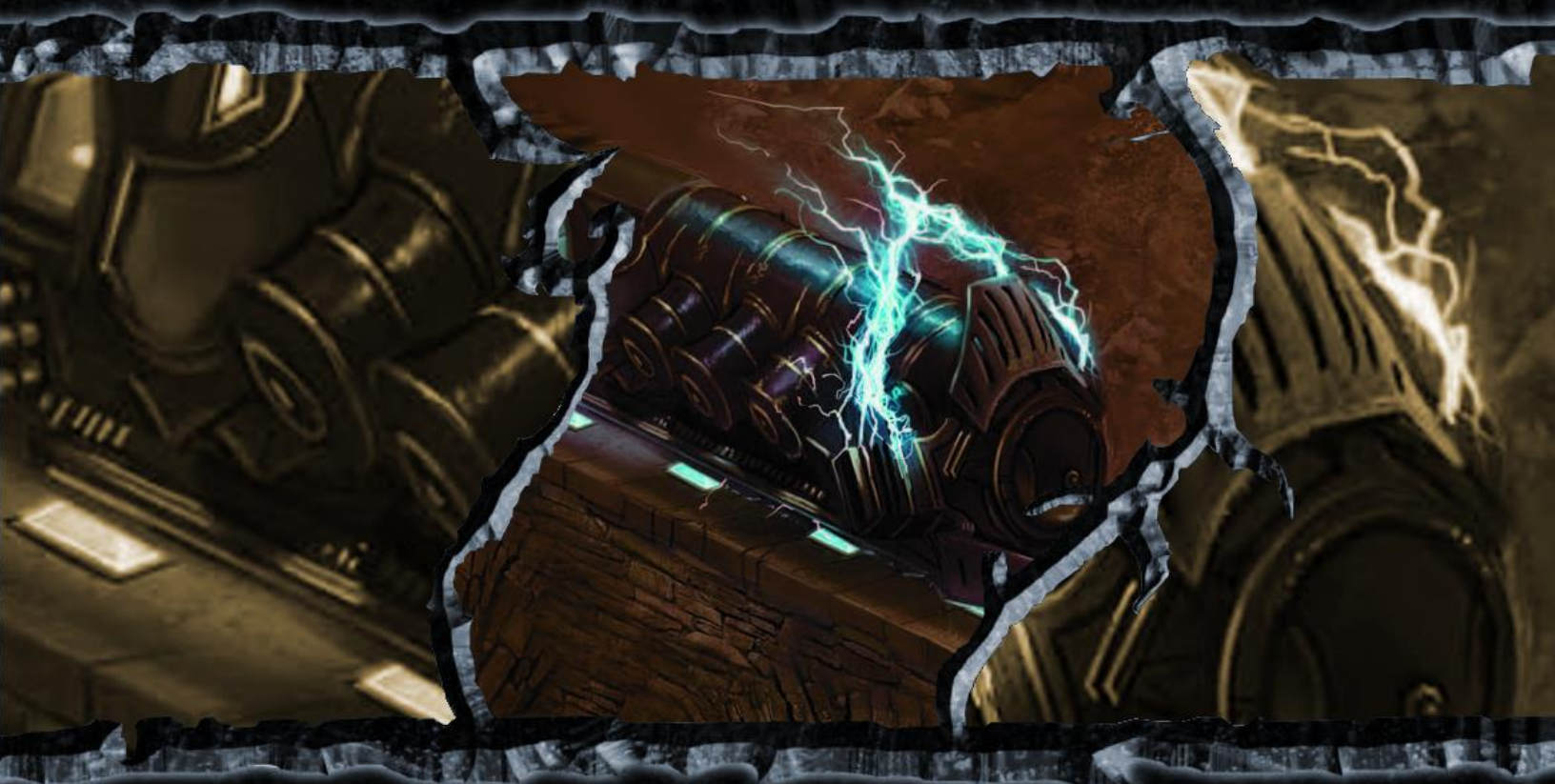


THE KORRANBERG CHRONICLE
PRESENTS

NIGHTMARE ON THE MOURNLAND EXPRESS



AN EBERRON ADVENTURE
FOR 6TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

BY
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AUNDAIR

THRANE

MOURNLAND

BLACKCAPS

Cragwar

Black Pit

Sword Keep

THE GREENHAUNT

Brey River

Lurching Tower

Vathirond

NWOOD

ELAND

Starilaskur

Hatheril

Dragon's Crown

New Cyre

Kennrun

FADED FOREST

Baran's Keep

Mistmarsh

Sterngate

THE HOWLING PEAKS

ZILARGO

DARGUUN

INTRODUCTION

"...the only thing we have to fear is Fear itself..."
—Franklin D. Roosevelt

Nightmare on the Mournland Express is a horror-themed adventure set in the EBERRON Campaign Setting, brought to you by *The Korranberg Chronicle*! It can be played as a stand-alone one-shot story or dropped into an ongoing campaign to spice up travel during a longer tale.

The action of the adventure takes place completely on the *lightning rail*, a magical conveyance in the world of EBERRON similar to a real-world train. As such, the players are a captive audience during the adventure—there's not much they can do to derail the story, other than attempting to derail the *lightning rail* itself!

A passing familiarity with the EBERRON Campaign Setting is recommended for you and your players to gain the full enjoyment out of this adventure. To that end, it is highly recommended that you check out the [*Wayfinder's Guide to Eberron*](#), the official update of the EBERRON Campaign Setting to the 5th Edition of Dungeons & Dragons!

Additionally, the [*Explorer's Handbook*](#), a 3.5 EBERRON sourcebook also available in pdf download, contains detailed information on the *lightning rail*. Some of that material is adapted here for 5th edition.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs begin the adventure as passengers on the *lightning rail*. If you are running this adventure as a one-shot, the PCs need not know each other ahead of time. If you are running this story as part of an ongoing campaign, it works best if the adventuring party is traveling together, on a journey from Sharn to Flamekeep, a route that brings them through Vathirond. Vathirond is a city near the eastern border of northern Breland, with a decommissioned *lightning rail* route to Metrol, which now, of-course, leads into the Mournland.

Regardless of their familiarity with each other, the PCs start the adventure sitting together in the same passenger cart of the *lightning rail* and are free to explore the train and encounter other NPCs. One of these NPCs, Joachim Waylan, is a 5-year old boy traveling with his parents. Joachim has burgeoning psychic powers that he has not yet learned to control. This makes the poor child vulnerable to powerful psychic entities, the quori, especially when he sleeps.

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During the *lightning rail's* travels across Khorvaire, young Joachim is attacked while dreaming by a powerful tsucora quori. However, something goes awry with the quori's plans; somehow, the minds of the adventuring party are drawn into Joachim's nightmare with him, giving them a chance to save him.

The PCs must then navigate the dream-version of the *lightning rail*, a once familiar convenience of modern travel turned horrific, malevolent nightmare. They must confront entities that feed on fear and deal with the twisted logic of their environment until they eventually find the heart of the Joachim's dream, the Nightmare Engine, and battle a tsucora quori swollen with the powers it has stolen from Joachim. In order to wake up unharmed, they must defeat the quori and save the child.

The adventure is designed for 5th to 7th level player characters and optimized for an adventuring party of four.

STAYING ON TRACK

Because this adventure takes place entirely within the confines of the *lightning rail*, it is very easy for players to feel railroaded. In more ways than one, they are. Give them ample opportunity to explore the *lightning rail* before Joachim's nightmare begins, interacting with NPCs they might find interesting.

When the adventure transitions into Part 2, and the PCs are stuck in the quori's malevolent dreamscape, the players shouldn't realize they are in a dream at first. If they do, they have a chance to enter a state known as "lucid dreaming" (see the sidebar on page 9) and begin to have some marginal control over the dreamscape around them, though still not nearly as much as the quori controlling the nightmare.

The goal is to allow the PCs as much freedom as is available to them, within the limitations of an enclosed environment, especially when that environment becomes actively malevolent.

To run this adventure, you will need the fifth edition *PLAYER'S HANDBOOK*, *DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE*, and *MONSTER MANUAL*. You should read through the adventure before sitting down to play it with your group, to familiarize yourself with the layout of the environment and events that unfold. When a monster or NPC's name appears in **bold**, that is a sign that the creature is a possible combat encounter. All

such creatures have their stat blocks provided in Appendix B of this adventure.

For any NPCs without a stat block provided in this adventure, default to the commoner stat block on page 345 of the *MONSTER MANUAL*. If your players throw you a curve ball and begin assaulting passengers, you can surprise them by having several passengers be veterans of the Last War. They'll form a makeshift militia to oppose villainous PCs. To represent them, appropriately enough, use one veteran from page 350 of the *MONSTER MANUAL* for every 2 PCs, plus two **wandslingers** from Appendix B.

CONDUCTING THE ADVENTURE

Nightmare on the Mournland Express follows a standard adventure format.

When you see text like this, it is to be read or paraphrased aloud to your players.

SIDEBARS

Sidebar appear like this and are not to be read aloud. They provide you additional information on the background or setup for the adventure.



PART 1: ALL ABOARD

As the adventure begins, the PCs are traveling on the Silver-Towers Local, a *lightning rail* heading from Sharn toward Vathirond, covering the first half of the adventuring party's journey to Flamekeep. The PCs are allowed to roam the Silver-Towers Local during their travels aboard it, within reason.

THE SILVER-TOWERS LOCAL

All in all, the Silver-Towers Local has a total of only 10 carts, a little on the low-side for a normal *lightning rail*, but the Silver-Towers Local is traveling light on this voyage.

Each cart opens up into a narrow, covered walkway lined with a low railing, that is connected to the cart adjacent to it by a heavy-duty metal pin and thick chains. Though some might consider it nerve-wracking to walk between carts while a *lightning rail* is moving, it does not require any special skill to do so, and no ability checks are required to keep one's balance while passing between carts (assuming the *lightning rail* is traveling steadily along its route, as normal). The door to the interior compartment of a cart is finely polished wood, with a clear window.

If the PCs start the adventure already knowing each other, they begin in their own cabin in cart 6, a standard-class passenger cart. Otherwise, they've each purchased steerage tickets and are seated in cart 7.

While the main story of this adventure revolves around young Joachim and the quori's malevolent dreamscape, if the players decide they'd rather play a train heist, there is enough to entertain them before the nightmare begins.

1. Fore Crew Cart (Elemental Coach): The first cart in the *lightning rail* is known as an elemental coach. It is here where a dragonmarked heir of House Orien is able to call forth the air elemental bound to the cart and command it. The adventurers should be discouraged from reaching the elemental coach before they even arrive outside of it. House Orien crewmembers elsewhere on the *lightning rail* will politely inform passengers that it is dangerous to distract the crew during elemental operation.

For the PCs to be able to force their way into the crew cart during normal operation, they must have overpowered all other security on the Silver-Towers Local. Such an outcome, while dynamic, is beyond the scope of this adventure.

2. First-Class Passenger Cart: The first-class passenger cart currently only has four occupants. **Eliana d'Vadalis**, a dragonmarked heiress, is traveling with "Frosty", a winter wolf companion (*MONSTER*

MANUAL, pg. 340). **Baron Denneil ir'Tollan** and his wife **Baroness Faela**, half-elven Brelish nobles on their way from Sharn to Vathirond to attend a wedding of two other Brelish nobles.

