest you can attune your weapon to one or more allies. Whenever any of those allies are within 20 squares, you are aware of any conditions affecting those allies, and whether they are bloodied, unconscious, dying, or dead. Power (Daily): Free Action. <i>Trigger:</i> You hit a target with an attack using this weapon. <i>Effect:</i> End one condition affecting an ally that the target created. The condition must be one a save can end.	Malice-Wrought Weapon Level 7 Uncommon <i>Though deadly-sharp, this weapon has no adornments, radiates no magic, and its steel is tarnished and lifeless.</i> Lvl 7 +2 2,600 gp Lvl 22 +5 325,000gp Lvl 12 +3 13,000 gp Lvl 27 +6 1,625,000gp Lvl 17 +4 65,000 gp Weapon: Axe, heavy blade, light blade, or spear. Critical: +1d6 damage per plus. Property: This item can never be used as an implement. Its enhancement bonus does not fade in dead magic zones like Danor. Power (Daily): Free Action. <i>Trigger:</i> You critically hit a creature with an origin other than natural while using this weapon. <i>Effect:</i> The creature cannot perceive you until the end of the encounter, or until you attack.
Canary in a Coal Mine Level 3 Rare <i>From a gold chain dangles a tiny pendant in the shape of a canary, but it turns black as coal in the presence of danger.</i> Lvl 3 +1 680 gp Lvl 18 +4 85,000gp Lvl 8 +2 3,400 gp Lvl 23 +5 425,000gp Lvl 13 +3 17,000 gp Lvl 28 +6 2,125,000gp Neck Slot Property: At the start of each encounter, you get a +5 bonus to all defenses during the surprise round and until the start of your first non-surprise turn. Power (Daily): Minor Action: You gain a fly speed equal to your speed until the end of your next turn.	Hat of Hats Level 4 Uncommon <i>You reach your hand into this simple bowler hat, and your hand brushes something fuzzy. Then you pull out the full outfit of a classic stage magician: white gloves, black suit with tails, black pants, polished white and black shoes. When you glance back at the hat, it's changed into a tophat.</i> Price: 840 gp Head Slot Power (At-Will): Minor Action. The hat changes shape to any hat that would fit your head, to a maximum of about three feet in any dimension. Even if given a hazardous shape, at best it counts as an improvised weapon. Power (Encounter): Standard Action. You produce a whole costume of mundane clothes that last for 24 hours, or until you use this power again. Power (Daily): Standard Action. You produce a small rabbit, bird, or badger from the hat. The creature is harmless and lasts until the end of the encounter.	Messenger Wind Level 6 Uncommon <i>You cup an invisible orb of winds in your hand. Five golden feathers spin in tiny eddies in currents, and you pluck one from the tiny miniature cyclone, then release the orb. The winds wait until you whisper to the feather and call upon them to deliver your message.</i> Price: 1800 gp Wondrous Item Property: The wind orb can be carried, or it can be left to float at any location, fairly invisible except to those who know to look for it. Five small golden feathers are attuned to the orb, and any person who has a feather can call upon the wind's power as long as they are within thirty miles of the orb. Power (Encounter): Minor Action. You call the wind of the orb. It flies 10 mph (20 sq/rd) until it reaches you; it will deliver (at 10 mph) a message you give it to any other feather. Each feather can be used once per encounter. If multiple creatures activate feathers, the first resolves before the second begins.
Cracked Cauldron Level 6 Rare <i>Crude images in relief of skeletons devouring people ring the lip of this cracked, black cauldron. Its handle hangs loosely on its hinge, and could be easily slipped off.</i> Price: 1800 gp Wondrous Item Property: When you use the cauldron as the focus of a ritual, instead of having the ritual take effect you can store its magic in the handle of the cauldron. You still expend any components used in the ritual. Power (Daily): Standard Action. The ritual stored in the handle takes effect as if you had just completed the ritual. Curse: The handle's presence is like screeching nails on a chalkboard to wild animals. While you carry the cauldron handle, fey or natural creatures of animal intelligence (Int 1 or 2) can sense you from 100 ft. away, and they gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against you.	Hedge Wizard's Gloves Level 4 Uncommon <i>With a swish and a flick, you float an object across the room.</i> Price: 840 gp Hand Slot Power (At-Will): Standard Action. As the wizard's <i>mage hand</i> power. Power (At-Will): Standard Action. As the wizard's <i>prestidigitation</i> power.	Staff of Arson Level 7 Rare <i>Carved from an ember-glowing beam of scorched wood, this staff desires to spread the flames that formed it.</i> Lvl 7 +2 2,600 gp Lvl 22 +5 325,000gp Lvl 12 +3 13,000 gp Lvl 27 +6 1,625,000gp Lvl 17 +4 65,000 gp Implement: Staff. Critical: None. Property: Critical hits by allies within 3 squares of you deal ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). Level 12: Ongoing 7 fire. Level 17: Ongoing 10 fire. Level 22: Allies within 5 squares; ongoing 12 fire. Level 27: Allies within 5 squares; ongoing 15 fire. Power (At-Will): Minor Action (1/round). Choose a zone that deals fire damage, or a creature suffering ongoing fire damage. A square adjacent to that creature or zone becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. Any creature that enters the new zone or ends its turn there takes fire damage equal to the amount dealt by the fire.

