

ENsider Presents:
A ZEITGEIST Campaign World Adventure

Bonds of Forced Faith



**Wherein a King and his Retinue strike
against a Coven of Witches before they
can lay a dire Curse upon an entire City.**

An Enchanting Excursion for 10th-Level Characters

FROM THE PEN OF Ryan Nock
STUNNING CARTOGRAPHIC DISPLAYS BY James Hazelett
Jonathan Roberts
MASTERFUL INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS BY Claudio Pozas
& artists of history
WITH LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN BY Eric Life-Putnam
ABLY PRODUCED AND FACILITATED BY Russell Morrissey

THOROUGHLY PLAYTESTED FOR MAXIMUM ENJOYMENT BY
Sam Coman, Mary Crowell, Matthew Freeman, Benton Harris,
James Herbert, Thurston Hillman, Stoyan Ivanov,
Russell Morrissey, Randal Slaven, and Judson Stowe

SEAMLESSLY UPDATED TO FIFTH EDITION BY
Ryan Nock

SPECIAL THANKS TO Nobuo Uematsu for the soundtrack to *Final Fantasy VIII*, which taught me to love a good witch villain.

Introduction

THE CITY OF FLINT IN THE YEAR 400 A.O.V. IS A modest coastal hub of shipping, fishing, and lumber, far from the industrial powerhouse it will become a century later during the main events of the ZEITGEIST adventure path.

The second war with Danor over control of distant islands has distracted King Lorcan of Risur, and his inattention has allowed a coven of witches to rise to power in this unimportant corner of his nation. The witches, led by a woman from the east known as the Red Contessa, have terrorized the people of Flint for years, abducting children, raising the walking dead, and performing dark rituals atop a three-thousand-foot-tall mountain in the city's center, previously known as The Hunchback, but which will forever after come to be called Cauldron Hill.

Only now, the day before his fiftieth birthday, has the king been motivated to face these witches, because he needs a successor. Risuri tradition disapproves of family inheritance of the crown; rulership usually passes to someone worthy, who must be approved both by the nobility and the common folk. Ending the suffering of the townsfolk of Flint is a small matter, but it will give the king's preferred successor an opportunity for glory.

Unexpected allies arrive from across the sea, and King Lorcan does not realize how pivotal this night's quest will be.

Running the Adventure

Bonds of Forced Faith is intended as a one-shot, a short and punchy adventure which you can get through in the span of a four hour convention slot, or a single night's gaming at home. This adventure can function as a standalone, or even an introduction to the ZEITGEIST setting and adventure path. If it's 2018 and you're just now reading this, you can even run it as a sort of supernatural flashback in the middle of Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*.

The pregenerated characters each have motivations in addition to simply wanting to defeat the witches of Cauldron Hill, which are detailed in the King's Retinue section below. Since this is a one-shot, we expect some characters to die spectacularly in the finale, but as long as they achieve their goals they can still feel victorious. For those of you running the full campaign, we've made a point

to leave this space of the setting's history a bit vague, so whatever result occurs can become canon in your game.

We start where the action begins, shortly before sunset on the night of a lunar eclipse.

The King's Retinue.

This adventure includes six pregenerated characters. If you have five players, run Mayor Stanfield as an NPC, and with four, also make Principal Minister Harkover Lee an NPC, since neither of them can end up king.

- **King Lorcan Finn.** Human monarch of Risur, a sword-wielding warrior empowered through ancient rites by the devotion of his citizens. His ultimate goal is to declare a worthy successor before the night's end, and he plans for that to be Dame Melissa ... if he can teach her a few things about what it means to be a responsible monarch first.
- **Dame Melissa Gahlot.** Half-elf bodyguard to the king, known as the Green Knight. By the favor of the fey, she cannot die while the sun is not up. She believes she is owed the crown after Lorcan. Her goal is to be named his successor.
- **Mayor Roland Stanfield.** A deva – one who died in the presence of a goddess centuries ago, and now reincarnates after each life. He has served as city mayor of Flint for three centuries. Mechanically he's the most complicated, which might appeal to players who like having lots of tricks up their sleeves. His goal is to ensure Amielle Latimer, an agent from Danor, survives and lays the groundwork for a future alliance with Risur.
- **Principal Minister Harkover Lee.** A fire-wielding mage who acts as advisor and supernatural defender of the king. Though foreign and mysterious, he is fully loyal to the realm. His goal, however, is for anyone but Dame Melissa to be named successor, because he thinks she would be a selfish queen.
- **Godhand Tomas Masaryk.** Human holy warrior from a foreign faith. His goal is to slay the Red Contessa and recover or destroy a heretical text she stole. He also believes that tieflings like Amielle are evil, a fact that might create some discord in the retinue.
- **Amielle Latimer.** Tiefling gunsmith from Danor, a nation recently at war with Risur. She comes to aid the king of Risur with her country's newly-invented firearms. She hopes this olive branch will open avenues of trade and industrial investment, so her goal is to be seen as an ally to whoever ends up monarch.

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Their character sheets are at the end of this adventure. Additionally, in the Teaser five of the players will play city guardsmen, who will die in less than five minutes in a variety of gruesome ways. The remaining PC, the mayor, dies too, but he comes back.

The Contessa's Coven.

Additionally, four main NPCs oppose the party.

- **Sister Languor.** A local Flinter named Rachel Lang, and one of the folk prophets known as skyseers, she joined the witches' coven for power. She keeps a public face among the skyseers, but has acted to sabotage those who would oppose the coven. She'll try to lure the king to a trap by feigning peril, and even if "rescued" she'll provide a false prophecy and an "elixir of protection" that will actually curse anyone who drinks it.
- **Sister Deliria.** A sneaky, beautiful witch with troll minions, she commands powers that dull men's minds or blind them with illusions. She is colluding with Sister Languor to try to trick the king.

- **Sister Pernicity.** Quiet, skinny, with a feigned childish demeanor, this witch flies in a cauldron and loves burning people alive. She torments most of the coven's prisoners, and the human sacrifices she performs halfway up Cauldron Hill empower the Red Contessa's primary ritual at the peak.
- **The Red Contessa.** Beautiful and dark-haired, she wields blood magic, a demonic ritual known as Bonds of Forced Faith, which links her life force to unwilling victims. Her goal is to bond herself to the entire city of Flint, and then force the king to name her his successor. If not granted her wish, she intends to kill thousands.

When roleplaying the witches, giving them each a unique voice can help to distinguish them. Sister Languor has a deep, droning voice; Deliria's voice warbles like the classic Wicked Witch from *The Wizard of Oz*; and Pernicity punctuates every sentence with giggles that often shift into cackles. The Red Contessa has an accent like an Italian or Eastern European starlet, and her attitude is supremely cocky, her quips biting. She grandstands as a matter of course, and she won't take anything seriously, even if it looks like she might die.





Mayor Roland Stanfield

Deva Mayor

Hit Points 53, **Armor Class** 13 (studded leather armor)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws CON +4, DEX +5, INT +7, WIS +8

Skills Deception +10, History +7, Medicine +7, Perception +12, Persuasion +10, Religion +7, Stealth +9

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+1 piercing damage.

Deathless Calm. You have resistance to necrotic and radiant energy, and you cannot be blinded by bright light.

Memory of Past Lifetimes. Once per day you can roll 1d4 and add it to one ability check, skill check, or saving throw of your choice. If you do this for a skill you are not proficient with, you gain proficiency for the next minute.



Dover

Human Witch Hunter

Hit Points 6, **Armor Class** 14 (leather armor, shield)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +1

Woodman's Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+1 slashing damage.



Francis

Human Witch Hunter

Hit Points 6, **Armor Class** 14 (leather armor, shield)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +1

Woodman's Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+1 slashing damage.



Teodore

Human Witch Hunter

Hit Points 6, **Armor Class** 14 (leather armor, shield)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +1

Woodman's Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+1 slashing damage.



Edeo

Human Witch Hunter

Hit Points 6, **Armor Class** 14 (leather armor, shield)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +1

Woodman's Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+1 slashing damage.



Benton

Human Witch Hunter

Hit Points 6, **Armor Class** 14 (leather armor, shield)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +1

Woodman's Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+1 slashing damage.



Adventure Scenes.

First, in the **Teaser**, ask which player wants the most mechanically complicated character. Hand that player a copy of the brief character sheet of Roland Stanfield (page 4). Hand the other players the “witch hunter” character sheets (page 4). Run the Teaser until everyone’s dead, killing Stanfield last.

Act One.

Hand out the full character sheets (pages 21 *et seq.*). Let the other players decide whom they’d like to play. Instruct them to read both sides and to pay attention to the “Starting Interactions” and “Character Goal” sections. Tell them that even if their character dies, if they accomplish their goal, they can consider it a win.

Then begin the **Briefing**, setting the scene at the mayor’s mansion, shortly before 6:00 PM, when the characters are about to begin discussing plans for the witches, but are interrupted by the approach of Amielle’s small steamship, *Hinc ad Aeternitatem*. Let the characters roleplay through sharing the information they have, namely that tonight will be a lunar eclipse, and that atop Cauldron Hill immense magical power will be available, reaching its zenith at 10:47 PM. It should be obvious to all that time is short.

Before they start making plans, the **Red Contessa’s Invitation** occurs. The chief of police reports that skyseer Rachel Lang fell under attack by an angry mob and fled onto the water at Parity Lake. Then from a nearby crowd of people, a person compelled by magic slits his own throat, causing a panic. From his blood an image of the contessa rises. She bids the king to attend a birthday celebration she’s throwing at the peak of Cauldron Hill. She’s already lit candles for him; she directs them to look at the mountain, which is ringed with pyres burning fifty prisoners at the stake.

The group’s plans will likely take them to the **Deception at Parity Lake**. Skyseer Rachel Lang is actually the witch Sister Languor, and together with her fellow witch Sister Deliria they have enacted a clever ruse. By imperiling Rachel Lang, Deliria hopes to make the king wholly trusting of the prophecy Lang offers, which will actually lead the king to his death. If either Deliria or Languor are slain, they lay curses upon whomever strikes the final blow, but if they survive they’ll reappear and aid the Red Contessa at the peak.

Act Two.

If skyseer Lang is “rescued,” she delivers her **Prophecy of the Cracked Cauldron**, claiming the only way to shatter the Red Contessa’s blood magic protection is for someone to willingly dive into her boiling cauldron, which will shatter it and its magic. Actually, doing so will just cause you to be horribly burned. Lang offers a potion she has crafted which will protect them from the mountain’s dark magic, but she could only prepare enough for the retinue, which should deter the king from storming the mountain with an entire army. In truth, the potion is a ruse to link the Red Contessa to the king and his retinue by *bond of forced faith*.

Townfolk are here who look to the king for guidance. He might introduce Dame Melissa to them, or rally them to come up the mountain. They’re not consequential to the victory, but make sure to mention them so the party feels the city is counting on them.

Next, the king and his retinue must **Ascend the Hunchback**, climbing a mountain warded with curses and minor monsters to reach a location known as “the hunch,” which is where the only safe route to the peak can be accessed. This scene plays as a montage of small horrors. Skyseer Lang’s potion does indeed provide protection against some of those dangers. If the king did bring along any mundane soldiers this climb ought to kill off most of them.

At the hunch, hostages are kept beside the **Pyres of Pernicity**. The withered Sister Pernicity flies about with eerie, childish delight while the fey and zombies that serve her lash her prisoners to more pyres. Fighting the witch and her minions becomes complicated as they start burning their prisoners alive, and like Languor and Deliria she lays a dying curse on whoever kills her.

Act Three.

The **Final Ascent** up the last few hundred feet is a challenging climb in the best conditions, but howling spirits and supernatural winds assail the king and his retinue, wearing them down and possibly leaving some mentally unhinged.

They find the peak lit up by witchfire as the Red Contessa performs her **Ritual of the Red Moon**. She dances in the firelight, stabbing herself and laughing. When she spots the group she begins monologuing, revealing that in her own twisted way she has done all this to prove her worthiness to succeed King Lorcan as monarch of Risur.

Since he’ll likely decline to name her his successor, she attacks, aided by an immense serpent-maned lion, minor witches in her coven, and various lesser spooks and spirits. She starts combat by animating the megalith standing stones and the cauldron itself as allies.

Her cauldron is the focus of a ritual that connects her via *bond of forced faith* with the whole city of Flint. If her ritual is not disrupted before the eclipse reaches its maximum, she will become immortal. She’s impossible to kill while the ritual is in effect, and even if it’s stopped, it is possible Rachel Lang’s ruse will mean she’s also linked to the party. Defeating the witches will require cleverness, or perhaps capitulation.

Teaser

This first section is meant to be run quickly, more as narration than actual gameplay. The goal is to convey confusion, horror, and helplessness.

Ask which player wants the most complicated PC, then give them the simple character sheet for Mayor Stanfield (page 4). Hand everyone else one of the witch hunter characters (also page 4).

Read the following text and pause to get die rolls, then announce who survives each assault by the witches. Mostly direct the narration toward Mayor Stanfield’s player.