The entrance to the first-class cart from the galley cart is guarded by **Gareth d'Deneith**, a highly skilled House Deneith bodyguard from the Defenders Guild, currently in the employ of the ir'Tollans. If the PCs insist on testing the boundaries of propriety beyond the breaking point, before the nightmare plot even begins, Gareth and other House Deneith personnel on the *lightning rail* will be their main opposition.

House Deneith bodyguards and mercenaries are highly trained professionals, and are not likely to react to verbal provoking, but they will act to subdue anyone attempting to get past them after polite, then stern warnings are given. If the PCs are defeated, they are knocked unconscious, shackled, and placed in the cargo cart as a make-shift holding cell. If this occurs, they begin Part 2 of this adventure in cart 9.

3. Galley Cart: The galley cart contains the living quarters for six skilled chefs, as well as a massive kitchen and pantry. An unarmed House Orien crew member will politely ask any passengers wandering in from the dining cart to return whence they came, as the kitchen staff is best left undisturbed. If the crew's polite warnings are repeatedly ignored, crewmembers are instructed to call on the House **Deneith White Blades** guarding the cargo cart.

4. Dining Cart: This cart is furnished with six long wooden tables with accompanying benches, allowing dozens of standard- and steerage-class passengers to dine at once. Service is usually rushed, but the Silver-Towers Local is not currently booked to capacity, so meal times are more sedate than typical for a *lightning rail* journey.

Seating is communal so meal times are when passengers will most often mingle with their fellow travelers amiably. This is also a good place to start the adventure if player characters are not familiar with each other before the adventure starts.

5. Standard-Class Passenger Cart A: Standard-class passenger carts are divided into 12 compartments, each one lined on either side with a plush couch. There are overhead shelves for storing passengers' luggage. The Silver-Towers Local does not have a dedicated sleeping cart, so standard-class passengers make due with dozing on the comfortable seating in their cabins.

The first standard passenger cart has only seven out of its twelve compartments occupied. Many of the passengers are normal folk of middling prosperity traveling for business or personal reasons. A House Orien crewmember periodically inspects

compartments that are supposed to be empty according to the logs, to ensure steerage-class passengers aren't "upgrading" their trip for free.

6. Standard-Class Passenger Cart B: This passenger cart is identical to the first one, excepting that it is where the adventurers make their lodgings and go to sleep, assuming they begin the adventure knowing each other. The party's compartment is marked on the map of cart 6 with an **X**. This will also be where the group finds themselves when Part 2 of this adventure begins.

7. Steerage Cart A: This low-class passenger cart is one open compartment, furnished with row upon row of simple, uncomfortable wooden benches. If the PCs do not know each other before the adventure begins, they each have their own individual seats in this passenger cart.

While the cart has a sizable number of passengers, there is room enough for people to stretch out and make uncomfortable sleeping arrangements, typically using doffed jackets or overcoats as makeshift pillows and blankets.

House Orien crew make frequent rounds to ensure steerage-class passengers remain civil, as the substandard conditions often leave travelers irritable, and some unscrupulous pickpockets have been known to ride the *lightning rail*. Player characters of the party's level are often easy to spot as tough-customers, however, so no one is likely to start a fight or try their luck with them.

However, if the PCs linger overlong for no discernible reason, a House Orien crewmember will come over and discretely ask if they might be more comfortable in more polite company. The steerage class passengers grow even more irritable if those with better accommodations start "slumming it" in their cart, flaunting their wealth and comfort. Though they might not be suicidal enough to cause a ruckus with the well-armed party, the resentment can cause brawls to break out between themselves. House Orien would rather not have to deal with such a situation.

8. Steerage Cart B: This last passenger cart is identical to the other steerage-class cart, except for two things.

First, a pair of House **Deneith White Blades**, veterans of the Blademarks Guild, stand just outside the rear door, riding the *lightning rail* between carts. If the PCs exit the passenger cart out onto the walkway between carts, the White Blades stop them and insist they go back inside. Starting an encounter on the outside of the carts is extremely dangerous (see Encounters on a Lightning Rail below).

Secondly, this is the cart in which Joachim and his parents, Trevor and Marigold Sabin, are traveling. If

PCs enter this cart, the Sabin family is noticeably given a wide berth, as young Joachim seems to be throwing a red-faced tantrum.

If PCs do not decide to explore this cart, it is important that they encounter Joachim and his family somehow. The most likely alternative in this case would be to have the PCs encounter Joachim's harried parents as they try to coax their difficult child toward the dining cart to eat.

9. Cargo Cart: This cart is a single open compartment, not unlike the steerage-class passenger carts, except a narrow walkway runs along the sides of the compartment toward the rear of the cart. Two additional **Deneith White Blades** make a frequent patrol of the perimeter walkway, each on an opposite side of the cart.

The cargo cart of the Silver-Towers Local is usually only filled with excess luggage from its steerage-class passengers. However, on this voyage, the ir'Tollans have placed a large painting, six-feet by 4-feet in dimension, in the cargo cart. This is to be their gift to the bride and groom getting married in Vathirond. The painting is a masterwork and is worth upwards of 10,000 golden galifars (gp). Because of the value of the cargo being transported, House Orien has made arrangements for increased security on this journey of the Silver-Towers Local. As such, inside the cargo cart, four **Deneith White Blades** round out the increased security detail. They typically make themselves comfortable while guarding the valuable painting, using other luggage as makeshift chairs and a table while they entertain themselves with rounds of Three-Dragon Ante, a popular card game.

Each door to the interior of the cargo cart is locked, and the White Blades from the rear of steerage cart B are in plain view of the entrance closest to them, and at least one other patrolling White Blade should be able to clearly see anyone making an attempt to fiddle with the side doors. If players try to pick the Kundarak-made lock (**Dexterity check DC 25**) on any door, they must deal with the White Blades outside first, and then must deal with the four White Blades inside.

10. Rear Crew Cart (Elemental Coach): The last cart of the Silver-Towers Local is another elemental coach. A *lightning rail* typically has two elemental carts, so that when it comes time to return along the route from whence it came, there is no need to waste time turning the entire conveyance around. However, while an elemental coach is the rear cart, it is devoid of personnel and its elemental lies dormant.

Still, the White Blade security detail in the cargo cart will not take any attempt to enter the rear cart lightly, should one or more characters actually manage to get past them.

ENCOUNTERS ON A LIGHTNING RAIL

Fight scenes aboard trains are popular in movies and television. The following actions and circumstances may arise during encounters and combat while aboard the *lightning rail*. These rules can be used for most situations, though later parts of this adventure modify them due to unique circumstances the PCs find themselves in.

Getting onto the Roof: Above the covered walkway at each end of every cart is a hatch, accessible by a 15-foot tall ladder to the side of the door into the cart's interior. Climbing a ladder does not require a check if a character is moving with extreme care (treating each foot of ascent as four feet of movement and not taking the Dash action). While the *lightning rail* is in motion, climbing at a faster rate (each foot of ascent counting as two feet of movement) requires a **DC 5 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**.

Opening the hatch at the top of the ladder is an Object Interaction, and it remains open until closed. Once on the roof, characters must move slowly in order to keep their balance. If they move more than half their movement speed in distance on a turn while on top of the *lightning rail*, they must make a **DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** to maintain their balance. On a failure, they stumble and begin to roll off the roof of the *lightning rail*, in danger of falling off.

Detach Carts: It is possible to separate a cart from one adjacent to it. Doing so requires four Object Interactions and one Strength check that requires an action. Removing each of the two heavy chains connecting the cart requires a pair of Object Interactions each. By taking their free Object Interaction and a second Object Interaction as their action on a turn, a character can remove a chain in 1 round.

Once both chains are removed, a **DC 20 Strength check** can be attempted as an action to remove the heavy pin holding the carts together. The Athletics skill does not apply to this check, as it is a matter of raw power.

Once the pin is pulled, all carts no longer connected to the crew cart pulling the *lightning rail* begin to decelerate. At initiative count 0 on every turn the carts are disconnected, the gap between the carts widens by 10 feet. A cart disconnected from a *lightning rail* traveling at its normal cruising speed of 30 miles per hour (over flat terrain), will come to a stop in a little over a minute.

Once it is no longer moving, the residual current from the elemental coach keeping the detached carts aloft is spent. The detached carts crash 5 feet to the ground, then tip over as they land on the sloped

surface of the *conductor stones* beneath them. All creatures inside these carts when they tip over take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage, or half that amount if they succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**.

Fall or Jump Off: A *lightning rail* floats about 5 feet above a line of *conductor stones*, but the floor of the carts and walkways is about 10 feet off the ground. Falling this distance would usually only deal 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage to a character, but if the *lightning rail* is surging along at full speed, a character falling from a cart takes an additional 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the forward momentum. If the *lightning rail* is traveling at faster than normal speeds (as in Part 2 of this adventure), the additional bludgeoning damage can be much greater.

Furthermore, a falling character takes 10 (3d6) lightning damage, or half as much if they succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**, from discharge of the nearby *conductor stones* as the active *lightning rail* speeds by them.

Characters intentionally jumping off may attempt a **DC 20 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** to try and jump a safe distance away from the *lightning rail* and roll with the impact. A character that succeeds on this check takes no bludgeoning or lightning damage. On a failure, they are treated as if they fell.

If a character falls off the roof of the *lightning rail*, the damage from the initial fall increases to 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage. Jumping from the roof of a cart safely is nearly impossible. Doing so requires a character to succeed on a **DC 30 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**.

Push Someone Off: The normal rules for shoving a creature (*PLAYER'S HANDBOOK*, pg. 195) are typically all one needs for pushing another creature off the roof of a cart.

Pushing someone over the railing of the walkways between carts is a bit harder, granting the creature resisting the shove advantage on their contesting ability check. Pushing someone out a window from inside a cart is harder still, imposing disadvantage on the shoving creature's Strength (Athletics) check, in addition to granting advantage on resisting creature's ability check.

All the windows on the Silver-Towers Local are fitted with glass panes. Successfully shoving a creature through a closed window deals 2 (1d4) slashing damage to the shoved creature (and they then fall as above).

Grab at a Railing: A character that falls off the *lightning rail* for any reason can, as a last-ditch effort, attempt to arrest their fall by grabbing onto a guardrail, windowsill, or some other feature protruding from the

side of the *lightning rail*. Doing so requires the falling character to make a **DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** as a reaction.

Until the creature's next turn, they are hanging precariously by their fingertips. Another creature attempting to shove the hanging creature off of their vulnerable perch has advantage on their contested Strength (Athletics) check to shove the hanging creature, and the hanging creature has disadvantage on their ability check to resist. If the hanging creature fails the contest, they fall with no further attempts to catch themselves.

If a creature is still hanging at the start of their turn, they can climb back onto the *lightning rail* with a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check**. Failing this check by more than 5 causes the hanging creature to fall.

Jump Aboard a Moving Lightning Rail: A character on the ground may attempt to run alongside a speeding *lightning rail* and leap for it, then pull themselves aboard. To do so, a character must first take the Dash action and move their speed in the same direction of the *lightning rail*, then leap for the cart, attempting to avoid a discharge of the *conductor stones* by making a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check**. On a failure, the character is struck by a discharge and takes 10 (3d6) lightning damage. If the check fails by less than 5, the character manages to grab ahold of the *lightning rail* but still takes this damage.

