



**ENsider Presents:**

# **Digging for Lies**

## **Part Two**

**A 5E-Compatible Adventure for 5th-Level Characters**



# Act Two: Mysteries of the Ancients

## Travel to the Ruins

### Exploration. Montage.

*The heroes trek through Risur's High Bayou.*

The PCs can take the train most of the way to the dig site, at the cost of 50 gp per person. The closest stop to the dig site is the city of Bole, which the PCs can reach within a day. From there it's a one-day trek through hills to the small town of Agate, and then another day through the High Bayou to the dig site.

If the PCs ask around in Agate and succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, people corroborate the broad details of Xambria's story. It was the talk of the town that a bunch of city folks got themselves killed in the High Bayou, and that the only survivor was a young woman. But that was nearly two months ago.

A result of 18 or higher on the Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that two weeks ago another group of outsiders came through in the night, equipped for monster hunting. They returned a few days later and placed an object in the back of a wagon for

## Rail Travel in Risur.

Trains in the ZEITGEIST setting had a slightly different genesis than in the real world. The first Danoran and Drakran innovators used a wider track gauge for their rail cars, so a track is typically 7 feet across (instead of the 4 feet 8½ inches on Earth). Wider railroads led to larger, albeit slower trains.

A typical train car anywhere on the continent of Lanjyr is 12 feet wide and 60 feet long, and most trains have 10 to 20 cars. A usual mix is one engine, one firegem car, one or two sleeper cars, one dining car, three to five passenger cars, and three to ten freight cars.

The PCs likely travel in sleeper cars, each of which has two luxury suites 9 feet wide by 30 long, with a 3-foot-wide hallway down the length.

Stretches of the railroad that pass through wilderness are usually lined with recently planted trees from which red flags hang. These serve as both appeasement and distraction for fey who might be tempted to sabotage the tracks.



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**OPEN GAME CONTENT**  
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transport. It was wrapped in cloth, about as large as a dinner table top, but much heavier than wood.

### High Bayou.

Read or paraphrase the following.

Dr. Xambria Meredith provided a detailed map and directions. In the town of Agate you acquire pole-boats and set out into the High Bayou, a landscape unlike anywhere else in the world.

Though trees and other plant-life poke out of the slow waters, the land beneath is not coastline but rolling hills. Streams from the Anthras Mountains snake down to the bayou, but instead of flowing freely they are trapped by berms of massive spider webs. The giant ground spiders of the High Bayou have coated huge swaths of terrain with their nests, made of silk much like beavers craft dams of wood.

You have to travel slowly to avoid the dangers of the swamp. Swarms of biting insects flock to the scent of blood, and pale crocodiles blend into the white, silk-coated hillocks that peek out of the waters. Cypress trees shelter you from the sun, but you have to navigate carefully to avoid drifting into titanic walls of web, as large as a hundred feet across, stretched between trees.

And the rain. Always the rain. It cuts visibility, soaks everything, and dulls your ears to the movements of predators. Sometimes, through the calls of birds and croaks of toads, you imagine you can hear a slithering whisper, indecipherable beneath the drone of the rain.

Have the party choose one PC to be in charge of following Xambria's maps and directions. They must succeed three DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) to get the party to the dig site. Each attempted check takes four hours of travel.

Additionally, every four hours in the swamp, each PC must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 1d4 points of damage from insect bites and fatigue. Also, every four hours have each PC make a DC 19 Wisdom (Perception check). If no PC succeeds, the party falls prey to an ambush monster. Let each PC propose a plan to mitigate the threat, and then make an appropriate skill check. Those who you deem don't have a good enough plan must handle an extra combat encounter.

Groups forced to fight in the high bayou can expect to deal with spiders and ettercaps, perhaps with crocodiles or bats as opportunists. The majority of terrain is shallow water, with some deep water, some hills coated with sticky webs, and walls of trapping silk stretched between trees. GMs should feel free to design their own combat encounters in the swamp to challenge their PCs as appropriate.