For each of the checks and saves we call for below, any witch hunter PC who rolls under 10 dies in the next narrated section. If no one rolls under 10, instead kill whoever rolled lowest. Don’t kill Mayor Stanfield. If all the other PCs are dead, just narrate the deaths of the rest of the townfolk who came along, then give Stanfield’s player a chance to respond before the Red Contessa kills him in the final bit of boxed text.



Yes, we're killing PCs during boxed text. (If any non-Stanfield characters survive to the final boxed text, they can be rescued later as hostages by the real PCs.)

You've ascended halfway to the peak, and you can see the evening lights of Flint below. You're nearly to "the hunch," where the thickly forested mountain grows suddenly rockier and steeper, but you can already hear the drums and wailing chants from the summit. A great fire burns a thousand feet above you, and for a moment your mouth waters at the rich scent of boiled meat, before you remember it's probably human flesh that's cooking up there.

This mountain used to be called The Hunchback. Now the locals are calling it Cauldron Hill.

Mayor Stanfield and forty more armed men go to rescue the hostages, because you at least are brave. For years, your King refused your calls for help, first too busy with his war across the sea, and now too busy signing an armistice after he lost.

Each of you has seen a friend kidnapped, or a wife, or a son, or a parent. For decades these kidnappings have been rare — rare enough that people dismissed the stories and preferred to ignore the witches. But over the last few years, while the soldiers have been away, the coven has grown bold. A dozen were abducted just last night, and if there's a chance you can save them, you'll not let fear stand in—

Everyone please make Perception checks.

When the boxed text mentions someone dying, point to the character(s) who failed their roll, to indicate they've just died. These attacks are loosely modeled on the spells *phantasmal killer*, *circle of death*, and *entangle*, but simplified to fit the narrative.

There is a rustling sound in the trees overhead, and a cackling woman's voice streaks through the air.

When you look back down, one man is on the ground, blood pouring from his belly. Another half-dozen are already running. The cackling swoops over them, and one flies up off the ground screaming, pulled into the tree canopy. All around you all you can see in the dark are trees, brush, and steep slopes to falls of hundred feet or more.

What do you do?

Give the players a chance to respond for a round or two, but there's nothing to attack. Don't let them get too into planning things. If you really like a player's idea, maybe just have that character knocked out and abducted instead of being killed.

Have everyone make Wisdom saves.

A man running beside you stops suddenly, begins to weep, draws a knife, and then jams it into his throat. Another man shrieks and shoves his companion off the nearest ledge. A gust of cold wind brushes the back of your neck, and a voice starts to whisper into your ear, telling you to fling yourself off the mountain before the witches can steal your soul.

Have the characters make Constitution saves.

A cluster of soldiers standing in a ring, their swords brandished bravely, begin to cough blood and fall to their knees. You still can't see any attackers, just chaos and confusion and screaming.

Have the characters make Strength saves. If Stanfield fails, go ahead and entangle him, but don't kill him yet. Any PCs who survived this far can be taken prisoner, but the Red Contessa kills the mayor.

You hear a scream twenty feet away as shadows reach out from the backside of a tree, grab a man, and pull him tight against the trunk, crushing the life from him. Tree branches leap out and grasp others, those who moments ago were brave witch hunters, but now scream for salvation. Wet, mulchy fingers paw at their faces, thorns rip at their skin, blood dribbles down their arms.

Shadowy humanoids as high as your waist detach from the night and surround the surviving warriors. They leap upon them, pull them down, and drag them away screaming.

The din of pandemonium dulls, grows quiet, goes silent. The mayor stands alone. The horrors of Cauldron Hill seem to have spared him intentionally.

Torches light up the forest. No, not torches; burning bodies, some wailing. Silhouetted by flames, a trio of female figures walk slowly toward the mayor. Two of them hang back in the shadows, softly chanting, but one steps close.

Her black hair cascades down to a dress the color of a scab, so tattered it looks like it's been through battle many times.

Let Stanfield's player decide what he wants to do. If he runs or talks, the witches eventually hold or trap him. The text below assumes he fights.

You plunge your sword through the exposed pale skin above her heart, striking what should be a killing blow.

She rolls her eyes, shoves you back into the brambles, and drags the blade out of her ribcage with a grunt. No wound is left behind. She drops the sword with a muted clang and draws a rusted, jagged knife from her dress. It's still stained with blood from the last time you saw her.

"Sisters," she says, "you can have the others. I've grown fond of killing this one."

The knife's teeth saw the flesh of your neck open. Your blood pours down her arm. She holds you up by your jaw with unnatural strength. Your vision darkens. Your limbs slack. Your last sensation is hearing your men still screaming as they burn.

Pick up everyone's brief character sheets, and welcome them to tonight's adventure, *Bonds of Forced Faith*.

Act One

TO BEGIN THIS ACT, HAND OUT THE PROPER character sheets (starting on page 21) and let the players decide who plays whom.

Briefing

Several weeks later, around 6:00 PM, gathered at the mayor's mansion island, in a turret overlooking protesting merchants and peasants, are King Lorcan, his aide Harkover and bodyguard Melissa, Mayor Stanfield, and Tomas, a foreign advisor from the nation of Crisillyir to the east. Everyone assumes they'll be waiting until tomorrow to attack, because tonight's lunar eclipse is a bad omen.

Amielle is not present yet.

Give the players ample time to read both sides of their character sheets. Encourage the players to pay close attention to the Suggested Starting Interactions and Character Goal sections. Tell them that even if their character dies, if they accomplish their goal, they can consider it a win.

Once everyone is ready, they can read their character description, but before formal introductions begin, shouting from all across the island draws everyone's attention out the window. A ship is sailing into harbor – no, not sailing, churning with some grumbling mechanism that belches black smoke and white steam in its wake. It flies both a white flag, and the flag of Danor.

As the ship nears the island, they can make out its name: *Hinc ad Aeternitatem*. A steam-powered runabout embarks and carries Amielle to the island.

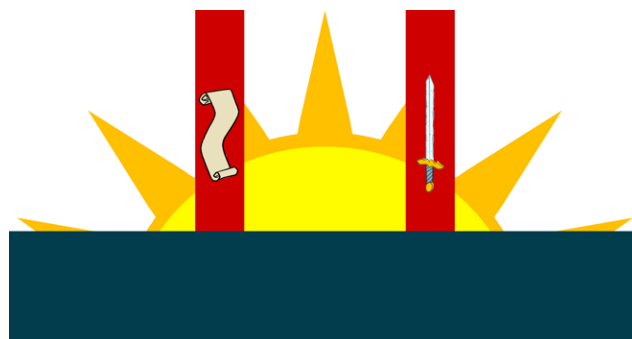
Let the group meet and roleplay. When the time is right and everyone has shared the information in their Suggested Starting Interactions, a commotion heralds the arrival of Flint's chief of police.

Red Contessa's Invitation.

The chief of police bows to the king, nods to his mayor, and glowers at the tiefling.

"I have news, my king. The skyseer Rachel Lang was supposed to come to present you a vision concerning the witches, and when she didn't arrive on time I sent out men to check the city. A runner just came back. He says he saw Rachel Lang and her acolytes fleeing a mob along the shore of Parity Lake. Lang yelled at him to get help, and then they shoved off on a small boat. The water should protect them for a short while, but it won't be long before the mob finds boats of their own."

And before the police chief can explain anymore either, screams sound from the crowd of protesters surrounding the governor's mansion. A figure in the crowd has brandished a dagger high, and he removes his hood, tilts his head up, and plunges the blade into his throat. People scatter, and the blood pours out onto the ground. The blood slowly rises up, waving its hands to forestall any hysterical reactions like attacking it.



NATIONAL FLAG OF DANOR.

The Red Contessa's blood simulacrum speaks:

"Greetings, people of Flint.

"No one cares about you! You're more chattel to your king than you are to me, and I've been sticking your children in a black pot and cooking them alive for thirty years.

"Well, the time has come to change all that! I am your queen now, and a queen treats her subjects well. The abductions shall stop! Anyway, we don't need more hostages; we have too many already."

She gestures up to the mountain top, and a line of fires are shining there. People being burned alive.

"Shush, king. I have no words for you that will speak louder than the sound my boot will make crushing your skull against the stone of my mountain. You're an old man, and so I've lit candles for your birthday. Come if you dare. I'll let you bow to me in fealty.

"Now, my subjects, ask yourselves. Who will better protect you? A king who has already lost a war, who has let his enemies sail into your very harbor? Or a queen who burns those who offend her? Let me demonstrate."

A few hundred feet away, with no other warning, the Danoran vessel explodes, vanishing in a cloud of white. Uncontained steam from the boiler launches timbers and metal shards through the air. The remnants of the boat catch fire and crumple. But over the roar of its destruction you can hear the witch laughing as her blood simulacrum fades away.

It's shortly after 6:00 PM, and the characters don't have much time to formulate a plan. While they talk, the fifty "birthday candles" that ring the hunch of Cauldron Hill slowly smolder and die.

Deception at Parity Lake.

The obvious hook is to go rescue skyseer Rachel Lang and investigate the mob threatening her.

If the party decides to head straight for the mountain, they'll actually spare themselves a fair bit of grief, though you might want to have Sisters Languor and Deliria follow them up and harass the group as they ascend to Pernicity's Hut.



The Goal.

Sisters Deliria and Languor were tasked by the Red Contessa to distract King Lorcan and keep him away from her ritual tonight. If that can't be achieved, they're instead to try to trick him into willingly undergoing the *bond of forced faith* ritual. This will cause the Contessa's wounds to be dealt instead to the king, as well as anyone else she's bonded to. While the ritual only is effective if the subject is within 250 feet of the focus, it can remain dormant for hours.

Languor has long operated in the open with her alternate identity as the skyseer Rachel Lang. A respected prophet, she uses visions that she sees in the night sky to help people around the city.

Deliria disguised herself as a local officialant – **Husky Pete**, beadle of the North Shore district – then convinced people Rachel Lang is a witch. He led an angry mob to drive her out onto the waters of Parity Lake.

Of course, Rachel Lang actually *is* a witch, but when Husky Pete is revealed to be the witch Sister Deliria, this should make the king completely trust Lang. No one suspects the double bluff.

The Scene.

Parity Lake today is a bit of a swamp, with few boat launches. A mob of sixty people has gathered in a forest clearing near a shoreline thick with reeds. A pair of archers stand at the end of a short dock, shooting flaming arrows at the skyseer, but they're almost out of ammo and are terrible shots at this range.

By the time the king and his retinue arrive, Rachel Lang and a half-dozen innocent skyseer acolytes have piled onto a boat and are floating a couple hundred feet off-shore.

The mob only has one modest 25-ft. boat that could carry ten people, and they're not confident enough to attack with so few. A thick knot of townsfolk in the center of the mob are arguing about whether it'd be faster to chop down trees and lash together a raft, or go find and steal a boat from somewhere else along the shore. The whole ordeal is being led by Sister Deliria, draped in an illusion that makes her appear as a balding, jowled man. Froth on his lips, he distracts the crowd with chants of "Drown the witch," and "Skyseer? More like *lie-seer*!"

Sister Deliria has *bond of forced faith* active on twenty people in the crowd (whom she tricked with *enthrall* a few hours ago), and two trolls that are loyal to her hide in the reeds under the dock (Perception DC 16 to detect if someone checks under the dock).

Watery Trap.

Deliria-as-Pete will thank the king for arriving and offer the PCs a boat so they can go slay the witch Rachel Lang. "Pete" claims that he asked the skyseer for advice and that she then cast a spell on him that filled him with agony. He fled and rounded up an angry mob, and they chased Lang onto the river.

If the retinue opts for the boat, it lies at the end of a 20-ft. dock surrounded by neck-deep water filled with reeds. Deliria waits on the shore; when the first player character gets into the boat, she opens combat by casting *hex* as a bonus action to impose disadvantage on that character's Strength. She cackles, "Weak-minded and weak-limbed. Drown them, my pretties!"

Eclipse Chronology.

7:26 PM	Sunset
8:13 PM	Penumbra darkens moon
9:12 PM	Partial eclipse
10:13 PM	Full eclipse
10:47 PM	Maximum eclipse

It takes about half an hour to reach Parity Lake on horseback. It will take about half an hour to reach a path to ascend Cauldron Hill, so the sun should just be starting to set, probably (a little after 7:00 PM). It takes another hour to climb to the hunch where Pernicity's Hut holds hostages (so probably 8:00 PM). We assume the king and his retinue will take a short rest here, spending an hour treating wounds and preparing for the final ascent.

Climbing from the hunch to the peak takes at least another hour (so probably 10:00 PM). Cleverness might shave time off. There is not much time to spare, because if the party doesn't stop the ritual by 10:47 PM, the Contessa will be permanently bonded to Flint, and impossible to kill.

If the PCs want five soldiers to accompany them, they're ready immediately. Twenty soldiers takes 15 minutes. One hundred soldiers takes an hour. Soldiers have the same stats as Flint witch hunters, and will almost all die ascending the mountain.

Witch Hexes.