The both crew carts of a *lightning rail* have a low platform on each side that is easier to reach. A savvy character can wait for the rear crew cart to come within reach then leap for one of its platforms, requiring only a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check** to grab ahold of.

Once a character has a hold on the speeding *lightning rail*, a successful **DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check** is required to climb fully aboard with the rest of the creature's movement that turn.

Although the *lightning rail* surges forward at a decent velocity, its length means a character that survives a fall may have the opportunity to pick themselves up and attempt to leap back on. A speeding *lightning rail* moves twice each round, once on initiative count 10 and once on initiative count 0. On each count, the *lightning rail* moves 130 feet down the line of *conductor stones* it is traveling on. This translates to roughly one cart flashing by a character on the ground at each initiative count the *lightning rail* moves.

ATTENTION, PASSENGERS

While the party is busy exploring (or robbing) the Silver-Towers Local, a few events that foreshadow the near future should occur.

Missed Connections. Vathirond's close proximity to the Mournland should be discussed sometime during the PCs' conversations with other travelers (or overheard from others' conversations if the adventurers don't feel like being chatty). The massive wall of dead-grey mist is visible on the eastern horizon from anywhere in Vathirond, and most common folk shudder at the necessity of traveling closer to that warped, blasted wasteland.

At some point in the conversation, it should be brought up that the line of *conductor stones* the Silver-Towers Express is currently traveling on continues east from Vathirond's *lightning rail* station into the Mournland (most likely spoken of in frightful whisper, or overwise to purposely spook a skittish traveling companion). The Silver-Line Local route used to connect Sharn to Metrol, the capital of the destroyed nation of Cyre. Now, however, the part of the line that continues east from Vathirond is obviously decommissioned.

The Usual Delays. Sometime during the day, a House Orien crewmember will begin making rounds to announce a delay in the Silver-Tower Local's schedule: the *lightning rail* will be pulling in to the station in Vathirond in the middle of the night instead of the evening. Passengers continuing on toward Flamekeep (that being the PCs) will need to be roused from their slumber to transfer lines, since the Silver-Towers Local line ends at Vathirond. This will put the expectation in the player's minds that the *lightning rail* will be in a large city when they wake up in the middle of the night later.

If the PCs ask the House Orien crew about the defunct route leading into the Mournland, the crewmember will politely assure them that the route is no longer functioning. If the adventurers insist on a more detailed explanation, the Orien crewmember will relate that *conductor stones* leading toward the Mournland have been strategically removed, so that even in the highly improbable occurrence that the Silver-Line Local "misses its stop" in Vathirond, it will decelerate and slow to a halt well before barreling into the Mournland.

Problem Child. The previous few bits of foreshadowing are set up to lead the players to a false conclusion once they are drawn into Joachim's quori-induced nightmare; that they are barreling through the Mournland and everything they're experiencing is real. However, the set-up for the actual reveal (that they are, in fact, dreaming), is even more important.

When the player's first encounter Joachim, he is having what appears to be a wild temper tantrum, making the lives of other passengers around him miserable. He repeatedly whines "I don't want to go! I don't want to go!" in such a loud, unpleasant, and piercing wail that most would assume he is just a spoiled brat futilely complaining about the trip his parents are taking him on.

His parents, Trevor and Marigold Sabin, appear frazzled and at their wit's end. Joachim is normally a very well-behaved child, but they have no idea their son is becoming a potent, uncontrolled wielder of psionic power, or that his raw potential has drawn the baleful attention of the quori—beings they don't even know exist.

A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check** lets a concerned character know that Joachim's tantrum is due to overwhelming fear. His screams and cries aren't those of a spoiled child not getting their way. When he shouts "I don't want to go!", it is because he believes he is going to be taken away from his parents, who he loves, and he is desperately frightened.

If a character tries to intervene and calm Joachim, a successful **Charisma check** (DC 20 using the Persuasion skill, or DC 25 using the Intimidation skill) will halt Joachim's wailing for the moment. He'll try to explain that he doesn't want to leave his parents, but Joachim doesn't understand enough about the psychic attack he is under to identify his assailant as a tsucora quori, or even relate anything that would sound like a believable threat. To all appearances, he appears to just be having an irrational childhood fear. Trevor and Marigold will thank the character for calming Joachim, but within minutes of leaving, the little boy's piercing wail will start back up again.

SURGING ALONG...

Once these foreshadowing events have been experienced, and the player seem ready to move on, narrate them returning to their seats and turning in early to get some solid rest before the line change in the middle of the night.

If players insist that their character wouldn't go to sleep, for fear of missing the line change in Vathirond, the steady surging rhythm of the *lightning rail* eventually lulls them to sleep regardless, after hours of fighting it.

"WHAT IF I DON'T DREAM?"

Some players might be playing characters that are of a race that does not sleep or dream, such as elves, kalashtar, or warforged. How then, will these characters get to participate in the rest of the adventure if it takes place in a dream?

What follows in *Nightmare on the Mournland Express* is no normal dream. Instead, the PCs are subjected to a unique effect akin to a mental *banishment*; their consciousnesses are forced from their bodies and drawn into Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams, by young Joachim's uncontrolled psychic talent. The PCs are clearly capable and stalwart adventurers, and Joachim has noticed this as much as anyone else on the *lightning rail*. In his desperate need, he has unconsciously drawn into his dreamscape the minds of the closest people he thinks might be strong enough to save him, regardless of their ability to sleep or dream naturally.

For player characters who experience this "psychic *banishment*" while conscious, the change to the deserted nightmare *lightning rail* described in the next part of the adventure is instantaneous and unexplained, occurring between one blink and the next. These characters may perhaps be the first to realize that the issue of the route leading into the Mournland is a red-herring, and suspect something else is going on, and that's ok. Once the PCs "wake up" in the nightmare, it's just a matter of time before they all come to that conclusion.

PART 2: CRAZY TRAIN

Once the PCs go to sleep or otherwise settle down for a long rest, the next phase of the adventure begins. The players should be expecting to have their sleep interrupted in the middle of the night to change lanes in Vathirond.

WAKING NIGHTMARE

When the characters next wake, however, describe them coming to naturally, as if at the end of a completed long rest (even for those that tried to stay up). This should be the party's first indicator that something wrong has happened.

No matter which cart the PCs are in (most likely 6 or 7), the view from the cart's windows clearly indicates that it is still the dead of night. The *lightning rail's* internal *everbright lanterns* brightly illuminate the inside of the carts and make the darkness outside slightly obscured by their reflections. Inspecting the windows up close reveals that the Silver-Line Local is currently surging through a desolate, grey wasteland, illuminated only by the glow of the *everbright lanterns* emanating through the windows from inside the carts, and the discharge of the *lightning rail's conductor stones*. If a character looking out a window has a Passive Perception score of 13 or higher, they notice that the *lightning rail* is travelling much faster than normal. Checking other compartments in Cart 6, or simply looking around in Cart 7, will reveal that all other passengers have gone missing without a trace.

Give the PCs a moment to inspect the cart they woke up in, then read:

You hear the high, plaintive wail of a crying child coming from the rear of the cart. The cry echoes, hollowly, as if heard at the end of a long, dark cave.

Despite the odd modulation to the sound, it doesn't take more than an instant to recognize it as coming from Joachim, the child you witnessed throwing a tantrum earlier that day.

From here, the players essentially have three choices: move away from the crying (Flee), ignore it (Stall), or move toward it (Approach).

Flee. There is no way for the PCs to move forward. The tsucora quori is aware of Joachim's last-ditch effort to psychically call for saviors. But the quori are nightmares incarnate, and the PCs' minds are now in one. The tsucora is calling the shots.

When the PCs attempt to move to a cart further away from the crying, the first big clue that the normal rules of reality have been suspended occurs. When

they open the door out of the cart onto the exterior walkway, the doorway is filled with a magical plane of darkness that cannot be pierced by anything short of truesight. Should a PC choose to go through the darkness rather than approach the crying, they are teleported to the rear of the cart they are currently in, closer to the crying, as if they just entered the same cart they tried to leave.

If the PCs try this a second time, the same thing occurs, but then the plane of utter darkness begins to expand into the cart, slowly filling the front end of it with cold void.

Stall: No matter the reason, if the PCs don't move from the cart they are in before long, a violent burst of acceleration rocks the cart. All creatures in the cart must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** to avoid being knocked prone.

Any character with a Passive Perception of 10 or higher will feel the noticeable increase in speed. A character who does notice it may attempt a **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check** to realize that if the *lightning rail* keeps accelerating like this, it will "jump the stones" and crash horrifically.

Any character that succeeds on this check would also know that detaching the rear carts from the front elemental coach at this speed would be disastrous: the *lightning rail* is currently moving so fast, that the residual charge from the elemental coach will run out before the detached carts' momentum, resulting in nearly as bad of a crash if the *lightning rail* jumps the stones on its own.

It is a simple matter for any PCs who fell prone to pick themselves back up again, but this should be enough to spur the party in one direction or another.

Approach: If the party decides to move closer to the sound of the crying child, out the rear of the cart they are in, they are able to freely move in that direction. If the PCs "woke up" in cart 6, then when they enter cart 7 the crying is clearly coming from further toward the rear. As they pass through cart 7, be sure to communicate the eerie absence of all the steerage-class passengers that were there before they fell asleep.

As they pass through cart 7, if they did not already experience a sudden burst of acceleration as in the Stall option above, they experience one now.

If the PCs "woke up" in cart 7, they can hear the crying coming from the next cart toward the rear, cart 8. Proceed to the next section of the adventure.

LUCID DREAMING

If at any point during Part 2 of this adventure a player or PC asks “is this all just a dream or nightmare?” or expresses a similar thought, immediately interrupt any action and tell them to make a Charisma saving throw. If they succeed on a DC 10 Charisma saving throw, the character realizes they are psychically projected to Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams, and are not in their physical body. Conscious realization of this while in a dream is a state known as lucid dreaming.

Hand the player a lucid dreaming rule card and dream tokens from Appendix C. A character that is lucid dreaming receives a number of dream tokens equal to their Charisma modifier, minimum 1. At any point during Part 2 of this adventure, they may expend a dream token to gain one of the following benefits.

- As an action, they may turn any weapon they are holding into a magical +1 weapon of the same kind. This lasts until they wake up.
- As part of an Object Interaction, spontaneously create any mundane non-living handheld object.
- As a reaction, they may turn any failure on an attack, save, or check into a success.
- As a reaction, they may cause an attack against them to miss.
- When they hit with an attack, they turn that hit into a critical hit.
- As an action, gain the benefits of a completed short rest.
- By pending a token, the character may try to do something that is normally impossible for them. They make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw, and on a success, they can use any class feature or spell available to 10th-level characters once. On a failure, their dream token is spent as an action, but nothing happens.

The one thing a lucid dreamer can’t do is force themselves to wake up—the nightmare isn’t their own, so they are stuck.

Once expended, dream tokens cannot be restored. A character receives a supply of dream tokens only once for each dream in which they come to the realization that they are dreaming. Unused dream tokens remaining when the character wakes up are lost.