### Offering of Decay.

If the PCs think to provide an offering to the Voice of Rot, the fey titan said to sleep in the High Bayou, they can make a DC 18 Intelligence (Religion) check to come up with an appropriate offering. Such an offering would consist of an additional pole-boat, filled with 100 gp worth of livestock that have been slaughtered and left to rot. If the PCs bring the boat along with them for at least four hours, the native creatures of the bayou will not attack them.

### City of Bole.

Bole was capital of its own nation in ancient times and it still maintains its grandeur today. Historically rich from lumber and from fertile forest gardens cultivated with the aid of fey, in recent years it has boomed as a hub of trade.

The Barret Damworks (a network of mill dams and locks completed three decades ago) tamed several tributary rivers from the Anthras Mountains allowing the Great Delve river to flow smoothly westward all the way through Slate and on to Shale. The concurrent development of steamships fostered traffic of great barges traveling up and down the river while the railroad linked it to Flint.

Despite this Bole is an old, relaxed city in contrast to the booming speed of Flint. The streets weave lazily through a tangle of rolling hills, neighborhoods, and old thickets. Tourists are drawn to the theater district, which is home both to the local RHC headquarters and to several famous distilleries and breweries.

Bole's RHC office doesn't have much crime to worry about and mostly serves to resolve disputes between loggers and the forest fey. The headquarters lies close enough to the river for the noise of the lumber mills and their attendant logjam to keeps the local Chief Inspectress, a viperous half-elf named Shaiaila Lundquist, in a dour mood. Lundquist has a deep-seated respect for the fey and Unseen Court, and naturally assumes anyone from Flint would disagree with her.

Shaiaila has several theatrical posters hanging on the walls of her office, and a primitive phonograph in the corner is loaded with recordings of several famous opera singers. If the party visits, she offers them some whisky and beer, made just down the street.

### Town of Agate.

A town of barely two hundred people, Agate sits at the where the foothills of the Anthras Mountains meet the marshlands of the High Bayou. It mostly serves as a nexus for gem miners in the hills, as well as silk trappers who collect threads from huge spider nests in the swamp. A small cadre of veteran monster hunters guard the town from giant spiders and the eerie alligators that crawl from stream to stream amid the web-shrouded hills.

## The Ziggurat of Apet

### Exploration. Real-Time.

*The heroes examine the remains of the fallen expedition.*

As the PCs draw near the archeological site, they start to feel things going amiss. Characters proficient in Survival or Nature notice that small animals are acting oddly, and Skyseers experience a strange sense of dissonance.

The ziggurat has numerous traps and several areas where bestial creatures might attack them. If they reach the center of the ziggurat and aren't careful, they'll trigger a trap that forces them to flee in a hurry while dead guardians of the ruin try to kill them.

When the characters reach the site, read or paraphrase the following:





## Planar Madness.

Several aberrations in the adventure are so bizarre that they tax a character's sanity.

### Mind Strain.

The monsters of Gidim are foreign and horrifying. Creatures who view them struggle to grasp their precise location, and that uncertainty creeps into their minds, slowly eroding their sanity. Several monsters in this adventure can cause the disease Distant Madness.

### Distant Madness.

A creature afflicted by distant madness gains one form of short-term madness. While under the effects of short-term madness, the creature is vulnerable to psychic damage. If the creature is reduced to 0 hit points by psychic damage in this state, it gains a form of indefinite madness known as a mind scar.

### Mind Scar.

Mind scars reflect permanent insanities tied to the unhinging effect of Distant Madness. When a character obtains a mind scar, roll 1d6 to determine the general nature of the insanity.

1. **Phobia.** Irrational fear of a type of creature, object, or situation.
2. **Paranoia.** Irrational belief someone is trying to harm the PC.
3. **Hallucinations.** Seeing or hearing things that don't exist.
4. **Delusion.** Irrational belief in something untrue.
5. **Obsession.** Irrational desire to be near a creature, object, or situation.
6. **Compulsion.** Urge to take specific actions in irrational circumstances.

The specifics of the insanity are left up to the DM or players. Most of the time, a mind scar should serve as a role-playing hook. Occasionally, however, the GM may offer a bit of insane insight in exchange for forcing the character to take a detrimental action appropriate to their mind scar.