The witches, as a coven, share a lot of the same powers. In fact, Deliria, Languor, and Pernicity vary only in their voice, their weapon of choice, their preferred curse, and what magic item they carry. (Also, Languor doesn't have *bond of forced faith* on her.)

The Red Contessa has many of the same powers, plus a few legendary actions.

You'll want to familiarize yourself with the mechanics of the witches, and with each witch's preferred curses. The witches' *torturous curse* ability—in addition to having longer range and dealing damage—functions like casting *bestow curse* with a 5th-level spell slot, and so the curse lasts 8 hours without requiring the witch to maintain concentration.

Her next action is to wag a finger at Harkover Lee while rasping, "No fire for you, old man"; this is a use of *torturous curse* to inflict her preferred curse of *amateur's amnesia*, aimed at making the minister unable to use fire magic.

The trolls erupt from the water beside the boat. One grabs and drags the hexed character into the water, while the other clammers onto the dock and keeps the rest of the retinue from saving the drowning victim.

Deliria isn't left without options if her tactics fail, though; she is ready to fight for a bit longer, then she will run. After seeing how her opening moves turn out, she casts *phantasmal killer* on whoever is attacking her, then on each turn after that she casts a different curse at the GM's discretion, aiming to maximize damage and chaos over gaining any real tactical advantage. She only uses her dagger for opportunity attacks. When her buffer of temporary hit points is depleted, she'll use *raven's flight* to get away. She'll then flee up the mountain.



Mechanics of the Bond.

The ritual *bond of forced faith* functions similar to the spell *warding bond*, but takes longer and is much more powerful.

Those whose life forces are linked to the target of the ritual must shed a drop of their blood into a cup of milk, which the target must drink. For several hours thereafter, the target gains a boost to her physical stats, and damage dealt to her is first divided equally among those whose blood was contained in the milk, as long as they are within 250 ft. Round up the damage, but the distributed total is never higher than the original amount.

For example, if the Red Contessa is bonded with five of the PCs, and an attack would deal 8 damage to her, three PCs would take 2 damage, and two would take 1 damage. She would take no damage as long as any of the PCs bonded to her were alive.

For simplicity's sake, the witches other than the Red Contessa are simply given a buffer of temporary hitpoints in their statblock. While they have these temporary HP, hits that would wound instead kill some of the people around them.

Simply hacking at the witch will kill a lot of innocents. You need to either move the witch away from the people, or subdue her. She's still vulnerable to conditions, and drowning works fine. For simplicity's sake, we have each witch bonded to twenty people, each of whom provides 10 temporary hit points. Getting those people out of range reduces the witch's HP buffer. Particularly utilitarian PCs might simply *fireball* the whole crowd and clear out the people in one go.

If all of the creatures bonded to a witch die or move out of range, she has disadvantage on all Strength checks and melee attack rolls, and her melee weapon attacks do half damage.

Viewed by *detect magic*, the ritual detects as an abjuration, but this is part of an illusion woven into the magic. If someone examining its magical aura uses an action to look for inconsistencies, he can make an Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 18) to realize it's actually a potent combined illusion, necromancy, and transmutation effect, effectively a 9th level spell.

Note that due to Amielle's family immunity to curses, she cannot be affected by *bond of forced faith*.

Foes at Parity Lake.

- 2 Deliria's trolls
- Sister Deliria

Deliria's Trolls (2)

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 84 (8d10+40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	7 (–2)	4 (–3)	4 (–3)

Skills Perception +0

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Giant

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Hallucinatory Break. The first time a creature deals damage to the troll, the attacker must make a Wisdom save (DC 10) or have his senses deluded by an illusion. He perceives the troll to be an innocent bystander, who appears to die horribly from the attack. The creature thereafter thinks the "troll" is gone, and cannot perceive the troll. At the end of each of its turns the creature can make a new save to overcome the illusion. If the troll attacks it, the illusion ends automatically before the attack roll is made.

Keen Smell. The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Regeneration. The troll regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the troll takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the troll's next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The troll makes three attacks: one bite and two claws. In place of a claw attack, it can attempt to grab a creature smaller than it.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6+4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage.

SISTER
DELIRIA**Sister Deliria**

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Hit Points 63 plus 200 temporary hit points**Armor Class** 12**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws WIS +4, CHA +7**Skills** Arcana +5, Deception +7, Perception +4, Stealth +5**Condition Immunities** charmed**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14**Languages** Common, Giant**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

Bond of Forced Faith. Sister Deliria is bonded to twenty people, who each grant her 10 temporary hit points. If they move beyond 250 ft., she loses these temporary hit points. As long as she has any of these temporary hit points, damage she takes does not disrupt her concentration on spells. If she has no more temporary hit points, she has disadvantage on all Strength checks and melee attack rolls, and her melee weapon attacks do half damage.

Dying Curse. As long as the Red Contessa controls the peak of Cauldron Hill, whenever Sister Deliria is reduced to 0 hit points her body convulses and a ragged black ghost flies free from her mouth, streaking toward the mountain. Whoever attacked or damaged her in the last round must make a Wisdom save (DC 15) or be stunned for one round by the screaming and cackling.

Additionally, creatures who failed the save are affected by the *prey of the coven* curse, if it isn't already under the effect of that curse.

Spellcasting. Sister Deliria has two spell slots available to cast any of the following spells. The save DC is 15, and all the spells are cast as if with a 5th-level slot. These slots replenish after a short or long rest.

Spells Prepared (2 slots): *cloud of daggers*, *cure wounds*, *dispel magic*, *entangle*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *hex*, *phantasmal killer*, *remove curse*, *suggestion*, *witch bolt*

The Witches' Curses.

All the witches in this adventure who can use curses can use the following curses using their *torturous curse* ability.

- **Brainless.** The affected creature cannot communicate with anything more than gestures, grunts, and gibberish, nor understand other people's linguistic communications. This does not prevent spellcasting.
- **Cowardly Lion.** If the affected creature is adjacent to an enemy and none of its allies are also adjacent to that enemy, the affected creature is frightened of the enemy (taking disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls against that enemy).
- **Heartless.** The affected creature cannot heal.
- **Prey for the Coven.** Attacks made by and spells cast by members of the coven deal an extra 1d6 necrotic damage to the affected creature. Natural animals are spooked by the affected creature.



ACTIONS

Sacrificial Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4+5) piercing damage. The target must make a Constitution save (DC 15) or fall prone from sudden wracking pain.

Raven's Flight. The witch transforms into a Tiny raven, with a fly speed of 50 ft. She immediately dashes that speed. She can only use this ability once per day.

Torturous Curse. One creature within 30 ft. makes a Wisdom saving throw (DC 15). If it fails, the witch deals 16 (3d10) necrotic damage to that creature, and then the witch bestows a curse on the creature. After using this power, the witch cannot attempt to curse the same creature until she takes a short or long rest.

The witches have a shared suite of common curses (see sidebar above), and each witch has one personal, preferred curse. Choose one available curse, which lasts until the coven is defeated or until it is broken by *remove curse*.

A creature afflicted by a torturous curse can spend an action to fight the curse. Taking this action allows that creature to ignore the effect of the curse until the end of its next turn, after which the curse takes hold again.

- **Preferred Curse: Amateur's Amnesia.** Affected creatures are unable to remember the thing they do the best — for example, for Harkover Lee this is fire magic; for King Lorcan this is how to fight with a sword. Affected creatures simply cannot take actions having to do with their signature talent, as determined by the GM.

Magic Items Deliria wears a *hat of disguise*.

Act Two

DEFEATED, DELIRIA CURSES HER KILLERS and flees; then, Rachel Lang returns to shore. The confused mob has fled in panic.

The Cracked Cauldron

Rachel, in her relaxed, languid style, thanks the PCs for rescuing her and her acolytes. She reports that she was on her way to share a vision when the mob drove them onto the lake. She offers what little healing magic she has left to the king (which gives her an opportunity to wipe away any blood the king may have shed; see below).

After casting two *cure wounds* spells (each restores 4d8+3 hit points), she recounts her vision:

"Blood coats the peak of the mountain, pouring out of a cauldron scorched black with fire. Body after body is dragged into that pot, and the victims scream and die and lend their blood to the cascade, while their terrified souls seep into the stone of the mountain. Then blood falls from the moon, raining across the entire city, and the eyes of a countless watch from every pool of moonlight. It is not safe to attack tonight!

"When the moon is near setting, and the glow of dawn waits to appear, the cauldron is unguarded, the coven exhausted and sleeping after their night of revelry. And a figure steps willingly into the boil and the bubble. By that selfless sacrifice, the fire turns to ice, the cascade stops, the blood fades away. And then the sun rises, the witches turn to stone, and the mountain is purified."

This false vision might fool the group if not for Amielle's warning. But if the king insists on continuing up the mountain, Rachel says she can cast a spell that will protect them. She has a gourd of milk which she fills with herbs, and she asks each of them to shed a drop of blood into it. She says the purity of the milk will protect them from the witches' blood magic. She'll stay down at ground level and pray over the gourd to keep the ward active.

Lang has tried to think of anything that might give away her ruse, and she's quite convincing (Insight DC 22). [By the way, we didn't give any of the PCs Insight for this very reason.] Nevertheless, PCs might understandably be wary of giving anyone their blood.

A character who presses for details of the magic can make an Arcana check. A result that beats DC 10 realizes the magic will indeed provide magical defenses. A DC 25 result, however, is enough to realize that the spell does more than she's saying.

Successful Trick.

If the party falls for this, Rachel promises that she and her acolytes will head to safety and begin praying over the gourd in an hour, after which the king's ascent will be blessed.

She mentions that she also glimpsed in her vision prisoners trapped in cages at "the hunch," where the gentle slope of the

mountain becomes much steeper for the final thousand feet up to the peak. She assumed those prisoners were doomed and would be hurled into the cauldron, but if the king insists on bravely attacking during the blood moon, perhaps they could be spared ritual sacrifice.

Again, Lang is just trying to appear helpful and cooperative, and wants to offer more warnings in order to distract any suspicions that her request for blood is a trick.

Failed Trick.

Unlike her sisters, Lang does not have *bond of forced faith* active, so she's loath to risk combat, but she needs to get at least a sample of King Lorcan's blood. If the party sees through Lang's lies, she has two backup options.

First, if she was able to tend the king's wounds, she makes sure to get some of the king's blood into her sleeve or on a rag. If the king took any damage from slashing or piercing attacks, that's enough for her to get a drop of blood.

Failing that, she can try one last gambit. She casts *cloud of daggers* (as a 5th-level spell) to try to get King Lorcan to bleed. If she survives until her next turn she soaks the king's blood into her sleeve or a rag, then uses *raven's flight* to flee.

Sister Languor

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 63

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws WIS +4, CHA +7

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +7, Perception +4, Stealth +5

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Dying Curse. See Deliria's ability of the same name (page 10).

Spellcasting. See Deliria's ability of the same name (page 10).

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

ACTIONS

Staff of Withering. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8) bludgeoning damage. The staff has three charges, and Sister Languor can spend one charge when she hits an enemy to deal an extra 11 (2d10) necrotic damage. In addition, the target must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or suffer disadvantage for 1 hour on any ability check or saving throw that uses Strength or Constitution.

Raven's Flight. This functions as Deliria's ability of the same name.

Torturous Curse. This functions as Deliria's ability of the same name (see page 10), except Sister Languor has a different preferred curse.

- **Preferred Curse:** *Layabout's Lethargy.* Sister Languor prefers to curse foes with laziness. Affected creatures have disadvantage on Dexterity-based checks and saves and always roll a 1 for initiative.

Magic Items Languor carries a *staff of withering*.



SISTER
LANGUOR

Ascend the Hunchback

It takes about an hour to reach the base of the path up Cauldron Hill. Remind the PCs what time it is (it is most likely 7:00 PM, just before sunset, if they spent time to help rescue Rachel Lang). At a safe pace it would take two hours to reach the “hunch,” and another two to reach the peak. This is not the time for a safe pace.

Effect of the Gourd.

As the party starts climbing the mountain, if they fell for Rachel Lang’s deception they are indeed granted some small protection by the prayers of her acolytes. They are immune to poison and have resistance to cold damage, which is enough to shield them from exposure for the duration of their climb. This is a unique abjuration effect, which helps mask the aura of the *bond of forced faith* the Red Contessa casts upon them.

First Ascent.

To abstractly represent the party climbing a few thousand feet in a hurry, each PC must make a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 10) or take 1d6 damage, plus an additional 1d6 for every 5 points they fail by. Then each character must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 5) or suffer a level of exhaustion. This exhaustion goes away if the character takes a short rest.

Clever ideas – like the king reshaping land to clear barricades in particularly tricky spots – might grant the retinue a +5 bonus to their checks. If the group is traveling without light sources, those without darkvision take a -10 penalty to their Strength checks.

Watchful Scarecrows.

During this ascent, the retinue comes upon one of the witch hunters who was captured in the teaser. He’s lashed to a tree, and is quite dead, with his gut torn open and slits cut from his eyes down his cheeks to his throat.