Vendetta Bullet

Level 5 Rare

When a man escapes murder or suffers the death of those he cares for, he can etch the name of the ones responsible onto ammunition, giving physical form to his vengeful desires.

Lvl 5 +1 50 gp **Lvl 20** +4 5,000gp
Lvl 10 +2 200 gp **Lvl 25** +5 25,000gp
Lvl 15 +3 1,000 gp **Lvl 30** +6 125,000gp

Ammunition: Firearm bullet.

Property: When you fire this bullet and are targeting the creature whose name is etched on the bullet, if you hit, the attack is a critical hit. If you miss, you instead get a normal hit. If a vendetta bullet has been used against a given target in an encounter, no other vendetta bullets will be effective against the target for the rest of that encounter, even if they're fired by other people.

Vendetta Bullet, continued

Vendetta bullets can only be created by someone who owes fierce vengeance to an enemy, and even then that aggrieved person can only create one *vendetta bullet* per enemy, and only if he knows the enemy's name. He can never create a second *vendetta bullet* against the same person, and if he passes the *bullet* to someone else, a given shooter can only ever benefit from one such *bullet* per target. These bullets can be created by people with no magical training; their creation only requires an intense will for revenge.

Wand of Egal the Shimmering

Level 5 Rare

A foot and a half of simple, pristine gold, this wand is eerily warm to the touch. It bears the profile of an aged man on its handle, his identity unknown.

Lvl 5 +1 1,000 gp **Lvl 20** +4 125,000gp
Lvl 10 +2 5,000 gp **Lvl 25** +5 625,000gp
Lvl 15 +3 25,000 gp **Lvl 30** +6 3,125,000gp

Implement: Wand.

Critical: The target is dominated until the end of your next turn.

Property: You cannot teleport or be teleported while this wand is in your possession.

Power (Daily): Free Action. **Trigger:** You hit a target with an attack using this wand. **Effect:** The target is surrounded by arcs of golden energy. It cannot teleport or move to another plane until the end of your next turn.



Standard
Encounter
Primary
vs.
AC

Surgical Precision

Martial Scientist Attack
Martial, Weapon

Melee Weapon

Target One creature

Hit 1[W] damage, and target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends)

Level 11 2[W] damage

Level 21 3 [W] damage

Effect If the target is bloodied, it automatically fails the first saving throw against any effects you inflict on it with weapons this turn.

Special Dr. von Recklinghausen can teach this power to characters with the Martial Scientist theme.



Surgical Precision

Level 7 Rare

You've learned to wield your weapon like a scalpel.

Equivalent Value: 2,600 gp

Master Training

Requirement: Dr. von Recklinghausen can only teach this technique to a character with the Martial Scientist theme.

Power (Encounter): Free Action. **Trigger:** You hit a target granting you combat advantage with a melee attack. **Effect:** You deal an extra 1d10 damage, and the target is either slowed or weakened (your choice) until the end of your next turn.

Detect Planar Energy

The energy drifts to you like a fragrance on a breeze. You spin and locate the strongest source of the smell, then set out.

Level: 1

Category: Divination

Time: 10 minutes

Duration: 1 hour

Component Cost: 17 gp

Market Price: 50 gp

Key Skill: Arcana

Choose a plane you have visited, or otherwise have had contact with. For the ritual's duration you can sense the direction to and intensity of energies from that plane, to a maximum range of one mile. These energies tend to fade after a few hours or days, but it is possible to track creatures native to other planes by following their trails. The ritual can be foiled by strong sources of energy from the same or other planes. For instance, Cauldron Hill in Flint is a powerful beacon of shadow energy, so you would be unable to pinpoint any sort of foreign energy there, not even fey or elemental energy.