If the player accepts and the PC follows the desired course of action, the character can use the following power during the current encounter. If a player proposes a detrimental course of action appropriate to his insanity, the GM may also reward them with this power. A character cured of Distant Madness is also cured of any mind scars.

If a player willingly proposes a detrimental course of action appropriate to an acquired insanity, the GM may also reward him with the following power.

### Insane Insight

*Your allies thought you were acting crazy, but in that moment of self-peril, you saw reality from afar and understood your situation with an inhuman clarity.*

Once in the next 10 minutes you gain one of the following benefits:

- Take an additional action on your next turn.
- Treat an ability check, saving throw, or attack roll as if you had rolled a 19 on the die.
- Cast one spell without it using a spell slot or being expended.

A golden strip of fabric flutters in the rainy breeze. Woven around the trunk of a tree, it marks the first clear sign you're getting close to Xambria's dig site. Beyond in the distance you spy another golden marker, and far past it, hidden in the drizzle, perhaps a third.

A patch of land cleared of webs near the tree also sports a hitching post of sorts for your boats. You tie them up, then follow the trail a few hundred feet up a slight grade. The sparse trees of the swamp thicken to a tangle of greenery, studded with golden markers to show that civilization was once here.

Then before you the wall of trees open onto a vast flooded plain. A large stone ziggurat looms at the edge of your rain-obscured vision. Three tiers of aged stone, their ancient carvings all but dissolved by time, rise up out of the forest to a sixty-foot high peak.

Or is it farther? Sudden vertigo strikes you all, and for a moment you can't tell which is closer—the top tier of the ziggurat, or your own hand. But when you look back down the sensation passes. You spot the remains of a camp site ahead, right beside the ruin's entrance. Three limp humanoid figures lie amid toppled tents and archaeological supplies.

Just beyond the camp and the remains of the dead, a fifteen foot high mouth yawns open in the stone side of the ziggurat's first tier. Vines that once hid it have been hacked away, and somewhere inside the ancient ruin, faint light glows.

## Background.

These hills were once dry and full of caves. The golden legion of Egal the Shimmering found a path to this world through the plane of Apet, but Ancient heroes sealed that plane. The invaders abandoned Apet, and the Ancients built a small mound over the seal. A small camp defended the mound for a decade until the Axis Seal ritual was completed.

Soon thereafter, forces from Gidim entered the world and attacked the Apet seal, hoping to discover how to undo the Axis Seal. The guardians of the seal barely fended off the attackers, but by the time they could alert their allies to alter the Axis Seal to cut off Apet entirely, the invaders from Gidim had killed most of the leaders of the Ancients.

After the remaining Gidim were killed, the three guardians of the ziggurat of Apet built improved defenses and traps, then had themselves mummified and entombed upon death.

Several thousand years later, Xambria discovered the tomb. With great caution she and her team bypassed the traps, solved the puzzle of the rainbow bridge, and reached the golden seal. Soon thereafter specialists sent by Caius Bergeron carefully opened the seal, but a panicked digger damaged a ward. Monsters trapped in a timeless void beyond the seal killed everyone within except Xambria.

Xambria fled, and Caius sent another team who were prepared to fight monsters. They used the journals of Xambria's dead team to reach the seal safely. Using magic more powerful than that which the PCs have access to, they avoided triggering the final trap. Then they removed the actual golden plate itself and brought it back to Flint in relative secrecy.



### Environmental Effects.

Several conditions are pervasive around the ziggurat.

### Mind Strain.

When the adventurers see the ziggurat they may contract Distant Madness. Saving throws for this should be made in secret if at all possible. A PC already affected by the disease makes an additional saving throw as though another day had passed. Keep rough track of how long the PCs take. Every half hour they remain within 100 feet of the ziggurat, repeat this effect.

### Bad Omens.

Spirit Mediums who enter the campsite see a quick vision of three researchers clasp their heads as if in pain, and then collapsing. They died too long ago to speak with their spirits, but the traumatic nature of their deaths has left an impression in the area. As the mediums encounter more bodies within the ziggurat, they'll sense similar deaths.