His blood has pooled at his feet, and if Harkover Lee hasn’t used his *black gem* or if someone approaches the corpse outside the gem’s radius, the Contessa’s voice trills happily from the scab of a pool beneath him.

“I see you. I do hope Roland is here again. Don’t worry. Just because their bodies are stiff doesn’t mean they’ve forgotten how you got them killed.”

At this point, she dispatches the undying spirits (see below) to find and attack them. They’ll arrive within two minutes. The party takes a -5 penalty on Dexterity (Stealth) checks if they want to hide from these monsters.

If the party is hidden from the Contessa’s scrying, though, the corpse hangs inert, though its eyes are slit open, giving an eerie sense it’s watching them. If someone disturbs the body, it slumps forward and a serpent in the corpse’s abdomen lunges out. Make the following attack.

Hidden Adder. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 1 piercing damage and the target must make a DC 10 Constitution save. On a successful save the target takes 5 poison damage. On a failed save the target takes 5 poison damage, and each round thereafter must make another save. Each subsequent failure deals less damage (4, then 3, then 2, then 1). If the target fails all five saves, the target is poisoned until he or she completes a long rest.

A half-dozen more of these scarecrows dot the path up to the hunch.

My Death, Your Death.

Scores of shadowy undead roam the mountainside, though the area’s vast enough that only five will come upon the party. As they near the hunch, or if they are spotted near the Contessa’s blood pools, characters who make Perception checks (DC 16) notice a chill and the presence of a mysterious “something” while the spirits are still a hundred feet away.

If the party is being stealthy already, or is alerted and decides to hide, have everyone in the retinue make a Dexterity (Stealth) check (DC 10) to slip past the spirits. If three or more fail, the spirits hone in on their location, forcing a second check (DC 15) to slip past them. If three or more people fail the second time, the spirits attack. They completely ignore Mayor Stanfield, because the Red Contessa likes to kill him herself.

If the party brought along guards or soldiers, the spirits almost certainly spot such a large group, and they target the cannon fodder first.

Tortured to Death.

An undying spirit manifests when the victim of a ritual sacrifice is magically compelled at the moment of death to forget everything but the manner of his demise. Thereafter the spirits serve the one who killed them, hoping for release from their endless memories of death. These oily vestiges of a soul resemble animate shadows until they get within reach of a living creature, at which point the darkness peels away, revealing a pale, wispy figure that resembles the spirit’s form in life. It screams or begs as it reaches out, trying to anchor itself to a living creature.

Foes on the Ascent.

- 5 undying spirits

Undying Spirits (5)

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12**Hit Points** 22**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)	9 (–1)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons**Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious**Skills** Stealth +4 (+6 in dim light or darkness)**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9**Incorporeal Movement.** The spirit can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.**Shadow Stealth.** While in dim light or darkness, the spirit can take the Hide action as a bonus action.**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)**ACTIONS****Frigid Grasp.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.*Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. This damage never kills a creature, since the spirit wants to take people alive. The target must make a Strength check (DC 8) or be grabbed.**Relive Death.** If the undying spirit has a creature grabbed, that creature must make a Wisdom save (DC 9) or be stunned for one round as it experiences how the spirit died. This is a fear effect, and can affect other undying spirits (such as if Tomas Masaryk's divine vessel ability lets him dominate one).**Second Ascent.**

To make it all the way to the hunch, more climbing is in order. But first, during this climb the air whips up in irregular, moaning gusts; and red eyes watch from distant tree branches that buck in the tempest. Barely glimpsed gremlins giggle as they dash at the edge of the party's vision. The air grows intensely cold and clouds descend to grip and blind the party.

Each PC must make a Constitution save (DC 10) or suffer a level of exhaustion from the cold and climb. If the party is protected by Lang's magic, the DC is only 5.

Then as before, each PC must make a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 10) or take 1d6 damage, plus an additional 1d6 for every 5 points he failed by.

Churrascaria.

As the party nears the hunch, the fog begins to clear as the enticing scent of cooking meat reaches their noses. A half-dozen burning stakes light up a section of forest a few hundred feet ahead, but seem to be surrounded by darkness on one side. At further examination, the fires sit at the edge of a steep cliff face, beside a thousand foot drop. Beyond them looms the hunch, where the relatively flat wooded slope becomes much steeper and rocky for the final ascent.

At this distance, the party has the option of snuffing their light and sneaking up – requiring a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 10;

DC 20 for those without darkvision) to navigate the rough terrain. Failure deals damage as above. Then a Dexterity (Stealth) check (DC 10) lets them sneak up to Pernicity's hut, or bypass it entirely, depending on whether they want to rescue the prisoners.

Pyres of Pernicity.

Pernicity's hut sits in a small clearing near a perilous cliff edge. Nearby cages hold more prisoners. Between the hut and the cages, a pentagram is burned into the ground, and a number of tiny dark fey – red-eyed, gnome-like beings, their ears curled like devil horns – are tossing charred bodies into a pile atop the pentagram. The fey carry small covered lanterns, which bob and flash like will-o-wisps.

Tiny and adorable Sister Pernicity sits inside a scorched cauldron atop the pile of corpses, humming and swishing her fingers along to a *Hall of the Mountain King*-esque tune. Given a couple minutes, she finishes the song, then leans into her cauldron, which magically glides to her hut. She grins to her fey and says:

"Little hellions, go and lash me some more poor souls to the pyres. I want to give the king a good kick in the groin when he arrives. Oh, but pick the ones I marked. Don't want to let the *good* meat go to waste."

Pernicity's plan is to have half a dozen live prisoners lashed to poles, which are primed with oil and pyrotechnic powder to ignite in an instant. The fey await her order, at which they set the innocents alight, which Pernicity hopes will distract King Lorcan and his crew and draw them to the cliff side. She'd quite love to send the king careening down a thousand-foot drop to shatter on the woods below.

Rescuing Prisoners.

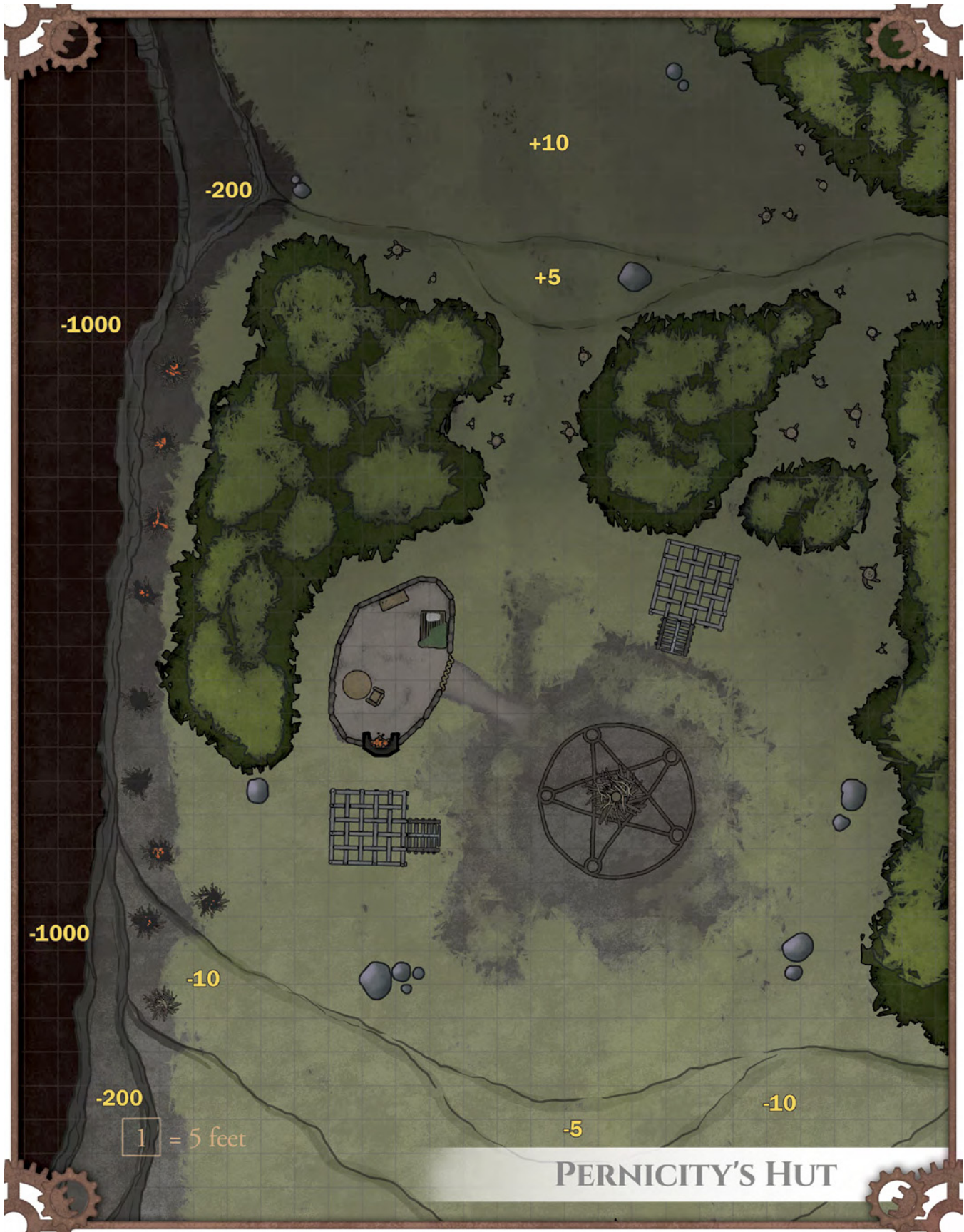
The dark fey drag six people out of the cage farthest from the cliff face, and then over the course of five minutes they drag the poor, whimpering men to the pyres and tie them up. During this, they're fairly oblivious (passive Perception 5). This leaves seven prisoners in that cage, and thirteen in the cage closer to Pernicity's hut. These are the twenty people Pernicity is linked to with *bond of forced faith*.

Minion Tactics.

The pile of corpses Pernicity sat on in the pentagram are actually all zombies under her control. They remain inert until she's attacked, at which point she'll hover over them and order them to swarm her foes. Since they're prone and staggered, the party has at least a round before they'll be attacked, but since they've already been burned alive, fire can't do much more to them.

One dark fey rushes to set the bonfires alight. This requires the creature to spend an action to light the pyrotechnic powder. Thereafter the bonfire flashes brightly, though in the first round the fire does no damage. One round later the bonfire does 1 damage to the lashed victim, and in subsequent rounds the victim takes 3 (1d6) fire damage and creates a cloud of smoke in a 20-ft. radius that provides concealment. Each victim has 10 hit points.

Meanwhile, the other fey will try to use their bonfire gusts to drive the PCs, either off the cliff or into the horde of zombies. If multiple zombies start their turn adjacent to a PC, they will try to cooperate to knock the PC prone (see "Grab or Shove").



Pernicity's Tactics.

Pernicity opens by targeting Tomas with *torturous curse*. She snickers, "Pretty boy's too serious!" and attempts to inflict her preferred curse, *madman's mirth*. She follows with a bonus action to *hex* someone else, probably Dame Melissa, to sap her Strength. She then flies up to thirty feet above the battle, preferably among trees to get cover.

The next turn she swoops around the battle cackling for a moment before going silent to hide. The following turn she'll dive in and use her scythe to slash and pick up the target she hexed. She'll carry them up into the air and then release them for extra falling damage.

Thereafter she swoops through trees, using *torturous curse* or swiping her scythe at isolated foes. If her zombies manage to grab and drag down someone, she squeals with glee, flies above them, and casts *witch bolt* (as a 5th level spell). Seriously, this spell is so hard to use effectively, so this is her one chance to make it work.

When her buffer of temporary hit points is gone she sneers and flies away in her cauldron.

Foes at the Hunch.

- Sister Pernicity
- 8 Cauldron Hill dark fey
- 20 burnt zombies

Sister Pernicity

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 63 plus 200 temporary hit points

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Wisdom +4, Charisma +7

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +7, Perception +4, Stealth +5

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Bond of Forced Faith. See Deliria's ability of the same name (page 10).

Dying Curse. See Deliria's ability of the same name (page 10).

Spellcasting. See Deliria's ability of the same name (page 10).

ACTIONS

Carrying Scythe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 12 (2d6+5) slashing damage. If Pernicity keeps moving this turn, she and the target make opposed Strength (Athletics) checks. If she succeeds, Pernicity moves the target with her and then releases it at the end of her turn.

Raven's Flight. This functions as Deliria's ability of the same name.

Torturous Curse. This functions as Deliria's ability of the same name (see page 10), except Sister Pernicity has a different preferred curse.

- **Preferred Curse — Madman's Mirth.** Sister Pernicity curses foes with insane laughter. The victim has disadvantage on Deception, Influence, Intimidation, and Stealth checks due to constant chortling and giggling. Additionally, the first time the victim takes damage in each encounter, he falls prone in a sudden fit of inexplicable laughter at the pain.