CREEPY CHILD

As the party enters cart 8, the second steerage-class passenger cart, it is just as empty and desolate as the first steerage cart, except there is a huddled figure in the far corner of the compartment (marked as **C** on the map of cart 8). Read or summarize the following:

As you enter the cart, the keening wail subsides into choked, terrible sobbing. Across the large open interior of the steerage cart, behind the last row of benches, you can see a child, facing the back-left corner. Its entire body is jerking violently, unnaturally, as though the wracking sobs are too powerful for its young frame.

The figure does not respond to any attempts to speak to it. It continues to bob in horrible full-body spasms. Besides its unnatural movements, the figure appears to be a small human boy, though its face is obscured by its hands and the hair falling over its face. If the players attempt to flee from the creepy sight, describe the slowly encroaching black void creeping toward them from the front end of cart 7. It moves slowly, giving the party 5 minutes to take decisive action regarding the figure in the rear of cart 8.

Should any character touch the wracking figure, it immediately turns around and reveals itself as a **hob** and attacks. Read the following:

At your touch, the child ceases all sound and movement, holding still like a statue. A heartbeat later it SHRIEKS as it turns on you, an inhuman face lurking beneath completely human hair, and long shining claws bursting from the flesh and nails of its fingertips to rake at you.

Roll initiative. On the off-chance that any character still expected the figure to be the boy Joachim, that character is surprised in the first round of combat.

Following the encounter, the body of the hob dissolves into a putrid black stain that quickly evaporates. Any encroaching wall of black void also evaporates at the same rate. The PCs may now travel toward the front of the *lightning rail* without being obstructed.

After giving the party a moment to gather their wits, then relate the following:

Suddenly, you hear a child’s voice again, this time coming from the front of the lightning rail. “I don’t want to go!”, he shouts, the panicked voice of young Joachim, somehow clear in your mind, despite the howling wind outside and distance.

However, almost the instant the voice fades from the PCs' minds, the *lightning rail* shudders violently with a burst of acceleration, requiring each PC to succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** to avoid being knocked prone.

If no one has yet realized the danger of the *lightning rail* accelerating off the line of *conductor stones* or of detaching the rear carts, any character that is an artificer or wizard, or has the Mark of Passage or Making, automatically realizes the danger without need to make an Intelligence check.

The PCs are free to ignore the psychic plea for help and the danger of the rapidly accelerating *lightning rail*, if they wish. Should they continue back toward the cargo cart and rear crew, they find the cargo cart is empty, and the rear crew cart is missing entirely. If any PC gets the idea that maybe leaping from the back of the *lightning rail* would be the safest way off the coach, give them one warning, that anyone with a Passive Perception of at least 8 can tell that the *lightning rail* is moving far, far too fast for anyone to survive such a leap.

If they still try it, the character dies, regardless of any ability checks they make try to justify their survival.

Because this scenario is a dream, death is not as permanent in *Nightmare on the Mournland Express* as it is in other adventures. See the sidebar on page 14 for more details.

DINING SERVICE

As the party heads toward the front of the *lightning rail*, they must invariably pass through carts 5 and 4. If the party still doesn't seem convinced of the danger of the accelerating *lightning rail*, you can force another burst of acceleration while they are passing through cart 5.

This time, all characters are knocked prone without receiving a chance to avoid it with a saving throw. By this point, all characters should realize the danger just by looking out a window and noting how dangerously fast the wasteland is screaming by outside. The party's only chance to avoid a devastating crash would be to find out why the elemental coach is accelerating out of control.

Once the relatively normal danger of crashing is realized, entering cart 4 might take the PCs off guard. Read or paraphrase the following:

You rush through the walkway between the foremost passenger cart and the dining cart in front of it. The wind viciously whips at your exposed skin and

eyes, chilling you to the bone as you open the door to the dining cart.

As you gaze inside, a deeper chill runs down your spine. Before you, where the dining cart should be, is an abattoir. The six, long wooden communal dining tables are covered in gore and viscera, dripping from the bodies hanging from cruel hooks attached to the compartment's ceiling by clanking chains.

As the lightning rail continues rapidly surging along, the bodies sway from side to side, but none move of their own accord. They are nothing but meat now.

The bodies appear vaguely familiar. A character inspecting the bodies will get a sense that the body must have belonged to one of the passengers, as the PC has a faint recollection of their features in a crowd. However, there is not any specific person that the PCs interacted with to any significant extent that can be found among the hanging bodies.

As the PCs make their way through cart 4, nothing happens. The bodies don't animate. The chains don't start whipping of their own accord. The room remains silent and still except for the swaying of the bodies to the rhythm of the *lightning rail*, and the dripping of viscera.

The party must continue on to cart 3, for at this point they all must realize that they have to deactivate the elemental coach to save themselves from crashing.

The rear door to cart 3 opens into the galley cart's enormous kitchen (marked **3A** on cart 3's map). Unlike the dining cart, the kitchen appears in pristine condition. Every utensil and appliance gleams. Knives sway unnervingly in overhead racks but are secure. However, again, nothing happens as the players make their way through the kitchen.

The door marked **3B** leads to a large pantry. If the players open this door, read or summarize the following:

You find the galley cart's pantry. Strangely, all the shelves are empty, the cabinet doors open and their insides barren. Everything is covered in a layer of dust, as if no food has been stored here for years.

There is nothing to be gained from inspecting the pantry.

The door marked **3C** leads to a long, dark hallway. As soon as the party opens the door, relate the following:

You open the door and a dim hallway stretches before you toward another door on the far end, about 30 to 40 feet away. A single everbright lantern overhead flickers ominously, swaying in its housing, casting crazy

shadows down the corridor and across the five doors on the left-hand side of the corridor.

Before you even begin to set foot in the hallway, an immense knocking sound blasts from the second-to last door. The door bounces on its hinges as something impacts it from behind, loudly. Then again, and again.

Most PCs will immediately attempt to react to this, drawing weapons, running forward, or retreating. However, when you get a chance to speak again, continue with:

Before you can do more than draw a weapon or take a step in any direction, one last, incredibly loud impact causes the door, and several feet of wall on each side of it to explode outward in a shower of splinters, just twenty feet in front of you.

Bursting into the hallway, a hulking immensity of raw, corded muscle, chains, and hooks—so many wicked, cruel hooks—turns to face you. It sharpens the massive meat cleavers it has in place of hands in a shower of sparks then begins barreling its way down the corridor, destroying it as it goes, just to reach you.

The party now faces **The Butcher**, and it is time to roll initiative.

When The Butcher is defeated, the final blow against it appears to hit nothing but air as the creature simply ceases to exist. As an eidolon, it is entirely a dream-construct of the party's own fear and paranoia, the culmination of their dread mounting after seeing the mess in the dining cart (itself just a creation of the tsucora quori).

If the party gets clever after seeing the dining cart's condition and decides to bypass the galley cart's interior by climbing its surface, The Butcher bursts from the roof of cart 3 and fights the adventurers atop it until it is destroyed. (If it is shoved off the roof of the *lightning rail*, as soon as it disappears over the ledge, it uses its Unseen Return ability to teleport to the other side of the *lightning rail*, leaping up from the opposite ledge on its next turn.)

MIND THE GAP

With The Butcher defeated, there is nothing stopping the party from making their way to the front of cart 3 and through cart 2. However, before they can reach the front exit of the first-class passenger cart, a horrible noise of rending metal resounds, and there is a subtle shift of balance. A successful **DC 15 Perception check** to figure out what just happened (or a Passive Perception of 15) will allow a character to realize that cart 2, as well as all carts to the rear of

it, have begun to decelerate after being decoupled from cart 1, the elemental coach.

By the time the party opens the door at the front of cart 2 to the exterior walkway, the gap between cart 1 and 2 has grown to 15 feet. As soon as the door is opened, ask for their positioning on the map and begin keeping track of rounds. (Exact initiative count doesn't matter; the party may act in any order they wish.) Any character with a Strength score of 15 or higher can leap across the gap without making a check, assuming they have a running start from the door to the walkway. All other characters must succeed on a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check** to make the leap. Another character already safely on cart 1 can Ready an Action to take the Help action to catch others making the leap, granting them advantage on their Strength (Athletics) check to jump.

After all characters have acted, the gap between cart 1 and 2 increases to 25 feet. If there are any characters still on cart 2 as it falls behind, a new round begins and those characters can attempt to leap the increased distance. Doing so without an ability check in round 2 is impossible without magical assistance (or lucid dreaming) and requires a **DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check**. If any PCs are left on cart 2 after all players have acted again, the gap between cart 1 and 2 increases to 35 feet, and the DC to successfully leap across in round 3 increases to 35. If there are still PCs left on cart 2 at the end of round 3, the gap grows too wide to leap, even with lucid dreaming (though the right magic spell might still help).

Regardless of the current round, if a character making a Strength (Athletics) check to jump across fails the check by 5 or less, the character reaches the other side, but barely, slamming their bodies against the ledge of the walkway and dangling below it. Their turn immediately ends and they take 3 (1d6) lightning damage from the discharge between the cart and the *conductor stones*. They take another 3 (1d6) lightning damage at the start of each of their turns that they remain hanging off the ledge. A **DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check** is required to climb up. A character already safely on cart 1 can pull a hanging character up with a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check** of their own, potentially pulling them up before they receive a second shock.

Any characters left behind on cart 3 and the rest of the *lightning rail* are doomed to a catastrophic crash, as the elemental charge keeping the carts hovering above the stones runs out in one minute, well before the carts can slow to even a marginally safe speed. Characters caught in the resulting devastation die, with no chance to avoid it.

NO TICKET, NO ENTRY

When all remaining party members are now on the walkway outside the elemental coach. Read or paraphrase the following:

You've made it onto the other cart, the elementally-powered engine coach currently speeding out of control. The walkway on the exterior of the cart appears much like all the others: a covered top, a ladder leading to a hatchway toward the roof, and a low railing over the ledge behind you.

The main difference: the door to the interior of the elemental coach is made of solid steel, rather than decorative wood, and does not have a glass window to allow you to see inside. The latch to open it sports a keyhole. All that stands between you and whatever is causing all this is behind that simple, locked metal door.

It is impossible to open this door. The tsucora quori has put all of its will into guarding this entrance to the heart of the nightmare, where it is currently feasting on Joachim's fears and psychic potential.

Allow the characters to attempt whatever means they wish to open the door (Strength checks to break it down, Thieves' Tools checks to pick the lock, casting the *knock* spell, etc.). The first attempt automatically fails.

The only other option the PCs have is to try the hatch to the roof, but if they opt to try the door a second time, a noticeable, glaringly obvious break from reality occurs. Read or summarize the following:

Just as before, your attempt to open the door to the interior of the elemental coach is foiled. This time, however, the plain metal door in front of you... shifts. The very frame of the door expands, from about three feet wide to almost ten, the simple lock and door knob expanding in size and ratcheting outward in complexity and imposing solidity until a veritable bank vault's door stands before you.