Skyseers feel constantly as if they are on the verge of receiving a vision, though they have not stared at the night sky. If they look upward, they feel as though worms are crawling inside their heads. Once they enter the ziggurat, they recognize the energy here as matching that of the planet Apet, as well as something else they've never sensed before in the sky.

### Hallucinations.

The residual influence of Apet affects PCs' minds while they remain within the ziggurat, which they experience as fear-inspiring hallucinations. Each PC should experience at least one hallucination that is personalized to them at some point before they reach the portal to Apet.

These hallucinations should involve the PC thinking he's someplace else, or seeing someone far away, but who is somehow closely linked to the PC. A docker, for instance, might think he's on a stage, surrounded by a crowd. It should not be obvious to the characters whether they're hallucinating, or if they're actually seeing or traveling somewhere else.

### Investigating the Scene.

Three bodies—two men, one woman, all humans—lie dead in the camp outside the ziggurat. They died while sitting, eating, and working near the campfire and a small folding table. Even without approaching, characters might notice how odd it is that none of the bodies of the dig team have been cocooned, eaten, or carried off.

The bodies have been decaying in the heat and rain for at least a week by the time that PCs reach them, and so are well decomposed. Examination with a DC 8 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals no sign of wounds or trauma, but an autopsy and DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check detects strange tumor-like bulges within each of the corpses. They all died from the psychic blast that the seal unleashed.

More noteworthy, however, is that the bodies have already been examined. PCs who check out the bodies can tell automatically that the bodies have been shifted about, and that their clothes were rifled through.

The campsite has a good amount of mundane gear, including rope, climbing kits, hooded lanterns, and thieves' tools. There are also several journals, logs, and other notebooks, most of them carelessly tossed onto the ground. These contain no useful information. Two weeks ago, the follow-up team sent by Caius sorted through this campsite and removed anything useful.

## Ziggurat Interior

### Various Encounters.

*The characters delve the ziggurat in the face of obvious warnings of danger.*

Unless otherwise noted, interior walls of the ziggurat are weathered stone with barely visible carvings. There is light in Areas 1 and 7, but nowhere else.

### 1. Entrance.

When the PCs enter the ziggurat, read or paraphrase the following:

A pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone is prominent above the entrance to the ziggurat. A dot lies on the sixth ring from the interior.

You have to marvel at the Ancients who built this place. While the ziggurat rose sixty feet above the ground, you descend what feels like fifty feet down rough stone stairs, to a room forty feet across, with a twenty foot ceiling adorned carvings. Stone amulets on golden chains hang from the carved mouths of jaguars and dragons all along the ceiling.

Two more bodies lie sprawled on the floor of this entry room, a man and a halfling woman. A toppled wooden tripod leans against one wall near the base of the stairs, and a cracked amber lantern on top of it emits dim but endless magical light. The light gleams off metal in alcoves along the walls, and a second glance reveals three tusked humanoid faces, their eyes closed, blindly watching all who enter.

When you glance back, you realize the stairs you came down were only ten feet long.

A DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies the entrance symbol as matching the star system. The sixth ring would correspond with Apet.

The two corpses here were more of Xambria's students, managed to flee this far before the monsters caught them. They show actual physical wounds of claws and necrotic burns.

The faces belong to the orc mummies who guard the ziggurat. They were preserved in bog acid thousands of years ago, and then placed standing in alcoves. Ropes lash their bodies to the stone, and golden bracelets marked them as great warriors. Close examination reveals that the hands of one mummy appeared to have been holding a sword, now missing. Another held a staff crossed over its chest. The third wore a necklace. All three were jostled a bit to remove the relics, which eventually found their way to Flint.

A note nailed to the wall reads, in Xambria's handwriting, "The mummies are worth more than all your tuition. Don't touch them."