Magic Items Pernicity rides around in a magic cauldron that functions like *carpet of flying* with speed of 60 ft.

Cauldron Hill Dark Fey (8)

Small fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 9

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	8 (–1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +4 (+6 in dim light or darkness)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Challenge ½ (100 XP)

Spooky. The fey can innately cast *minor illusion* at will, requiring no components, but can only create sound. Spending an action to make an Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 9) reveals the sound is illusory.

ACTIONS

Flaming Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 7 (2d6) fire damage. If the target is a creature or flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, it takes 3 (1d6) fire damage at the end of each of its turns.

Bonfire Gust. Once per day the fey can create a flaming gust, similar to a combined *burning hands* and *thunderwave*. Creatures in a 15-ft. cone must make a Dexterity save (DC 9) and Constitution save (DC 9). They take 10 (3d6) fire damage on a failed Dexterity save, or half on a successful save; and they are pushed 10 feet on a failed Constitution save. (The dark fey aren't resistant to fire themselves, but they're a bit cavalier about avoiding hitting each other.)

Equipment covered lantern (illuminates 10 ft., 20 ft. dim light)

Burnt Zombies (20)

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (–2)	16 (+3)	3 (–4)	6 (–2)	5 (–3)

Saving Throws WIS +0

Damage Resistances fire

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Challenge ¼ (50 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, the zombie makes a Constitution saving throw (DC 5 + damage taken), unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage.

Grab or Shove. The zombies sometimes cooperate in a rudimentary way to knock a target prone. If they choose to do this, one zombie makes a Strength (Athletics) check to grapple, which the target can oppose with Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) as usual. Once a zombie has a target grappled, another zombie will make a shove attack (same procedure) to knock it prone. Then additional zombies will surround the prone target and attack with advantage. (A grappled creature can't stand up; it must escape the grapple first.)

Act Three

IF ANY HOSTAGES SURVIVED SISTER PERNICITY'S tender ministrations, there's no point having them come along, though some offer. They profusely thank the king and his retinue for saving them, but most are too terrified and exhausted to try moving until dawn. They know that more people were dragged up to the peak during the day, though, so the PCs can easily guess that the Red Contessa will have hostages of her own.

Final Ascent.

There are few traversable routes up from the hunch, for the mountain here is perilously steep, with only sparse foliage. For a moment, the king and his retinue might enjoy the stunning moonlit vista of Flint stretching out below them to the coast. But it's likely that penumbra begins to darken the moon's face. The king and his retinue might spare the time to take a short rest, treat their wounds, and break some curses, but then they must hurry upward.

As they ascend from Pernicity's hut, unearthly gales howl around the mountain, and sometimes those howls sound more like beasts than the wind. It is an hour-long, mind-eroding cacophony, and each PC who does not take precautions must make a Wisdom save (DC 12) or suffering disadvantage on their other ability checks and saves during the climb. This is a fear effect. Possible precautions include crafting earplugs (Medicine DC 12 per PC), distracting the group from the sound (Performance DC 17), or reciting protective chants (Religion DC 17). One successful precaution grants advantage to the save. Two or more successful precautions yield an automatic success.

Then there's the matter of actually reaching the peak alive. The last few hundred feet call for each PC to make a Constitution save (DC 12) or suffer a level of exhaustion from the cold and climb. If the party is protected by Lang's magic, the DC is only 7.

Then each PC must make a Strength (Climb) check (DC 15) or take 1d6 damage, plus an additional 1d6 for every 5 points they fail by. As before, grant bonuses for cleverness and penalties for darkness.

After about an hour of blood-chilling climbing, the mountain's crest flattens slightly, and the party spots a fire burning beneath a huge iron cauldron. The PCs have reached the eastern edge of the peak, and can choose how they approach. The wind still whirls around them, but is slightly weaker here, only gusting to dangerous speeds every few rounds.



SISTER
PERNICITY

Ritual of the Red Moon.

The pinnacle of Cauldron Hill teeters upward to a pair of flat plateaus separated by about forty feet, with a truly precipitous drop to the north and west and a rough but climbable slope to the south and east. The Red Contessa and her minions congregate on the western plateau, centered on a cauldron surrounded by standing stones. Those minions include a serpent-maned lion and a handful of lesser witches, all of them spinning and cavorting to harness the energy of the blood moon. If Rachel Lang tricked or escaped the party, she appears here, hooded as Sister Languor. Likewise, Sisters Deliria and Pernicity attend the ritual if they have survived.

Eight devilish fey like those at the Hunch patrol the base of the plateaus (passive Perception 10), each holding a covered lantern that illuminates out 10 feet, with 20 ft. of dim light. These are really just here for the party to be able to hew through and feel bad-ass, but if they want to be sneaky they'll have to come up with a way to keep the lanterns from shattering (like by having King Lorcan shoot a fey and Harkover grab the lantern with *mage hand*).

The Contessa is laughing and dancing around her cauldron. Her dress is torn from numerous puncture marks, and she holds a bloody dagger which she has been using to stab herself, to the torment of her hostages, who sit on the eastern plateau, guarded by a pair of undying spirits. Their hands are bound by rope, and another rope threads all twenty of them into a single awkward mass, making it impossible for them to slip away.

However, those prisoners are only red herrings. If it's 8:13 or later, the Contessa's ritual has taken hold, and she has bonded to everyone in the city. If she's able to let the ritual run its course until the lunar eclipse reaches totality at 10:47, the effect will be permanent, making her nigh invincible.

She hopes the king will assume the hostages are the only source of her immunity, and will waste precious time trying to save them. She pretends to be distracted, but keeps an eye on that peak

(passive Perception 14), because she so desperately wants to be able to say her piece to King Lorcan.

Do note that during this encounter, King Lorcan gains a +5 bonus to Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based checks, because the Red Contessa seeks to wrest control of Risuri land from him.

Speaking Her Piece.

Eventually the Contessa will notice the group, and she'll start monologuing. She'll do her whole spiel if given the chance. Otherwise she reads one paragraph each round during combat. (Adjust as needed to match events that have occurred so far.)

"King, now that we are alone, let me apologize for my earlier threats. I'm an artist, and it's important to strike the right tone. So I have to ask, how do you like my audition?"

"Like I said earlier today, a queen must protect her subjects. This evening, thanks to my plans, two vile witches who were terrorizing Flint have died. Rachel Lang, a traitor among the skyseers, was unmasked as a witch as well. Oh, you do know that Sister Languor is in my coven, right?"

She gestures to a hooded figure also standing by the cauldron, and pulls back the cloth to reveal the skyseer. Rachel Lang — or Sister Languor — looks askance at the Contessa, seeming slow to grasp that her mistress is offering to betray her.

"I know," the Contessa laughs, "your majesty, you are feeling your age, and that crown is so very heavy. So many people are your responsibility. Well, if you name *me* your successor, it's just possible that the horrible ritual I've got going on in this cauldron will be stopped before anything terrible happens to the little people down below us.

"So who could protect Risur better? Me, or your self-absorbed, war-obsessed knight lady? Maybe you want to make the devil girl the queen.

I know: you're thinking, 'What? Isn't this witch evil?' Ha! Neither of us really cares about the peasantry. World affairs, that's what matters! Oh, and look, we have representatives from Danor and the Clergy. They came here because of, that's right, me!" She winks to Amielle and Tomas.

"Face it, old man, I'm making you look like a hero. I'm smarter than you. I'm more powerful. If you want to protect your kingdom, only one person up here deserves that crown. So lay it on me, kingy! Do we have a deal?"

If the king agrees, they might have to kill the other witnesses, which can turn into a battle of the Contessa and the king (plus the fey, spirits, and serpent-maned lion) versus the party, Sister Languor, and the remaining witches.

If the king declines, the Contessa shrugs.

"Fine, I'll make my own country. It'll have blood magic and nightly orgies. Kill them!"

How to Win.

The cauldron is the focus of the Contessa's *bond of forced faith* ritual, linking her to the whole population of Flint. With the cauldron intact, rather than the normal 250 ft. range limit, the ritual works anywhere in Flint. While it's active, even if she is also bonded to any of the PCs through Languor's trickery, damage dealt to her is dispersed so widely that none of the linked creatures take any damage. Only if the large ritual ends does any smaller bond take over.

So, how to end the large ritual?

If the cauldron is cracked (Strength DC 20 to break or AC 15 and 40 HP), the ritual ends. Likewise, Harkover could get lucky and dispel the ritual (Intelligence check DC 19), which would *really* catch the Red Contessa by surprise. Shoving the cauldron off the cliff





automatically breaks it, and is sort of assumed to be the canonical ending, since the PCs in *ZEITGEIST* Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, find it there a century later.

Be open to other creative solutions. Throwing the Contessa off the mountain alone isn't enough to kill her, since the falling damage will just be dispersed and kill a couple hundred peasants, but as long as the cauldron is destroyed, she'll be defeated and will have to flee. Maybe Amielle pours her blood into the cauldron, and the tefling immunity to curses suppresses the ritual for a minute. Perhaps Tomas uses his hook pendant to redirect the ritual from the city of Flint to himself, so the Contessa is only bonded to him.

The Cauldron.

Jumping in the cauldron definitely *does not* help. The boiling liquid inside deals 17 (5d6) fire damage each round to any poor idiot who winds up inside the thing.

Effects of Ending the Ritual.

If the cauldron ritual ends and the Contessa isn't bonded to anyone else, she suffers disadvantage on Strength checks, saves, and weapon attack rolls, and her weapon attacks do half damage, and she takes damage normally.

However, if the Contessa is bonded to at least one PC through Sister Languor's deception, ending the cauldron ritual doesn't end her bond with those PCs. Damage is still divided among those PCs instead of dealt to her. This smaller bond does have the normal 250 ft. range limit.

Foes at the Peak of Cauldron Hill.

- The Red Contessa
- Sister Languor (see page 11)
- 1 serpent-maned lion
- 5 minor witches
- 2 undying spirits (see page 13)
- 8 Cauldron Hill dark fey (see page 15)

THE RED
CONTESSA



The Red Contessa

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 93

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws WIS +5, CHA +9

Skills Arcana +8, Deception +9, Perception +5, Stealth +7

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Coven Leader. As long as at least one of her other witches is alive, the Contessa can concentrate on three spells at a time. (Usually that will be *animate objects*, *call lightning*, and *hex*.)

Greater Bond of Forced Faith. The Red Contessa has is bonded to the entire city of Flint, and so she is immune to damage. As long as this effect persists, damage does not disrupt her concentration on spells. If her cauldron is destroyed, this effect ends. If she is not bonded with at least one PC through the *lesser bond of forced faith*, she has disadvantage on all Strength checks and melee attack rolls, and her melee weapon attacks do half damage.

Bond of Forced Faith. If the party fell for Sister Languor's trick, the Red Contessa may be bonded to one or more PCs. If the greater ritual is ended, any damage that would be dealt to the Contessa is instead divided among those bonded to her.

Blood Magic. The Contessa can see through pools of blood within three miles, and can manifest her voice, face, or even body, if there is sufficient blood, similar to the *project image* spell. These projections can in no way harm or attack others.

Once the Contessa has actually taken damage (so not if she's still protected by *bond of forced faith*), as a bonus action she can wreath herself in her own blood, in a shape akin to a large water elemental. She gains resistance to acid, and to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons. Her reach extends to ten feet, and the bleed effect of her dagger increases from 1 damage to 5.

Dying Curse. When the Contessa is reduced to 0 HP, she chooses an enemy who attacked her in the past hour (probably King Lorcan). For the next 10 rounds that creature gushes blood. At the end its turn it must succeed a Constitution save (DC 17) or take 20 damage. A success prevents the damage for that round.

During this minute, the wind around Cauldron Hill rises to a hurricane intensity. Any creature that is not prone or holding onto something heavy at the end of its turn must make a Strength save (DC 10) to avoid being pushed 15 feet away from where the Contessa died. Traveling against the wind costs double movement.

Spellcasting. The Red Contessa has three spell slots available to cast any of the following spells. The save DC is 17, and all the spells are cast as if with a 5th-level slot. These slots replenish after a short or long rest.

Spells prepared (3 slots): *call lightning*, *cloud of daggers*, *cure wounds*, *dispel magic*, *entangle*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *hex*, *phantasmal killer*, *remove curse*, *suggestion*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Contessa uses her deva-slaying dagger and then makes an unearthly strength attack.

Deva-Slaying Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d4+7) piercing damage, and the target bleeds until it receives magical healing or someone makes a Medicine check (DC 10) as an action. While bleeding, the creature takes 1 damage at the end of its turn. If the Red Contessa hits a deva with this attack, she deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage.

Unearthly Strength. The Contessa makes an opposed Strength (Athletics) check against a creature within 5 ft. If she succeeds, she can grab the target or throw it 10 ft. and knock it prone.

Torturous Curse. One creature within 30 ft. makes a Wisdom saving throw (DC 17). If it fails, the Red Contessa deals 16 (3d10) necrotic damage to that creature, and then she bestows a curse on the creature. After using this power, the Contessa cannot use this power on the same creature until she takes a short or long rest.