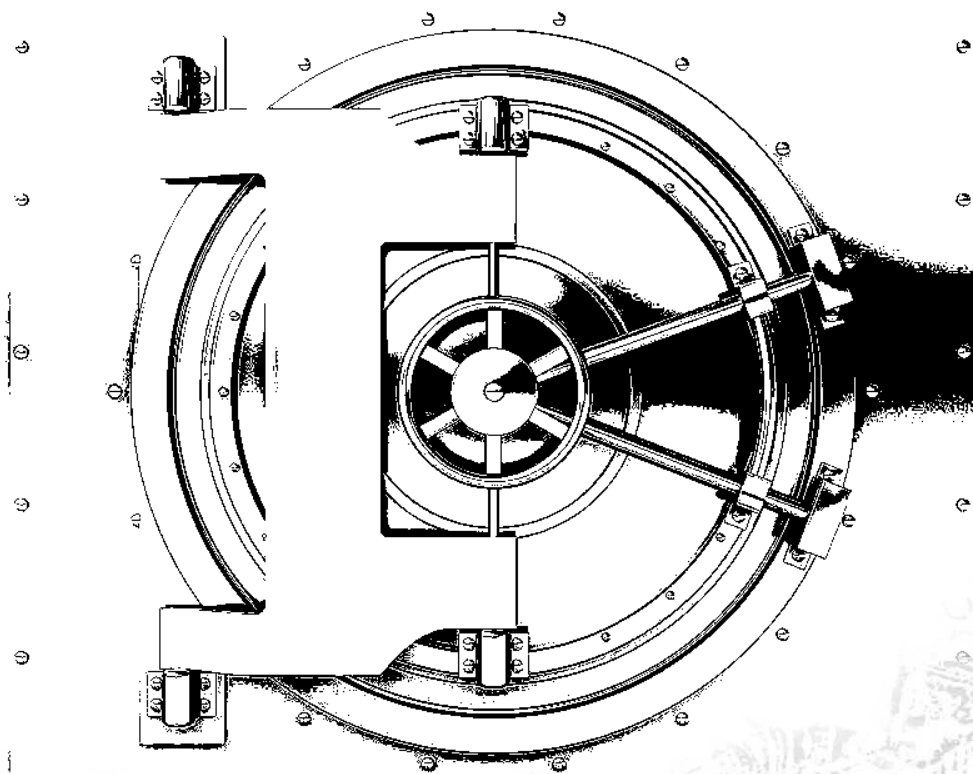
It's almost as if the door, the elemental coach, as if reality itself is sending you a message. "STAY. OUT."

At this point, if any characters have not yet entered a state of lucid dreaming (see the sidebar on page 9), they do now. Those who enter lucid dreaming because they are confronted with the reality of the dream in this way only gain 1 dream token, rather than dream tokens equal to their Charisma modifier.

Once all characters are lucid dreaming, relate the following:

It dawns on you. This... this isn't real. None of it. This is a dream. But... but something other than you is controlling it.

That much, you are certain, IS real. You aren't sure who is behind this, or what will happen if you die in a dream you aren't in control of, but one thing is for sure. You need to find another way into the elemental coach.



THUNDERSTRUCK!

Whether the PCs try the door or immediately go for the ladder, the only option that progresses the adventure forward is to climb onto the roof of the *lightning rail's* engine. Once the player characters climb the ladder or find their own means up, place them at the rear of the coach's roof, near the ladder's hatch (marked as **1A** on the map of Cart 1).

Read or paraphrase the following:

Stretched before you lies the top of the lightning rail's elemental coach. Rising amid the center of the coach's roof, a pair of 15-foot tall structures of burnished metal sweep up and back toward you, tapering to a point. From the tip of these spires—the Silver-Towers—a continuous arc of electricity snaps angrily to and fro like a dangerous halo.

Periodically, a flash of light assaults your eyes, illuminating the dark expanse of the wasteland hurtling around you, as a lash of lightning strikes the metal surface of the lightning rail around the base of the spires.

Before the three lightning-rod towers, a ribbon of living lightning roils in a twenty-foot-high archway near the front of the engine. Just passed that, however, nestled in a windbreak at the very front of the engine, is an access hatch.

The lighting spires are both marked as **1B** on the map and the air elemental's arch of electricity is marked as **1C**. The access hatch is the trapdoor indicated as **1D** on the map. The player characters must reach it to continue on to the source of this nightmare. The party may try several methods to get there, each with different likelihoods of success.

Flying: Because the elemental coach is hurtling along at such dangerous speeds, flying is not a viable option. Any creature that ends their turn while flying is rapidly outpaced by the *lightning rail*: at initiative count 10 and 0 of every round, the *lightning rail* moves 400 feet along its tracks, leaving every creature not standing on or in it behind.

PCs that are left behind find themselves swiftly swallowed by utter darkness, as the only light in the barren wasteland that provided by the roiling lightning atop the *lightning rail's* elemental coach, recedes into the distance. Even characters with darkvision eventually find that preternatural sense swallowed by magical darkness, and they are left in nothing but cold, stark void.

Inform the character that they begin taking increasing necrotic and cold damage every round, until they die.

Climbing. Possibly one of the safer options, players may try to avoid the lightning spires by

hanging onto the sides of the *lightning rail* and shimmying across. A character without a climb speed requires a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** check to move half their speed sideways along the side of the elemental engine. A shimmying character cannot take the Dash action on their turns.

Once a shimmying character reaches the elemental struts projecting the arc of living lightning (marked as **1F**), they can no longer shimmy sideways safely. Attempting to shimmy over the strut deals 10 (3d6) lightning damage to a character as soon as they touch the strut, and at the start of each turn they remain in contact with it.

A character taking this lightning damage must make a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw** to endure the numbing shock. On a failure, they are stunned, and resultingly lose their grip, fall, and die.

Walking: As noted earlier, walking along the roof of the *lightning rail* is dangerous. A character must move as though moving through difficult terrain, or risk losing their balance and falling. The PCs can try to cross the engine together or one at a time. Doing so individually is the wiser option.

Whenever a PC first enters an area within 15 feet of a spire or just to the rear of the ring of elemental lightning (areas demarked in light blue rings on the map for cart 1's roof), or if they start their turn in such an area, lightning strikes toward them, as well as any creature around them.

All creatures within a 10-foot radius of the targeted character, including the character themselves, must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** or take 7 (2d6) lightning damage.

More dangerously, any creature that takes this damage must immediately make a **DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** to maintain their balance. If a character fails this check, they are blasted off their feet and immediately tumble off the roof of the elemental coach.

Such characters have a chance to save themselves as per the "Grab at a Railing" on page 5 of this adventure. If they succeed on grabbing the side of the *lightning rail*, they may either climb back up, or being shimmying sideways as above.

Teleportation: If available, teleportation is a character's safest option to get to the access hatch. Spells such as *misty step* or *dimension door* can bypass some or all of the areas that threaten to blast the PC with lightning (assuming they don't teleport *into* one of the designated areas). Because the travel is instantaneous, there is no danger of being left behind, and the teleporting's characters forward momentum atop the elemental coach is maintained.

THE NIGHTMARE ENGINE

Once the surviving PCs make it to the access hatch, they are free to open it. When they do, relate the below:

Instead of the expected internal workings of the elemental coach, what you see below you is a dark cavern glowing with a lurid purple light. The drop below looks deeper than the lightning rail is tall, as if the space below was completely disconnected from the reality of the racing wasteland around you.

If a character looking below has darkvision or a Passive Perception of 16 or higher, read the following as well:

What at first struck you as an uneven cavern floor comes into sharper focus the more you look at it. The cave below you isn't hewn from rough stone. It is lined with bodies. Motionless, grey bodies.

When the PCs drop into the cavern of bodies, place them around the **X** on the Nightmare Engine map, read the below:

You land with a sickeningly soft thump. All around you, the floor, the walls rising into darkness, even the ceiling overhead, are made from bodies.

Before you, on a raised dais, are two figures: The first is a primal nightmare of a being. Combining the features of a hideous scorpion, snake, and crustacean, it hunches over Joachim, the small boy crying and sobbing almost silently beneath it. The massive creature's eyes—too many eyes—swivel from the boy to you.

In your mind, a terrible susurrus of nails on chalk and the drip and sizzle of venom on flesh form words:

"This is not your world. This is not your fight. Go back where you came, leave the boy to me, and I will spare your fragile sanity."

The voice they hear in their head belongs to the hideous creature, Aka'vanaksha, an **apex tsucora quori**. He is on the altar, at the **Q** marked on the map.

Should any PCs decide to take him up on the offer, they find that they can now will themselves to wake up. Should they go through with it, that character instantly disappears, leaving the rest of the party—and Joachim—to their fate.

If any PCs refuse the Aka'vanaksha's offer, it will attack. Roll initiative.

During combat, Joachim will remain motionless on the dais, and will do nothing but cower in fear. Unlike the hob pretending to be him earlier, the real Joachim's trembling isn't hideously exaggerated. He simply looks like a poor, frightened child, because he is.

IF YOU DIE IN A DREAM...

Because the PCs are not in their physical bodies, death may not be as final as it otherwise would be in Part 2 of this adventure.

If any PC previously died since the beginning of Part 2, their bodies are among those that comprise the walls and floor of the Nightmare Engine. Fellow PCs will instantly recognize them because, while pale, they have significantly more color to them than the grey corpses they are intertwined with.

"Dead" PCs in the cavern appear to be living and aware, but incapacitated. They are considered to be at 0 hit points and stable. If they receive any amount of healing, they roll initiative and on their next turn, can spend half of their movement pulling themselves free from the walls or floor. After that they can join the fight.

PCs that are killed by the quori directly cannot be brought back from the dead in the dream this way but are mostly likely still alive in the waking world.

END OF THE LINE

Once Aka'vanaksha is defeated, the nightmare still remains, and the PCs find they can no longer wake themselves at will.

The Waking World. In order to wake up and finish the adventure, the PCs must interact with Joachim in a soothing manner. No skill checks are necessary: they merely need to treat him with compassion after the ordeal he's been through. Alternatively, if your PCs are just mean, they can kill Joachim, which causes the entire dreamscape to implode. Once Joachim is soothed or dispatched, the nightmare ends and the PCs wake up.

Once the dream ends, the PCs find themselves waking, just as the Silver-Towers Local pulls into Vathirond's lightning rail station at around 3 in the morning.