Choose one of the following curses, which has a duration until the coven is defeated, or until broken by *remove curse*. A creature afflicted by a curse can spend an action to fight against the curse. This lets it ignore the effect of the curse until the end of its next turn, after which the curse takes hold again. In addition to the weaker curses the other witches in the coven know (see page 10), the Contessa prefers the following three curses. She can only have one creature afflicted with each of these curses at a time.

- **Curse of Cacophony.** The target is deafened, grants advantage to attacks from all enemies, and treats all creatures as enemies. It must take opportunity attacks if possible.
- **Curse of the White-Eyed Doppelganger.** Whenever the target makes an attack, he repeats the attack against himself, perceiving a doppelganger-like duplicate attacking. The duplicate exists only in the target's mind; nothing can damage or affect it.
- **Curse of the Writhing Cauldron.** Whenever the target performs a strenuous action (like attacking or casting a spell), it takes damage equal to half its maximum hit points. If the target dies, it erupts into a harmless swarm of centipedes.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Contessa can take 3 legendary actions, 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. She regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Call Down Lightning (Costs 2 Actions). The Contessa casts *call lightning* if she has not already, or she calls down a new bolt, dealing 27 (5d10) lightning damage to a target within 120 ft. The target takes half damage with a successful Dexterity save (DC 17).

Retributive Curse. If a creature hit the Contessa with an attack on the turn just ended, she uses *torturous curse* against them.

Through the Veil. The Contessa's form blurs and she moves her speed. During this time she can move through solid objects and creatures as if they were difficult terrain. If she ends her movement in a solid object she takes 5 force damage and is shunted to the nearest open space. She cannot move if restrained or if an effect would block teleportation.

Magic Items The Red Contessa specially crafted a deva-slaying dagger that deals an extra 3d6 damage to devas. She also has a scroll case that contains the ritual *bond of forced faith*.

Serpent-Maned Lion

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (−4)	12 (+1)	8 (−1)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Beyond the Veil. The lion was a creature of the Dreaming, corrupted by the dark energy of the Bleak Gate. It counts as fey and undead, which means King Lorcan's sword and bow deal more damage to it, and Tomas Masaryk can dominate it if he defeats it.

Keen Smell. The lion has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Running Leap. With a 10-foot running start, the lion can long jump up to 25 feet.

Serpent Mane. Blind, hissing serpents form this monster's mane, and their mesmerizing presence makes all spaces adjacent to the lion count as difficult terrain for enemies.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lion makes a claw attack and then a bite attack.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage. The target must make a Strength saving throw (DC 13) or fall prone.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage. If the target is prone, it also must make a Constitution save (DC 13) or be poisoned from the biting mane. While poisoned, the target takes 5 poison damage at the start of its turn. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect with a successful save.

Minor Witches (5)

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 33

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws WIS +2, CHA +4

Skills Arcana +3, Deception +4, Perception +2, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 12

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The witches each have one spell slot available to cast any of the following spells. The save DC is 12, and all the spells are cast as if with a 2nd level slot.

Spells prepared (1 slot): *darkness*, *hex*, *inflict wounds*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The witch makes two dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage. The witch can also throw the dagger with range 20/60 ft.



Animated Cauldron

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances fire

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sloshing Brew. Whenever a creature within 5 feet of the cauldron hits it with a melee attack, steamy gruel splashes that creature dealing 2d8 fire damage. If a creature enters the pot, it takes 5d6 fire damage immediately, and at the end of each subsequent turn it remains in the boiling brew. If the cauldron falls prone, when it stands up the brew drains out and it loses this ability.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6+1) bludgeoning damage and 9 (2d8) fire damage.

Upend. The cauldron leaps, flips in midair, and attempts to land upside down over someone. One Medium or smaller target within 5 ft. makes a Dexterity save (DC 13). If the target fails, the cauldron traps the creature, which is considered grappled. The cauldron is considered prone, but until it stands up there is still enough boiling brew inside to burn the trapped creature, per the sloshing brew ability. A creature (including the one trapped inside) can as an action make an opposed Athletics check to shove the cauldron off.

Animated Henge Stones (3)

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 50

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Tumbling Death. When the standing stones are reduced to 0 hit points, they try to fall on an enemy if one is within 5 ft. That creature must make a Dexterity save (DC 10) or take 7 (2d6) damage and be knocked prone and restrained. The creature can use an action to make a Strength check (DC 10) to free itself.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d10+2) bludgeoning damage.

Tactics.

The Red Contessa opens by casting *animate objects* on two of the standing stones (Large objects) and the cauldron itself (Medium object), then casts *hex* as a bonus action. She'll use her first legendary action to cast *call lightning*, and will drop a lightning bolt once per round, using her other legendary action to curse unless she needs to relocate in a hurry.

Thereafter she expects enemies to close with her. Once they're within 30 ft., she'll use *torturous curse* and then uses one of her three unique curses. She prefers to target Dame Melissa with the Curse of Cacophony (shouting, "You'd make a pathetic queen!") and Tomas Masaryk with the Curse of the White-Eyed Doppelganger (spitting on him and hissing, "Your gods have fallen!"). She saves Curse of the Writhing Cauldron for King Lorcan.

Since she assumes she's invincible, she's in no rush, and will stalk after Stanfield. If her bond with Flint and her bonds (if any) with the PCs end, she casts *suggestion* and says, "Just sit down and applaud me until the battle's over." Then she wreathes herself in blood and fights to the death, smiling the whole time.

Aftermath.

With the Red Contessa's defeat, her dying curse will likely kill King Lorcan (or someone else if the king actually allied with her) unless the party unites to save him. Narratively, this is intended to motivate the king to pick a successor.

The winds around the peak rise to hurricane intensity. For nearly a minute, it becomes difficult to move without being picked up and dragged toward a cliff. Trees are uprooted, any surviving witches are carried into the sky screaming, and even the standing stones crash and crack. If the cauldron was not yet destroyed, it is knocked over and rolls off the cliff.

Overhead the clouds rapidly swirl and fill the sky, until the red haze of the blood moon is fully blocked. Darkness hangs over Cauldron Hill, but for the moment, mundane shadows feel safer than the sanguine glow of the lunar eclipse. With any luck, King Lorcan will have chosen a worthy successor, and for a time, the city of Flint will be safe. But in the coming decades, the citizens of that city will keep a wary eye on the mountain in their midst, ever suspicious of when its curses and malevolence will boil over and threaten them all again.

Pregenerated Characters

The following character sheets are intended to be playable, fun, and balanced. They do not necessarily conform to existing character classes. For unlisted skills, just use the appropriate ability score modifiers.

Note: As stated on his character sheet, King Lorcan's *rites of rulership* trait has a special effect while in the presence of someone "contesting control over Risuri land." For the purposes of adjudicating this ability during this adventure, it only applies in the final encounter against the Red Contessa. 



King Lorcan Finn

Level 11 Human King

ABILITIES

STR 16 (+3)

DEX 10 (+0)

CON 12 (+1)

INT 14 (+2)

WIS 16 (+3)

CHA 16 (+3)

Plate armor;
defense
fighting
style

Saving Throws.

STR +7, CON +5

Proficient Skills.

Athletics	+7
Deception	+7
History	+6
Nature	+6
Performance	+7
Persuasion	+7
Survival	+7

Combat.

You get two attacks per action, and your weapon attacks score critical hits when you roll a 19 or 20 to attack.

Melee.

King's Claymore +8 (2d6+4), or
Dagger +8 (1d4+3)

Ranged.

Silent Shortbow +7 (1d6+1, 80/320)

Inspiring Leader. By spending 10 minutes offering inspiring and encouraging words, you can grant up to six creatures (including yourself) 14 temporary hit points.

Polyglot. You can speak every language used by every creature and NPC in this adventure.



Rites of Rulership. You have a magical connection with the kingdom of Risur that accords you several benefits.

You gain a +5 bonus to saves against charm, fear, and poison.

As long as you are above 0 HP, at the start of your turn you heal 10 HP.

The first time each encounter that you fall to 0 HP or below, each of your subjects within three miles is overcome with weakness and falls prone.

Once per round as a bonus action you can move up to four 5-ft. cubes of earth, stone, or foliage up to five feet while on Risuri land. This cannot affect land that is within 5 feet of a hostile creature, so no dropping people in pits.

When you are in the presence of a creature who is contesting control over Risuri land, you gain a +5 bonus to Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based checks. For the purpose of effects like grappling or shoving that depend on size, you can choose to be treated as that contesting creature's size.

Equipment.

In addition to a variety of mundane gear (daggers, rope, etc.), you have the following items.

Coat of Armor. Your royal attire defends you as well as a suit of plate armor. You cannot be teleported against your will.

King's Claymore. This cold iron greatsword teleports to your hand at your command. Attacks against fey deal an extra 3d6 damage.

Silent Shortbow. Creatures damaged by this weapon cannot speak above a whisper for one round. Your enchanted quiver contains nigh-unlimited cold iron and silver arrows. Attacks against fey deal an extra 3d6 damage.

Crown of Risur. You always know the preferred name of those you can see. On your turn you can say someone's name to grant them a new save against an effect with an ongoing duration, but only once per person per day.



Background.

You've chosen to give yourself an unusual gift for your fiftieth birthday: you intend to abdicate.

A year ago you declared an armistice with the godless, technologically superior nation of Danor, ruled by tieflings. Risur lost territory in the war, and you can already feel your people's fading trust weaken the power granted you by the Rites of Rulership.

The monarchs of Risur pass their title based on merit, not blood, which is good because your children are all obnoxious. You intend to name as your successor Dame Melissa Gahlot, your chief bodyguard, known as the Green Knight. But the rites are only strong if the monarch is beloved by the masses and approved by the nobility, so Melissa needs to be seen as a hero.

A tragedy has given you a rare opportunity, though. During the war a coven of witches in one of your less-important cities – Flint – grew bold and deadly. Led by a woman known as the Red Contessa, they terrorized the townsfolk, these witches killed the

mayor three times (he reincarnated, though), and now they seem bent on laying claim to the area.

In the last month they have abducted dozens of hostages, and you intended to help, but a skyseer named Rachel Lang – one of Risur's folk prophets who sees the future in the stars – warned you not to move against the witches before this night, the night of a lunar eclipse, which you know as an ill omen. In any event, tomorrow is your birthday. You have gathered trusted allies to plan an assault on the witches' stronghold, the mountain known as Cauldron Hill, which looms over Flint's city center. You will strike at dawn.

You might not return, but there's more at stake than simply saving your citizens. Dame Melissa is noble and mighty, but she has no bond with the common folk. You pray that she will see that the nation is nothing if its people do not have faith in their monarch. If you fail, you're not sure who will succeed you.

SUGGESTED STARTING INTERACTIONS.

Ask your allies to brief you. Let Roland Stanfield, mayor of Flint, tell what has happened so far in his city, and have your chief advisor Harkover Lee explain the nature of the witches. The foreigner Tomas Masaryk claims he knows a secret of the witches' power. Impress on Dame Melissa that protecting the people of Flint is your chief concern and that this is the proper attitude of a responsible monarch.

CHARACTER GOAL.

Do not tell anyone you intend to abdicate. It would be wise to keep it quiet that you're considering Dame Melissa as your successor, though you think she already suspects, as she has grown haughty and overconfident. Make sure that you do not die before passing the crown on to someone else.

You could declare almost anyone to be your successor, but not Mayor Stanfield (the rites demand the monarch must be "mortal"; because he is a deva, Stanfield perpetually reincarnates) nor your principal minister Harkover Lee (the rites disqualify anyone who has ruled another nation from wearing the crown of Risur).





Dame Melissa Gahlot

Level 10 Half-Elf Green Knight



ABILITIES

STR	18 (+4)
DEX	8 (-1)
CON	10 (+0)
INT	13 (+1)
WIS	12 (+1)
CHA	18 (+4)



Magic plate armor, shield



Saving Throws.

WIS +5, CHA +8

Proficient Skills.

History	+5
Intimidation	+8
Medicine	+5
Persuasion	+8

Combat.

You get two attacks per action.

Melee.

Vanguard Lance +9 (1d12+5), or
Cold iron dagger +8 (1d4+4)

Ranged.

Returning Spear +8 (1d8+4, 20/60), or
Golden Net +8 (restrained, 5/15)

Charger. When you use your action to Dash, you can use a bonus action to make one melee weapon attack or shove a creature. If you move at least 10 feet before taking this bonus action, you either get +5 to damage or push the target up to 10 feet away from you.

Divine Smite. When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can expend a spell slot to deal extra radiant damage – 2d8 for a 1st level slot, 3d8 for 2nd, or 4d8 for 3rd. Increase the damage another 1d8 if the target is undead or a fiend. You can also use this power to gain a bonus to Strength checks to break an item, with the bonus equal to 3 plus twice the spell's level.

Nature's Blessing. You derive a number of powers from your connection with nature.

You are immune to disease.

As an action you can heal a creature you touch. You have a pool of 50 HP you can heal per day, and in lieu of healing 5 HP you can cure a disease or neutralize a poison.

If you die and remain dead for five minutes, you can spend a Hit Die and revive at 1 HP.

You and allies within 10 ft. get a +4 bonus on saves, resistance to damage from spells, and can't be frightened while you're conscious. As an action 5 times per day, you can sense celestials, fiends, and undead within 60 ft.

Once per short rest you can shout a rebuke to fiends and fey within 30 ft. Each fey that fails a Wisdom save (DC 16) is turned for one minute or until it takes damage. A turned creature must try to move as far away from you as possible. If it cannot get away, it spends its action to Dodge.

You can cast the following spells spontaneously. Any save DC is 16.

- **1st Level (4/day)** – *command*, *cure wounds*, *ensnaring strike*, *speak with animals*, *thunderous smite*
- **2nd Level (3/day)** – *branding strike*, *lesser restoration*, *misty step*, *moonbeam*, *zone of truth*
- **3rd Level (2/day)** – *crusader's mantle*, *plant growth*, *protection from energy*, *remove curse*, *revivify*

Equipment.

In addition to a variety of mundane gear (daggers, rope, etc.) and non-magical combat gear (longsword, plate armor, shield, cold iron dagger), you have the following items.

Vanguard Lance. If there is an enemy within 60 ft. distance at the start of combat, you may choose to treat your initiative as if you rolled a natural 20. If you do, you must charge on the first turn of combat.

Returning Spear. If thrown, it flies back to you at the start of your next turn.

Golden Net. Creature struck is restrained (STR check DC 15 or 15 slashing damage to break). Restrained creature cannot teleport or phase out.



Background.

You should be the next monarch of Risur. You have worked all your adult life toward this goal, since thirty years ago when you were knighted by Queen Caroline, the predecessor of your current king, Lorcan.

For three decades you have honed your prowess, for any ruler of Risur must be fit to give battle to conquerers and usurpers. Your forthrightness and honesty have earned you the respect of the nobles of Risur, and your skill at subtle mockery has won you favor from the fey Unseen Court. And in the last war for the Yerasol Isles you inspired terror in your opponents, the effete tieflings who ruled the nation of Danor. Last year King Lorcan ceased hostilities, but you think he gave up too much territory.

The people think he is weak, and so if he's smart he'll pick a strong successor to protect the nation, before the Rites of Rulership that grant him his power fade.

Now comes your final test to prove your worth. A coven of witches in control of a mountain called Cauldron Hill have committed many horrors, and King Lorcan has called upon you to wade into battle by his side. You will strike at dawn tomorrow, which happens to be your king's fiftieth birthday. He is human, and he will not maintain his strength much longer, but your elf blood will give you a century more of life. If you can defeat these dark villains, surely he shall name you his successor. You will be a good queen.

SUGGESTED STARTING INTERACTIONS.

Be sure to remind King Lorcan, in as polite a way as possible, that the territory Risur lost in the recent war has undercut the respect the common people have for him. Ask him if he feels their doubt through the Rites. Pretend to be sympathetic.

CHARACTER GOAL.

You want King Lorcan to name you his successor. Toward that end, protect him, but also strive to be seen as a hero.



Weodam, Fey Stag. You have a stag mount that obeys all your commands. If you do not command it, it acts on its own, on your initiative. It has the statistics and attack shown at right.

Twice per day as an action, Weodam can teleport you and it 60 ft. together.

Mounted Combat. While mounted, you have advantage on melee attack rolls against unmounted foes that are size Medium or smaller.

While mounted, you can force an attack that targets your mount to target you instead. If you do, your mount takes half damage against effects that grant a Dexterity save, or no damage if it succeeds the save.

Weodam

AC	16 (leather barding)
HP	19
SPEED	60 ft.
STR	8 (-1)
DEX	12 (+1)
CON	13 (+1)
INT	6 (-2)
WIS	12 (+1)
CHA	7 (-2)
MELEE	gore +4 (2d6+4)



Roland Stanfield

Level 10 Deva Mayor

ABILITIES

STR	8 (-1)
DEX	12 (+1)
CON	11 (+0)
INT	16 (+3)
WIS	19 (+4)
CHA	14 (+2)



Studded
leather
armor



Saving Throws.

CON +4, DEX +5, INT +7, WIS +8

Proficient Skills.

Deception	+10
History	+7
Medicine	+7
Perception	+12
Persuasion	+10
Religion	+7
Stealth	+9

Combat.

Your past lives give you some unusual combat options. See Manifest Incarnations at right and the incarnation statistics on the next page.

Melee.

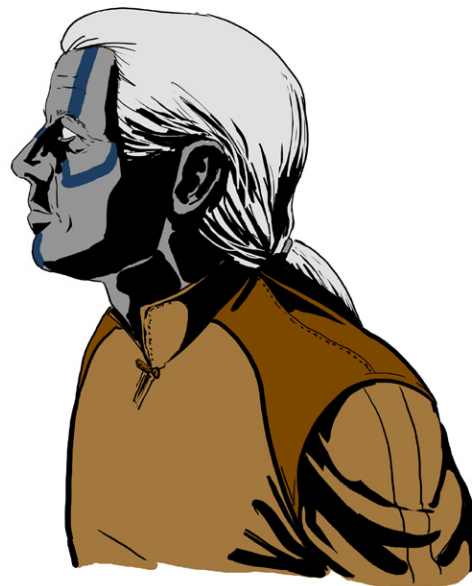
Shortsword +5 (1d6+1)

Ranged.

Dagger +5 (1d4+1)

Old Injury. A back injury you suffered in your first life recurs each time you reincarnate. Whenever you fall prone, you bleed, and suffer 1 damage each round until you receive magical healing or someone succeeds a DC 10 Medicine check to stop the bleeding. Your incarnations all have the same weakness.

Equipment. Aside from a variety of mundane items (daggers, rope, etc.), your studded leather armor, and your shortsword, you have no noteworthy gear.



Rogue Tricks. In this life you find yourself sneaky and clever.

Once per turn you deal +5d6 sneak attack damage when you hit an enemy and have advantage on the attack roll, or if one of your allies is within 5 feet of the enemy.

You can use a bonus action to Dash, Disengage, or Hide.

When an attacker you can see hits you, you can spend your reaction to halve the damage.

You take half damage against effects that grant a Dexterity save, or no damage if you succeed the save.

Deva Traits. Your status as a deva offers you the following benefits.

You have resistance to necrotic and radiant energy, and you cannot be blinded by bright light.

Once per day you can recall knowledge from a past life. Roll 1d4 and add it to one ability check, skill check, or saving throw of your choice, after you roll but before you know the result. If you do this for a skill you are not proficient with, you gain proficiency for the next minute.

If you die, eight hours later your body dissolves and you reincarnate, fully grown but with jumbled memories, somewhere within three miles. (You hope you never reincarnate while at sea.)

Manifest Incarnations. As a bonus action you can call forth a shimmering manifestation of one of your past lives. He appears besides you, can roam up to 250 ft. from you, and lasts as long as you remain conscious. You share senses intuitively. Each of you can move independently, but you have only one action, and can use it either for yourself or for one of your incarnations.

Each incarnation has 20 HP and uses your stats, but do not have Rogue Tricks. The incarnations have additional abilities listed on the next page.

If an incarnation is reduced to 0 HP, it vanishes, and you lose 20 HP. You can have multiple incarnations manifested at the same time, but no more than one of each type. You can dismiss an incarnation as a bonus action. If you manifest it again, it starts at 20 HP.



Background.

Four centuries ago you saw a goddess die. It changed you, and years later when you eventually perished you reincarnated, reappearing fully-grown in the wilderness with only vague memories. You are no longer a man, but a deva, bearing a sliver of the goddess's power.

Over the course of a hundred years and several incarnations you found your way to Risur, and became mayor of the coastal town of Flint. Upon your next death, the people of Flint found you and asked you to return.

You had trouble at first, but then a wise man helped you unlock memories of your previous incarnations. With each life you were a slightly different man, but now your former selves could advise you. Thereafter Flint quickly prospered.

Then forty years ago a witch known as the Red Contessa established a coven atop a looming peak in the city's center. The mountain was once called the Hunchback, but the locals have renamed it Cauldron Hill. At first the coven moved subtly, and the threat they posed was not worth the risk of fighting them. But a few years ago Risur went to war, and while the nation was

distracted the witches began to terrorize your people and curse the families who looked to you for protection and guidance. You tried to drive them out. They killed you.

Your next incarnation opposed them as well, and a couple years later the Contessa killed you again, which only increased her infamy and made it seem impossible to confront her. Your next incarnation called on the king to save your city, but he took too long, so you led a desperate mission yourself. You wish you couldn't remember this latest death, how horrifying it was to watch men who trusted you burn alive.

Last night you were visited again by the same wise man who helped you centuries ago, though he wore a new face. He congratulated your leadership, and asked two favors before leaving: "Tell no one else of my visit, please." And, "When the tiefling arrives, accept her aid, and keep her alive. She has the power to make Flint the mightiest city in the world."

Your current incarnation feels ... *sneakier* than usual. But what hasn't changed is your commitment to the improvement of Flint and the protection of its people.

SUGGESTED STARTING INTERACTIONS.

Tell King Lorcan and his retinue about your city's suffering at the witches' hands, and of your own deaths. The king intends to strike at dawn. Insist on joining this mission.

CHARACTER GOAL.

The people of Flint must be safe from the torment of the witches. Accept the aid of the tiefling, whoever she happens to be, and make sure she survives, even if you die. You'll reincarnate anyway. Tell no one about the mysterious wise man.

Warrior Incarnation.

Centuries ago you fought in a holy war.

- AC 20 (plate armor, shield)
- STR 19 (+4)
- **Combat.** This incarnation makes two attacks with a single action, and has the following attacks:

Melee longsword +8 (1d8+4)

Ranged holy light +5 (2d6 fire damage, range 60 ft., at-will)

Loremaster Incarnation.

Since then you have devoted yourself to learning.

- AC 11
- **Spellcasting.** The number of uses for each spell refreshes each day; getting a "new" loremaster incarnation doesn't help.

Cantrips — *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

1st (4/day) — *detect magic*, *magic missile*, *silent image*

2nd (3/day) — *hold person*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *spider climb*

Politician Incarnation.

You've found your greatest success in leading and governance.

- **Unassuming.** Attacks against you have disadvantage if the attacker can see any of its other enemies.
- **Inspirational Presence.** As a bonus action twice per short rest, you can grant an ally who can hear you rhetorical inspiration. That ally can spend the rhetorical inspiration to get +1d10 to any d20 roll.
- **Poisoned Weapon.** Applying poison is a bonus action. A target struck takes 24 poison damage. A Constitution save (DC 15) reduces the damage by half. The poison can only coat this incarnation's weapons.



Harkover Lee

Level 10 Enigmatic Mage

ABILITIES

STR 25 (+7)

DEX 8 (-1)

CON 10 (+0)

INT 20 (+5)

WIS 16 (+3)

CHA 14 (+2)

Mage
armor
spell

Saving Throws.

INT +9, WIS +7

Proficient Skills.

Deception	+10
History	+7
Medicine	+7
Perception	+12
Persuasion	+10
Religion	+7
Stealth	+9

Combat.

As a consequence of your taboo, you cannot make melee attacks or otherwise use your physical might to cause damage to other creatures. You use your magical abilities instead.

Melee.

Unarmed strike +11 (8 damage, objects only)

Ranged.

Handheld flame +9 (1d10+5 fire, 120 ft.)

Enigmatic Taboo. You should keep your strength a secret; openly displaying it would raise questions you're not prepared to answer. You may not attack to injure another creature with your physical might, but you may use magic to do so. Your strength can still aid with skill checks, combat maneuvers like grappling, and attacks against objects.

Friend to Flame. You are immune to fire damage. You can see perfectly through smoke. You can conjure fire and throw it at-will.

Spellcasting. You have the following spells prepared. The save DC is 17, and any spell attack is at +9. Once per day at the end of a short rest you can regain up to 5 levels worth of spell slots.

You can shape the area of your evocation spells (marked with an asterisk) to ignore a number of creatures equal to 1 + the spell's level.

Evocation spells you cast that deal damage deal an extra 5 damage.

- **Cantrips (at-will)** – *fire bolt**, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *minor illusion*
- **1st Level (3/day)** – *burning hands**, *detect magic*, *feather fall*, *identify*, *mage armor*
- **2nd Level (3/day)** – *flaming sphere**, *scorching ray**, *see invisibility*, *shatter**
- **3rd Level (3/day)** – *dispel magic*, *clairvoyance*, *fireball**, *remove curse*
- **4th Level (3/day)** – *dimension door*, *fire shield**
- **5th Level (2/day)** – *wall of force*

Equipment. As a consequence of your taboo, you carry no weapons.

Golden Orb. Etched with arcane writings, this 4-inch diameter sphere of gold is your spellbook. It weighs 22 pounds, but you carry it easily.