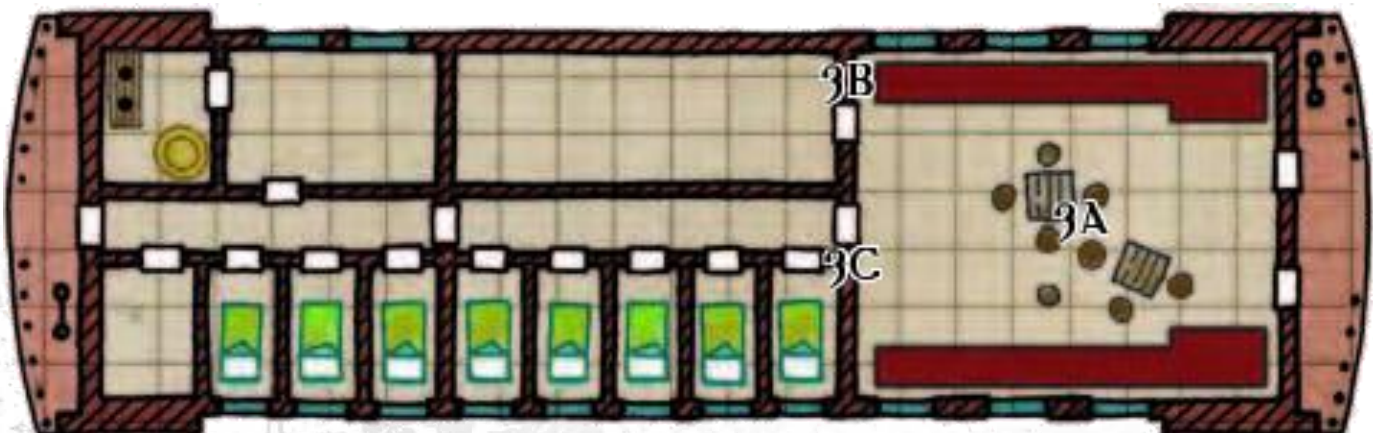
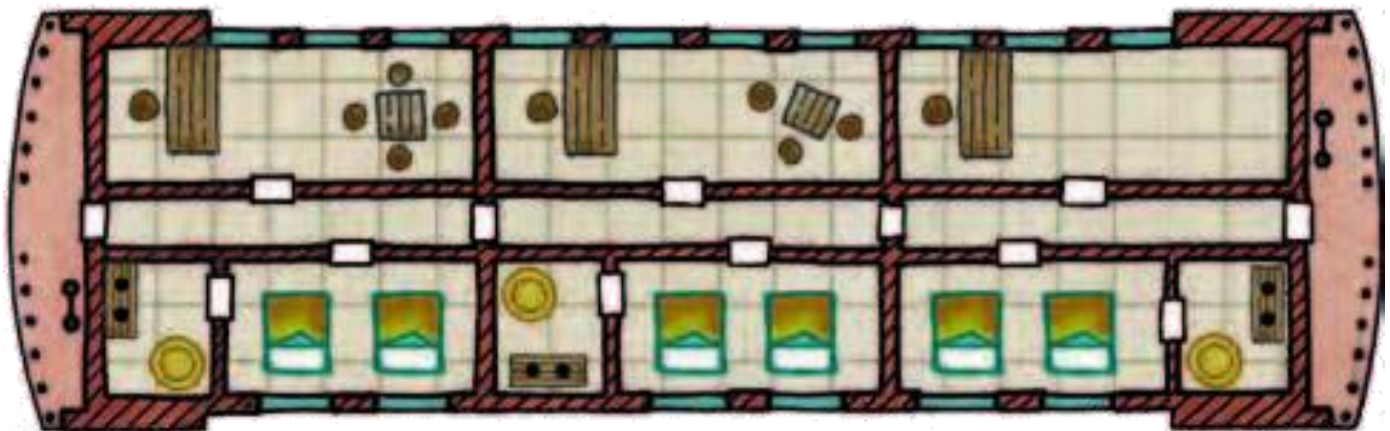
Consequences. If any PC were dead at the end of the nightmare, they still wake up, but they gain no benefit from having rested and take 10 (3d6) psychic damage. If the PCs imploded the dreamscape by killing Joachim, every member of the party suffers this result.

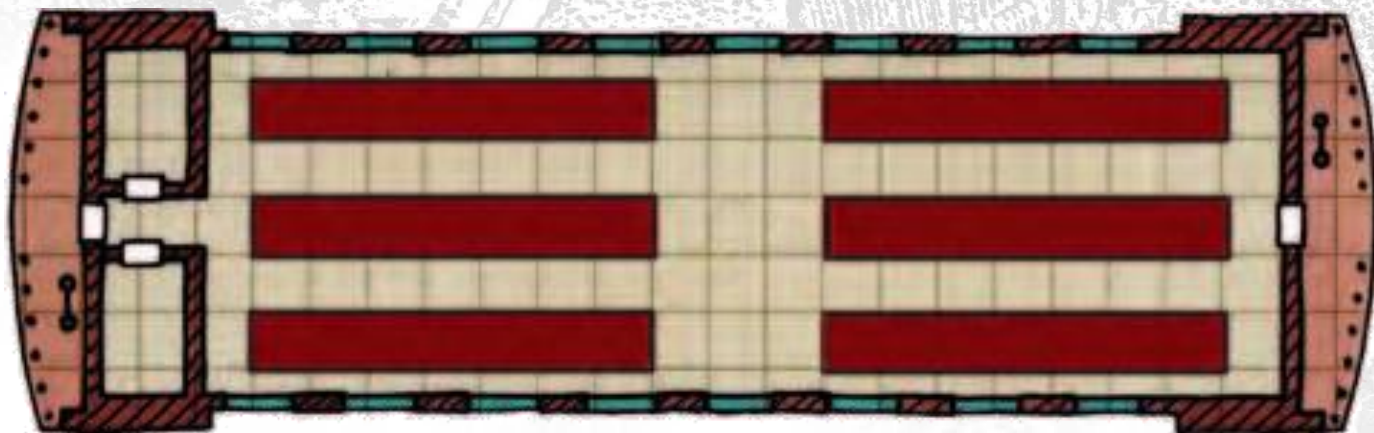
If a PC was roughed up during the previous day for some reason (such as, fighting Deneith security personnel...), the psychic damage may possibly reduce them to 0 hit points. If such an outcome occurs, then the character does indeed die—for real this time.

If you are running this adventure as part of a larger campaign, you may decide that the psychic damage also reduces a character's maximum hit points by the same amount, which cannot be restored until they receive a blessing from a divine spellcaster. Good thing the PCs were headed to Flamekeep!

APPENDIX A.