Robes of the Pyromancer. Any creature that grabs you catches on fire, and takes 2d6 fire damage immediately and each round thereafter. Only if the creature releases you can it attempt to put out the flames, making a DEX save (DC 10) for free at the end of its turn. It can spend an action to automatically extinguish the flames.

Black Gem. Crack in order to release an aura that blocks scrying within 100 ft. Lasts one day once activated.

Rune of Succor. Inscribed into your flesh but hidden from view, this rune triggers if you remain at 0 HP or below for more than two rounds. If triggered, you teleport to your sanctum hundreds of miles away in the city of Slate, where minions can revive you. You cannot share this contingency with anyone else. You have a *scroll of teleport* at your sanctum, but it would take you a few minutes to retrieve it.

Scrolls. You have three *scrolls of dispel magic* and three *scrolls of remove curse*. Dispelling has a chance of removing curses, but might be better saved to thwart other spell effects.



Background.

You do not speak of your history, and you will not eat or drink in front of others, nor may you fight with your physical might, only your magic. And – for one more year at least – you must obey your pledge of loyalty to Risur and continue to serve as principal minister to the monarch, whomever he or she may be.

King Lorcan, fifty years old tomorrow yet still strong for a

human his age, asks you to aid him against the witch coven of Cauldron Hill, and so you shall. You have never been to the city of Flint before, but you and your apprentices have scryed it and learned information that will be critical in defeating the witch known as the Red Contessa. The king intends to strike at dawn.

Serve the king well. Risur has done you a great favor.

SUGGESTED STARTING INTERACTIONS.

Share this information with the king and his council:

The coven's leader, the Red Contessa, can sense any blood spilled within 3 miles, and can speak and observe through pools of blood. Your *black gem* will help you sneak up on her.

The witch known as Sister Pernicity can command dark fey and the spirits of the dead. Sister Deliria confuses people's minds, using trickery, illusions, and enchantment. There may be more witches.

People have reported attacking the witches, inflicting mortal wounds, and then seeing no effect. The witches have many minions, some willing, some coerced, some enchanted. And not all of them are human. The witches are never seen far from their minions, so perhaps they derive power from them.

The witches have captured more than a hundred hostages in the past month, and hundreds more in the past decade. Ritual sacrifice in the past has drawn the peak of Cauldron Hill in close contact with the realm of spirits, but you cannot determine what the Contessa intends her current crop of blood sacrifice for.

The visitor Tomas Masaryk has come from the nation Crisillyir, who follow a religion known as the Clergy. Tomas claims he has information that will be useful, and you have used magic to verify the truth of his claims. He can be trusted as an ally, at least for the mission of defeating the Red Contessa.

CHARACTER GOAL.

While you are fond of King Lorcan, you are more loyal to Risur as a nation than to its monarch. You worry Lorcan plans to name Dame Melissa his successor. She would be a terrible queen, so try to make sure if he names a successor that he names someone else. You would *prefer* not to actively harm Dame Melissa, but you will if it's the only way to stop her from taking the crown.





Tomas Masaryk

Level 10 Human Godhand

ABILITIES

STR	9 (-1)
DEX	18 (+4)
CON	14 (+2)
INT	11 (+0)
WIS	16 (+3)
CHA	14 (+2)

Saving Throws.

STR +3, DEX +8

Proficient Skills.

Acrobatics	+8
Athletics	+3
Intimidate	+6
Religion	+4

Combat.

You get two attacks per action, plus you can use a bonus action to make an additional unarmed strike attack.

Melee.

Unarmed strike +8 (1d6+4)

Ranged.

Hook chain +8 (1d6+4, thrown, 5/15 ft.)



Holy sentinel benefit



Divine Vessel.

Your holy power manifests in a number of ways. You have a halo that you can have cast light as bright as a torch, or have it simply float dim, like polished metal. Whenever a ranged weapon hits you, as a reaction you may have your halo flare, unleashing a force that reduces the damage by 1d10+14. If this reduces the damage to zero, you may send the weapon back at the attacker, with a +8 attack bonus.

You are immune to disease, poison, charm, and fear effects.

When you succeed a DEX save for half damage, you instead take no damage; if you fail, you only take half damage.

You reduce all falling damage by 50 points.

You can use *speak with dead* any number of times per day, but only once for a given corpse. Each attempt requires a minute berating and compelling the corpse to answer you.

You have ten uses of divine favor per day. You can spend one use for any of the following:

- You can take the Disengage or Dash action as a bonus action, and you double your jump distance this turn.
- Your fists unleash glowing blasts of holy energy, extending your melee reach to 120 ft. this turn.
- Heal 15 damage to a creature you touch as an action.
- If you reduce an undead or fiend to 0 HP, you can keep it alive and dominated with 10 HP. Five minutes after being dominated, it is destroyed.

Equipment.

Holy Scripture of Triegenes. The sacred text of your faith, a humble book. If you spend an action to recite from it, your halo illuminates a 10-ft. aura around you. Until the start of your next turn, foes must make a WIS save (DC 16) to attack you or your allies in the aura. This protection is broken if you or an ally in the aura attacks or casts a spell that affects an enemy.

Martyr's Fishhook Necklace. As a reaction, you can change one spell that targets one ally within 30 ft. and cause it to target you instead.

Urn of Holy Water from the Aqueducts of Alais Primos. Weapons anointed with this water can harm ghosts. Can affect nine weapons (including fists), lasting 24 hours.



Background.

You are a *geneu credeto*, a godhand, and you have not flesh but faith made manifest. You have traveled a thousand miles to see done the will of your hierarchs, to restore the purity of the Clergy, which guards this world from infernal magic and guides mortals to reach for godhood.

The Red Contessa is a heretic who was cast out four decades past. Five years ago she returned to your homeland and snuck into the Vault of Heresies, from which she stole the blasphemous ritual *bond of forced faith*, scribed by the ancient fiend Namtar-Shamash of the demonocracy, which your Clergy gloriously defeated a thousand years ago.

The Contessa leads a coven of witches in the Risuri city of Flint, and the hierarchs divined that Risur's monarch King

Lorcan Finn intends to give battle to the foul women. You desire power in your church, and if you can slay the Contessa, you intend to petition for a place among the hierarchs.

King Lorcan is a non-believer – the folk of Risur worship spirits of the land and gods of the faeries – but your interests align on this mission. Indeed, King Lorcan recently lost land in a war against the hellish tieflings who rule the nation of Danor, Risur's rival across the sea. While they're a primitive people, Risur at least is strong enough to oppose true evil.

Your hierarchs would prefer the Contessa purified in the fires of your homeland's holy volcano Enzyo Mons, but any death will do. You have been given a full indulgence by the church: whatever sins you commit in this duty shall be expunged upon your return.

SUGGESTED STARTING INTERACTIONS.

You have already endured a magical test to prove to the king's wizard that you are not trying to deceive them, but you want your allies to trust you. Try to bond with King Lorcan over your mutual disdain of the tieflings of Danor.

Share this information with the king and his council:

The Red Contessa stole a heretical text and has learned a blood ritual known as *bond of forced faith*. Willing allies or unwilling hostages share their life force with the caster, whose physical might is increased. Wounds dealt to the caster are instead distributed among those bonded to her, but she must remain within 250 feet of them. Drowning and other non-wounding subdual should still work, as would moving her far enough from those bonded to her.

CHARACTER GOAL.

Ensure the Red Contessa dies, preferably in fire. Recover or destroy the ritual she stole. Serve as a strong example of your faith, so that Risur might be more amenable to conversion.



Also in Your Backpack. Along with your other items, you carry a copy of the *Catalogue of Fiends of the Demonocracy*, a work said to be transcribed directly from the blasphemous utterings of Ashima-Shimtu, prisoner of the Crypta Hereticarum. Bound in silver and white leather. Just some light reading you brought along; no mechanical effect.



Amielle Latimer

Level 10 Tiefling Gunsmith

ABILITIES

STR 10 (+0)

DEX 18 (+4)

CON 10 (+0)

INT 14 (+2)

WIS 12 (+1)

CHA 16 (+3)

Chain
shirt

Saving Throws.

STR +4, DEX +4

Proficient Skills.

Acrobatics +8

Athletics +5

Deception +7

Engineering +6

Perception +5

Stealth +8

Combat.

You get two attacks per action, plus you can use a bonus action to attack with your off-hand weapon.

Melee.

Rapier +8 (1d8+4), or

Main-gauche (off-hand weapon) +8 (1d4)

Ranged.

Musket +10 (2d8+4, 60/180), or

Pistol +10 (1d10+4, 20/60), or

Grenade* (3d6 in 5-ft. radius; dex dc 12 negates. 20/60)

Courseur.

 You practice a daring form of athleticism.

Climbing doesn't halve your speed, and you use Dexterity for Athletics checks to climb or jump.

You only need a 5-ft. start for a running jump.

You can stand by spending only 5 ft. of movement.

When you Dash, difficult terrain doesn't slow you.

When you make a melee attack against an enemy, you don't provoke opportunity attacks from that creature for the rest of the turn.



Racial and Family Traits. As a Danoran tiefling of the Latimer line, you have some useful inborn qualities.

You have resistance to fire damage.

You are immune to curses.

Twice per day, when a foe deals you damage, as a reaction you may wrathfully ignite that creature. It takes 2d6 fire damage and catches on fire. Each round thereafter it takes another 2d6 fire damage. At the end of its turn the creature can make a DEX save (DC 15) to put out the fires, or it can spend an action to automatically stop the flames. This ability recharges if the damage kills the foe.

Gunplay. Your firearms are the first of their kind, which you crafted yourself. Some kinks remain to be worked out.

Whenever you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll with a firearm, the gun misfires – nothing happens, and the gun remains loaded. Clearing the barrel requires an action, and makes the gun safe to use. You can continue using a misfired gun without clearing the barrel, but attacks with the weapon have disadvantage, and if you roll a second natural 1, the weapon suffers a mishap and explodes: it is destroyed and deals its base damage die to you (2d8 for the musket, 1d10 for a pistol).

After you attack with a firearm, smoke fills your square and each adjacent square, providing concealment until dispersed.

Reloading a firearm requires either an action or bonus action; it entails pouring a charge of firedust into the barrel, loading a lead ball, and inserting a ramrod to pack the shot firmly.

Equipment. You wear a mithral jerkin you took from a Risuri soldier in the war, but otherwise your main items of equipment are all hand-crafted masterpieces from Danor, including your rapier and main-gauche, a flintlock musket, four flintlock pistols, a flintlock lighter, and cigars. You have more than enough ammunition and firedust powder to complete this adventure without needing to replenish your supply.

You carry two explosive fragmentation grenades.*

You wear an electrum ring engraved inside the band with the words "One Bullet Kill."

* SEE NEXT PAGE FOR GRENADE RULES



Background.

You graduated valedictorian from the prestigious martial academy *Jierre Sciens d'Arms*. In the Second War for the Yerasol Isles you earned medal after medal as your keen aim and hand-crafted musket felled dozens of Risuri soldiers. The war ended a year ago in Danor's favor, and you could have retired to a life of aristocracy.

But you know war is destructive for both sides, and you want to have children and not give them a dangerous world to inherit. You have joined with like-minded intellectuals of Danor in a secret society devoted to bringing Risur and Danor closer together.

Now you see your chance. In the Risuri city of Flint, for decades a witch coven has gathered atop the mountain known as Cauldron Hill, spreading fear and madness, abducting children, and raising the walking dead. Spies report that Risur's King Lorcan plans a massive assault to defeat them.

The Risuri see you only as an enemy. They fear that your nation's technology may supplant their magic, and that your enlightened reason will cast down their superstitious religion. But you must make them see you as an ally.

SUGGESTED STARTING INTERACTIONS.

You'll arrive on your steamship *Hinc ad Aeternitatem* shortly after everyone else begins discussing their plans. You'll need to convince them to let you help.

Share this information with the king and his council:

An astronomer colleague of yours has calculated that tonight's lunar eclipse will be in conjunction with the dark planet Nem, creating a strong surge of necromantic mana. At 10:37 PM, the focus of that power will align with the peak of Cauldron Hill, so any magic performed at that time will be greatly enhanced.

You know the Risuri think eclipses are bad omens, but they cannot let superstition cause them to hesitate. They must strike tonight, before the eclipse reaches its maximum. You have rushed on Danor's fastest ship to warn them while there's still time.

CHARACTER GOAL.

Earn the trust of the monarch of Risur, and make the first steps to introducing Danoran technological industry to this superstitious nation.



***Grenades.** When you throw a grenade, choose a creature or an unoccupied 5-ft. square. (If the creature occupies more than one 5-ft. square, choose one of the squares it occupies.) Make an attack roll against AC 10. If the attack misses, the grenade veers off course, missing by 5 ft. in a random direction, or 10 ft. if the target area was at long range. Each creature in a 5-ft. radius of where the grenade lands must succeed a DEX save (DC 12) or else take 3d6 bludgeoning and piercing damage.

If you targeted a creature and the attack roll is a critical hit, the grenade directly strikes that creature (or the creature of your choice, if there are multiple). The grenade does double damage to that creature without allowing a save. Other creatures in the area are affected normally.