MAPS

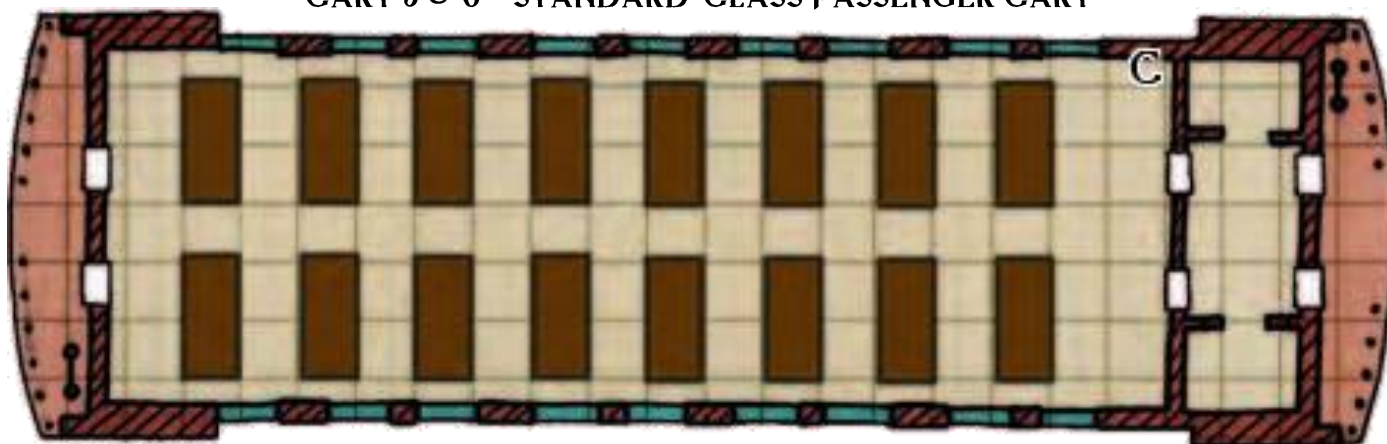




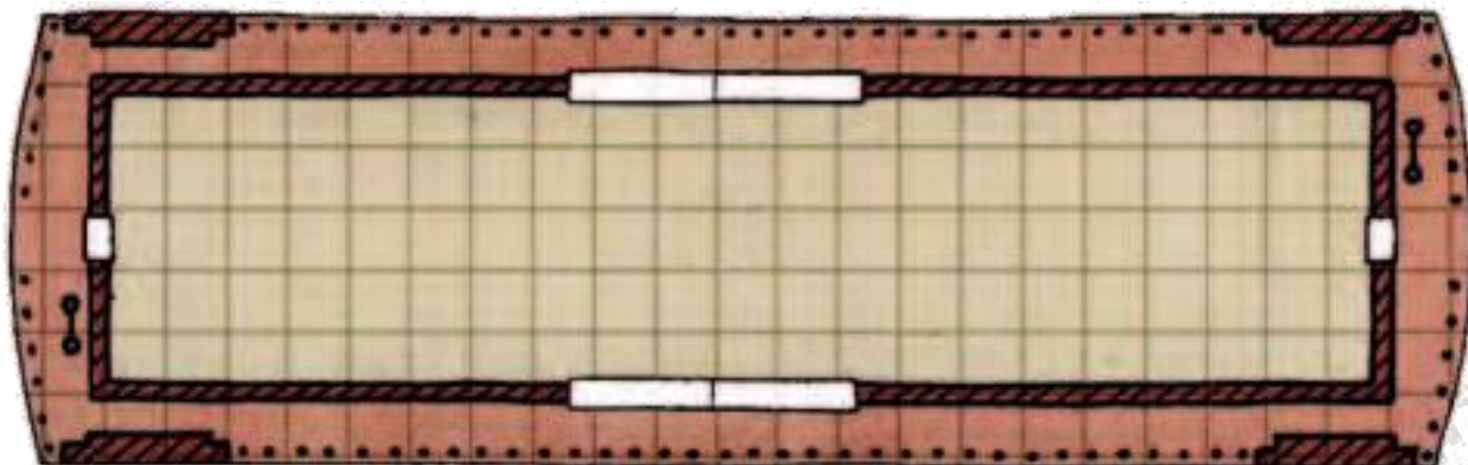
CART 4 ~ DINING CART



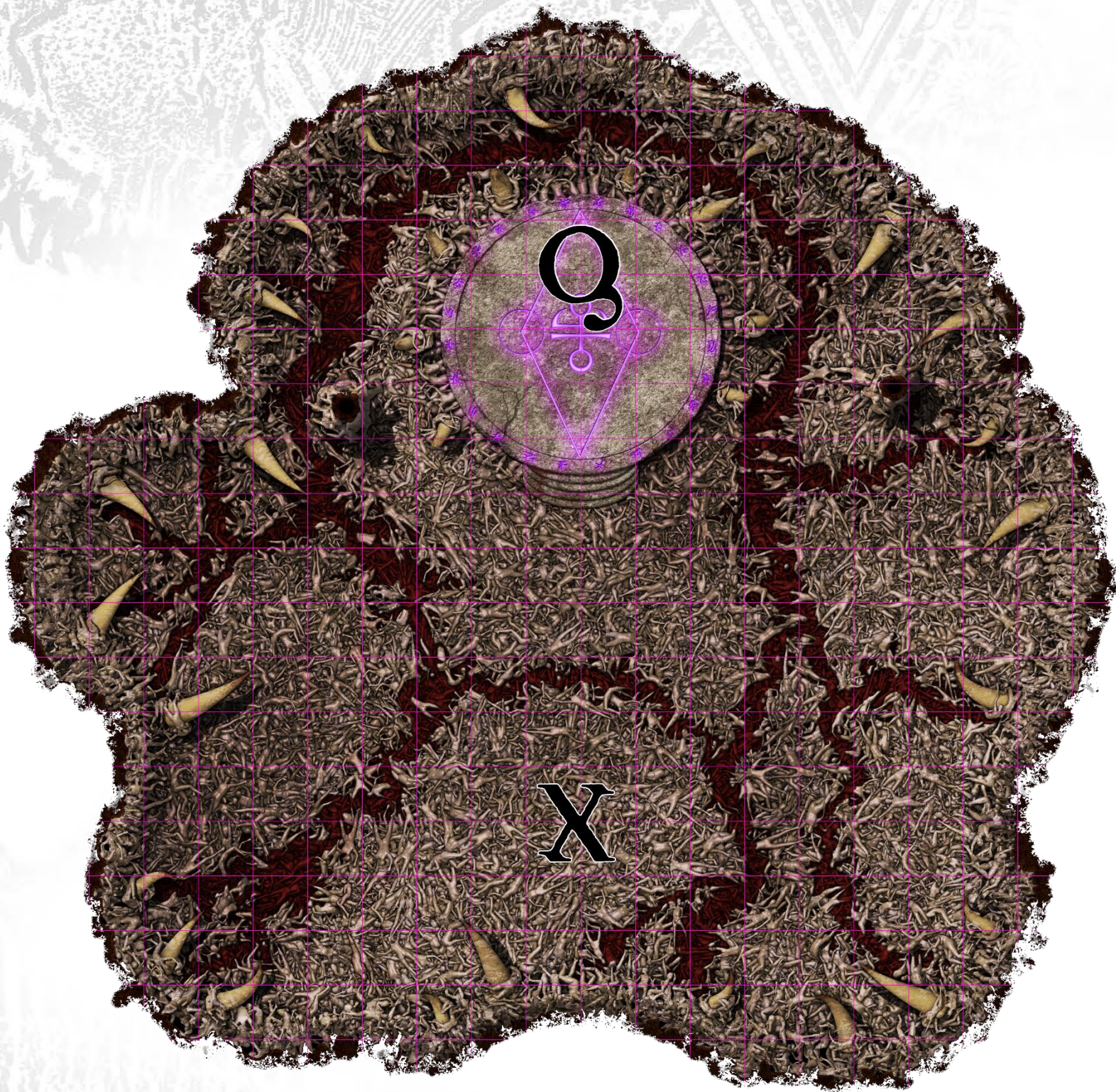
CART 5 & 6 ~ STANDARD-CLASS PASSENGER CART



CART 7 & 8 ~ STEERAGE-CLASS PASSENGER CART



CART 9 ~ CARGO CART



THE NIGHTMARE ENGINE

APPENDIX B.

NPCs & MONSTERS

APEX TSUCORA QUORI

Quori are fiends native to the plane of Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams in EBERRON. All quori embody a nightmare, dream, or emotion of mortal minds. Tsucora quori are fear and terror incarnate.

Tsucora are typically one of the weakest caste of quori, but Aka'vanaksha is one of the most powerful of his kind, rivaling the might of the du'ulora caste.

APEX TSUCORA QUORI

Large fiend (quori), lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with mage armor)

Hit Points 95 (10d10 + 40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +8

Skills Intimidate +8, Perception +12, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances acid, cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Common, Quor, Riedran, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Legendary Resistance (1/day). If the apex tsucora fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The apex tsucora has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Nightmare Awareness. Magical darkness doesn't impede the quori's darkvision, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The tsucora's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *mage armor* (self only; the armor is invisible), *mage hand* (the hand is invisible), *teleport* (self only; on Dal Quor only)

3/day each: *charm person*, *cure wounds* (cast at 4th level, self only), *inflict wounds* (cast at 4th level; deals psychic damage instead of necrotic)

Actions

Multiattack. The tsucora makes three attacks: two with its pincers and one with its sting.

Pincer. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). The tsucora has two pincers, each of which can grapple only one target.

Terrifying Sting. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute.

At the end of each of the target's turns while frightened by this effect, it must succeed on another Wisdom saving throw or take 22 (4d10) psychic damage. On a successful save, the target is no longer frightened.

Legendary Actions

The apex tsucora can take 2 legendary actions (or 4 if there are 6 or more PCs in this adventure), choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The apex tsucora regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Pincer. The apex tsucora quori makes one Pincer attack.

Sting (Costs 2 Actions). The apex tsucora makes a Terrifying Sting attack.

Mind Schism (Costs 2 Actions). The apex tsucora casts one of its innate spells.



Aug 11
811 boy

BARON DENNELL IR'TOLLAN

The Baron is not the deadliest of swordsmen, but he does fence as a dedicated hobby and has placed respectably in some national tournaments. If pressed, he will draw steel to defend himself and his wife.

BARON DENNELL IR'TOLLAN

Medium humanoid (half-elf), lawful neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	12 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +5

Skills History +3, Persuasion +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Dennell has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Skilled Duelist. Dennell adds twice his proficiency modifier on attacks using weapons with the finesse property, and such weapons deal one extra die of their damage when he hits with them (included in the attack).

Actions

Multiattack. Dennell makes two rapier attacks.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Reactions

Parry & Riposte. Dennell adds 4 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, he must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

If this causes the attack to miss, Dennell immediately makes a rapier attack against same attacker.

BARONESS FAELA IR'TOLLAN

Baroness Faela studies arcane magic in her ample free time, and she has a penchant for illusion and enchantment magic.

BARONESS FAELA IR'TOLLAN

Medium humanoid (half-elf), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +4

Skills Arcana +5, Insight +4

Damage Resistance bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks (from *stoneskin*)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Faela has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Spellcasting. Faela is a 7th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following wizard spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *dissonant whispers*, *illusory script*, *mage armor**

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots): *major image*, *stoneskin**

4th level (1 slot): *Mordenkainen's faithful hound**

* Faela casts these spells before combat if possible.

Actions

Hairpin. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Reactions

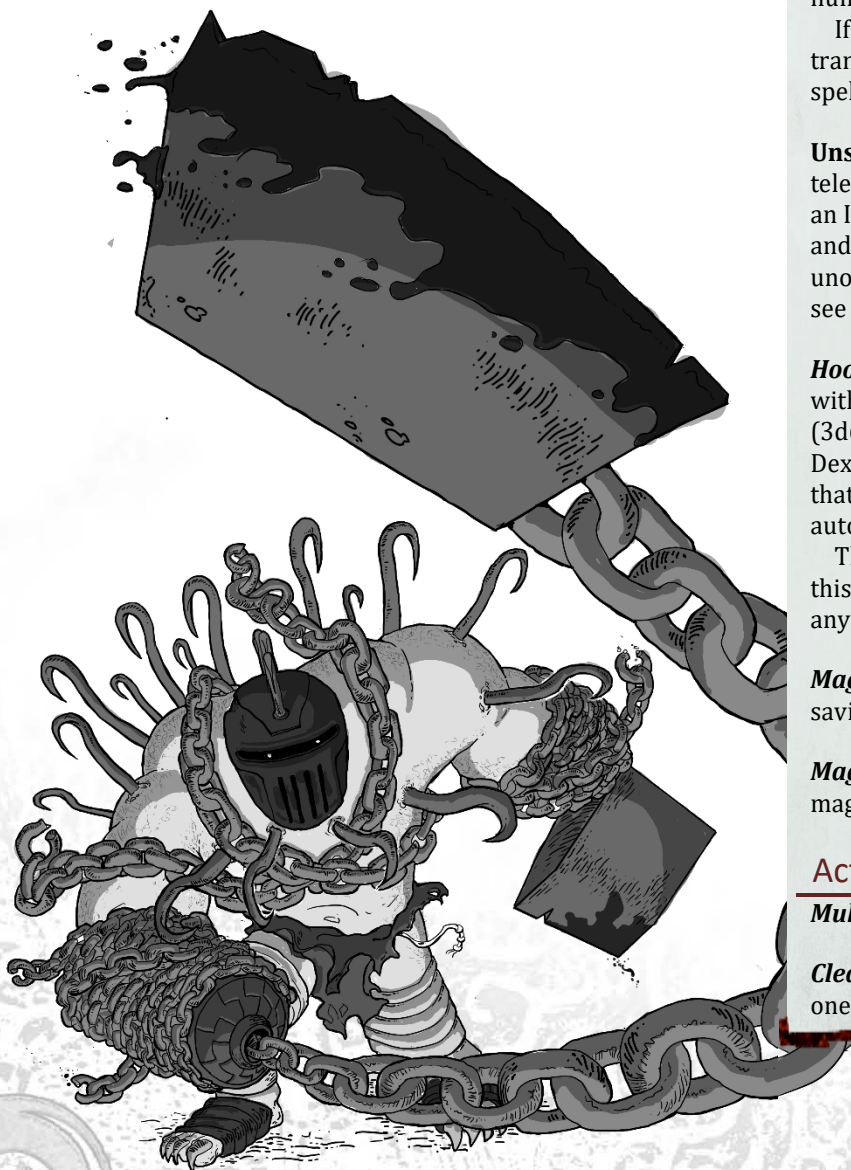
Illusory Success. If a creature succeeds on a saving throw to resist a spell Faela has cast upon them, she can force them to reroll the saving throw and abide by the new result instead.

THE BUTCHER

"The Butcher" is not truly a creature—it is what the quori term an "eidolon"; a figment of the imagination of a mortal dreamer. Such thought-constructs are not to be taken lightly, as within the wild dreamscapes on the fringe of Dal Quor, they can be just as dangerous as any quori. Knowing the true nature of an eidolon does not grant a creature any advantage or protection from it while they remain in the Region of Dreams.

Part 2 of *Nightmare on the Mournland Express* takes place in such a dreamscape, so while the PCs are dreaming, "The Butcher" is a very real threat to them. The Butcher can "burrow" through any solid barrier, rending metal and splintering wood with disconcerting ease as it closes with the party, leaving wreckage in its wake.

Eidolon Nature. An eidolon can only exist on the plane of Dal Quor. It does not breath, eat, drink, or sleep. When reduced to 0 hit points, an eidolon disappears without a trace.



THE BUTCHER

Large construct (eidolon), unaligned

Armor Class 14 (chains)

Hit Points 93 (11d8 + 44)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	9 (–1)	18 (+4)	3 (–4)	8 (–1)	1 (–5)

Damage Immunities psychic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks not made with adamantite weapons.

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands the languages of the creatures who imagined it into being but can't speak

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Eidolon. Whenever an eidolon is subjected to psychic damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the psychic damage dealt.

If the eidolon is affected by any effect that would transport it to another plane, such as the *banishment* spell, it is destroyed instead.

Unseen Return. As a bonus action, The Butcher can teleport up to 30 feet, but only when no creature with an Intelligence score of 6 or higher creature can see it, and it can only arrive at a destination that is likewise unobserved. The Butcher does not need to be able to see its destination.

Hooks. A creature that touches The Butcher or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 10 (3d6) piercing damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or become grappled. Creatures that start their turn grappled by The Butcher automatically take this damage.

The Butcher can grapple any number of opponents this way and doing so does not impair its ability to take any actions.

Magic Resistance. The Butcher has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The Butcher's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The Butcher makes two cleaver attacks.

Cleaver. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) slashing damage.

DENEITH WHITE BLADE

Within the Blademarks Guild of House Deneith, the rank of White Blade is reserved for proven veterans.

The Mark of Sentinel. Not all members of the Blademarks Guild have manifested dragonmarks. Only half of the White Blades aboard the Silver-Towers

DENEITH WHITE BLADE

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 17 (half-plate)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Dragonmark Magic. The Mark of Sentinel grants the White Blade innate spellcasting. It's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components

At will: *blade ward*

Recharges after a Short or Long Rest: *shield*

Sentinel's Intuition. When the White Blade rolls Initiative or makes a Wisdom (Perception) check to notice a threat, it adds 1d4 to the result of the roll.

Actions

Multiaction. The White Blade makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

Reactions

Blademark Strike. The White Blade makes a longsword attack against a creature that leaves its threatened space, even if they took the Disengage action. If the attack hits, the target's speed is reduced to 0 for the rest of its turn. This reaction occurs before the target's triggering movement.

Local have the Dragonmark Magic and Sentinel's Intuition traits detailed in the White Blade's stat block.

White Blades without the Mark of Sentinel have the same challenge rating as those who do.

ELIANA D'VADALIS

Eliana is a dragonmarked heiress of House Vadalis, with a Greater Mark of Handling. She travels with her favored bestial companion "Frosty", a lawful neutral winter wolf (*MONSTER MANUAL*, pg. 340), that will protect her with its life if necessary.

ELIANA D'VADALIS

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

Skills Animal Handling +4, Nature +3,

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) alone, 3 (700 XP) with Frosty

Dragonmark Magic. The Greater Mark of Handling grants Eliana innate spellcasting. Her innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom. She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components

Recharges after a Short or Long Rest: *animal friendship* 1/day each: *beast sense*, *dominate beast*

Wild Intuition. When Eliana makes a Wisdom (Animal Handling) or Intelligence (Nature) check, she adds 1d6 to the result of the roll.

Primal Companion. Eliana grants her winter wolf companion, Frosty, advantage on attack rolls against all creatures within 15 feet of herself, no action required.

Additionally, if Eliana's winter wolf is within 15 feet of her, she may expend a spell from her dragonmark as a bonus action to recharge its Cold Breath attack. If she does, the winter wolf can use it immediately as a reaction.

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

GARETH D'DENEITH

Gareth d'Deneith is a decorated veteran of the Defender's Guild, with many marks of distinction in his service to his House and his wards. He is professional, polite, and most of all, deadly.

His most prized position is his *Plate of the Guardian*, a magical, ornate suit of armor that is also a dragonshard focus item that empowers his Greater Mark of Sentinel. It was awarded to him personally by Baron Breven d'Deneith, House Deneith's patriarch, to honor his astonishing skill and exceptionally potent dragonmark.



GARETH D'DENEITH

Medium humanoid (human), lawful good

Armor Class 21 (plate, shield)

Hit Points 127 (17d8 + 51)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)

Saves Dexterity +4, Wisdom +7

Skills Athletics +8, Insight +7, Perception +7, Persuasion +6

Damage Resistance bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Dragonmark Magic. The Greater Mark of Sentinel grants Gareth innate spellcasting. His innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components

At will: *blade ward*

Each Recharges after a Short or Long Rest: *compelled duel*, *shield*, *warding bond*

Sentinel's Intuition. When Gareth rolls Initiative or makes a Wisdom (Perception) check to notice a threat, it adds 1d10 to the result of the roll.

Special Equipment. Gareth is donned with *Plate of the Guardian*, which grants him a +1 bonus to AC and resistance to all bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

In addition, one per day, he may expend a use of *warding bond* from his dragonmark as an action to cast *spirit guardians* instead. When he does, the spectral form of the spirits appear as duplicates of himself seemingly made from three-dimensional living dragonmarks, and the spell always deals force damage instead of radiant or necrotic.

Actions

Multiattack. Gareth makes three longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage plus 10 (3d6) slashing damage if an ally Gareth can see is missing any of its hit points.

Reactions

Defender Strike. When a creature within 5 feet of Gareth makes an attack against a target other than him, he can make a longsword attack against the attacking creature with advantage.

HOB

Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams, is dominated by the quori, and mortal dreamers conjure eidolons into existence every night. However, those are not the only creatures native to the plane.

Hobs are one type of “drifter”—beings that roam the fringes of Dal Quor, created from the ambient energies of Dal Quor and shaped by the collective impressions of mortal dreamers. This nebulous group of beings are neither quori nor eidolons, but something in between. Drifters come in many types and forms, and hobs are just one species of creature among them.

Hobs are telepathic shapeshifters, instinctively changing their forms to be the most terrifying to those around them. In their natural forms, they are small, grey creatures with semi-feline heads that are slightly too big for their bodies.

The hob in this adventure is a scavenger—a remora to Aka’vanaksha’s shark, picking on the scraps of terror left behind by the larger predator’s feast of psychic energy.

If you know of any particular phobias the PCs might have—spiders, for instance—the hob’s Fearmonger trait allows it to capitalize on them. When using its Terrifying Form, it will shift into the visage of what it knows to be the character’s most primal fears.



HOB

Small monstrosity (shapechanger), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 130 (20d6 + 60)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Skills Deception +7, Insight +5, Intimidation +10

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages all, telepathy 100 ft.

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Fearmonger. A hob knows the deepest fears of all creatures within range of its telepathy. Any creature within range of its telepathy has disadvantage on saving throws to resist the hob’s Terrifying Form.

Shapechanger. The hob can use its action or reaction to polymorph into any Medium or smaller aberration, beast, humanoid, or monstrosity, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form.

Actions

Multiattack. The hob can use Terrifying Form. It then makes any two attacks appropriate to whatever form it is currently in.

Beak, Bite, or Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) acid or poison damage (hob’s choice).

Claws or Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Fist, Slam, Tail, or Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the hob can’t use this appendage to attack another target.

Terrifying Form. The hob changes into a form horrifying to every creature of its choice that is within 100 feet of it. These creatures must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature’s saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the hob’s Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

WANDSLINGER

Magic was a valuable asset during the Last War, but the armies of the Five Nations did not often have time to wait for fully-trained mages to enlist. Soldiers that showed even a minor magical talent received enough training to be able to cast one or two cantrips—typically combat oriented wizard or sorcerer cantrips—and one 1st-level spell. Unlike fully trained wizards or gifted sorcerers, a wandslinger can only fulfill the somatic components of spells by using an arcane focus, typically a wand.

Within the military, these limited spellcasters are known as “arcaneers”, but to common folk, they are known by the more evocative moniker of “wandslinger”.

WANDSLINGER

Medium humanoid (any), any alignment

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Arcana +5, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages any two languages

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

High Caliber Cantrips. The wandslinger adds its Intelligence modifier to the damage of any cantrip it casts and casts them as a 5th level character.

Spellcasting. The wandslinger is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The wandslinger knows the following spells and must use a wand as an arcane focus to cast them.

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (3 slots): *shield*

Actions

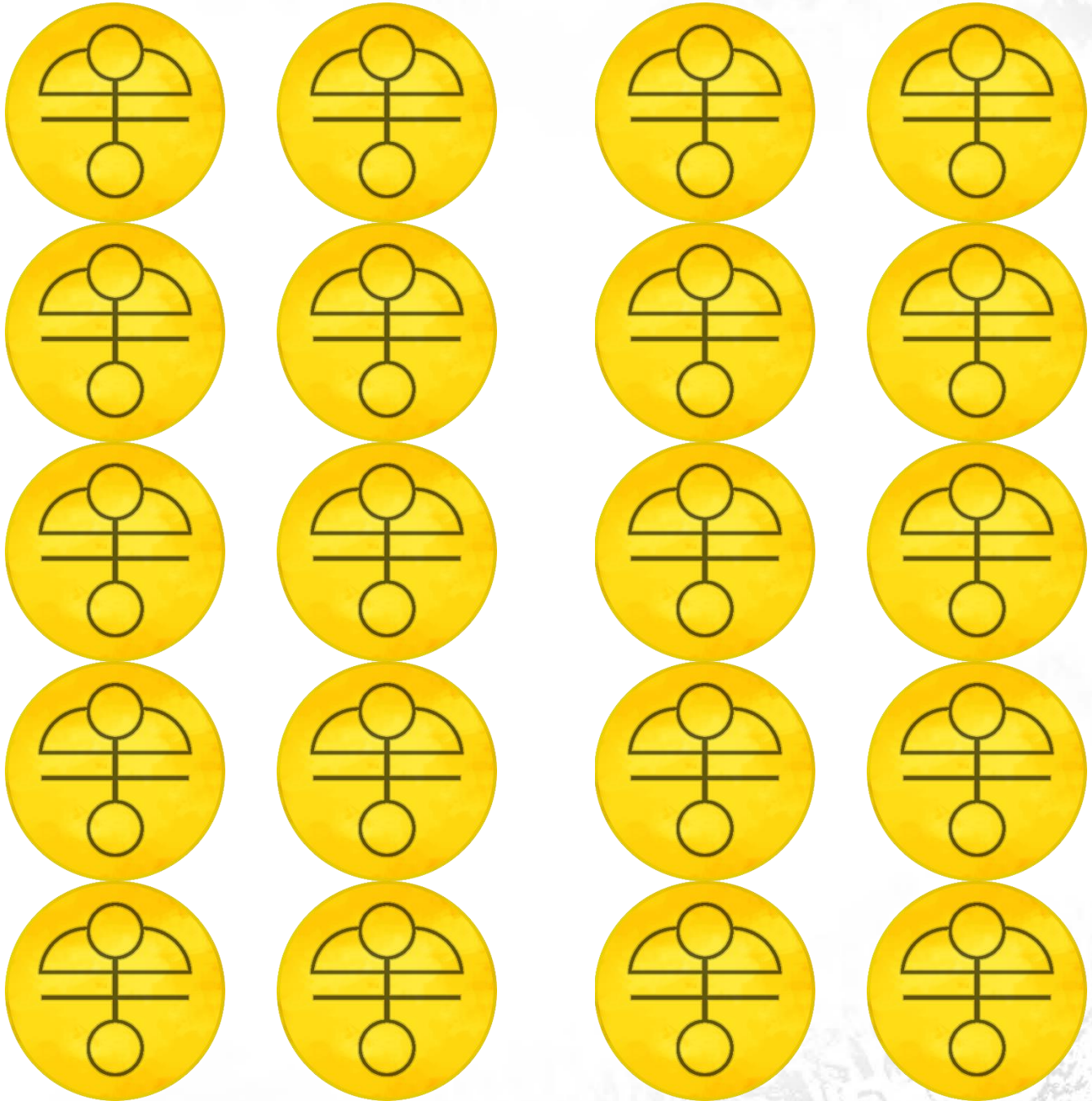
Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Wands Akimbo. If the wandslinger has two wands drawn, it casts two cantrips as a single action.



APPENDIX C.

PLAYER HANDOUTS



DREAM TOKENS

You are Dreaming!

Spend a 1 Dream Token to:

- turn any weapon you are holding into a magical +1 weapon of the same kind, as an action. This lasts until you wake up.
- create any mundane non-living handheld object as part of an Object Interaction.
- turn any failure on an attack roll, saving throw, or ability check into an automatic success as a reaction.
- use a reaction to cause a successful attack against you to miss.
- turn any successful hit into a critical hit.
- gain the full benefit of a completed short rest as an action.
- try to do something impossible! Make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw. On a success, use any class feature or cast any spell available to 10th-level characters, but only once. On a failure, your dream token is spent as an action, but nothing happens.

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LUCID DREAMING RULE CARDS

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