# Ziggurat of Apet

The map shows a complex layout of rooms and corridors. Room 1 is a large central hall with a red door and a yellow light. Room 2 is a small room with a green door. Room 3 is a room with a red door. Room 4 is a room with a green door. Room 5 is a room with a red door. Room 6 is a room with a green door. Room 7 is a room with a red door. Room 8 is a room with a green door. Room 9 is a room with a red door. Room 10 is a room with a green door. The map also includes several traps (T) and treasure (gold coins). A red door is located in room 1. A yellow light is located in room 1. A green door is located in room 2. A red door is located in room 3. A green door is located in room 4. A red door is located in room 5. A green door is located in room 6. A red door is located in room 7. A green door is located in room 8. A red door is located in room 9. A green door is located in room 10. The map also includes several traps (T) and treasure (gold coins). A red door is located in room 1. A yellow light is located in room 1. A green door is located in room 2. A red door is located in room 3. A green door is located in room 4. A red door is located in room 5. A green door is located in room 6. A red door is located in room 7. A green door is located in room 8. A red door is located in room 9. A green door is located in room 10.

One square equals 5ft.

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C



These mummies—as well as others throughout the complex—are destined to rise after the PCs trigger the ziggurat's final trap (see Serpent Pillars on page 13). However, until then they are harmless. Particularly paranoid PCs might destroy the mummies the first chance they get. If they completely destroy the mummies, remove them from the final encounter. Burning or determined hacking works, though each mummy takes at least 5 rounds to destroy. Simply hitting the mummy a few times has no effect.

Carvings on the walls depict a humanoid figure struck by a beam of fire and then burning. The beam came from some object that was set into the wall. Now only an empty rectangular nook, about a foot around, remains. It once held a small golden replica of the seal, but was taken by Caius's second team.

Two hallways lead away from this room. Though they're actually fairly short, characters passing through them feel like they're much longer, like their sense of time and space are being stretched out.

## 2. Spear Traps and Mummies.

Spear traps are scattered throughout the ziggurat. As the PCs approach the first of these traps they spot a lank mummy wearing a gold necklace. The inert corpse hangs from a wooden spear that has impaled it from behind.

The spear traps are not mechanical. Each hides a small cubby in the wall, where a mummy waits. Normally they just thrust their spears at passers-by, but when the final trap in Area 10 is triggered, the cubbies grind open and the mummies emerge. The mummy the PCs spot was, a few thousand years ago, a tomb-robber who fell victim to one of these traps. Now he has joined the ranks of the dead that guard the ziggurat. A DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check spots a seam in the stone that can be pried open to reveal the mummy within (see page 14), which immediately attacks. Otherwise the hidden mummy attacks with its spear whenever a creature that is taller than 4 feet and not ducking walks within reach. Creature that ask permission to pass in the Ancient language are not attacked.

## 3. Fire Burst Traps.

Two pillars in the hall explode into flame when any creature draws near.

By making a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, PCs notice the familiar pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone that marks two spots, one just before and one just after each pillar (marked with red dots on the map). A dot lies on the innermost ring. A DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies that this symbol corresponds with Jiese, the Plane of Fire, which is closest to the sun.

PCs with a result of 17 or more on their Wisdom (Perception) check notice a 10-foot pole leaning against the wall beside the symbol, a convenient 10 feet from the pillar. All but the last foot of the staff is blackened by fire. On the ground beneath the symbol sit several torches, oil, flint, and steel.

### Fire Burst Trap.

This trap is activated when an intruder steps near a pillar with a prominent ring symbol a few feet above the ground. The DC is 17 to spot the faint scorch marks on the floor nearby. A spell or other

effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals auras of divination and evocation magic around the pillar. The trap activates when a creature is adjacent to it, bursting with fire for 5 minutes (after which it goes inert for 1 hour). All creatures and objects within 10 feet of a pillar must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Pressing fire against the ring symbol by reaching in with a torch or attacking it with a fire spell suppresses the trap for 5 minutes. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 15) cast on the flame statue suppresses the trap's enchantment for 5d10 rounds.

### Mine Bypass.

Xambria's team dug a tunnel from the pillar trap in the southeast. They hoped to find a way to avoid the crushing force trap in Area 4, but to their dismay found another fire pillar trap at the end of their tunnel. This just provides an alternate route for the PCs.

## 4. Crushing Force Trap.

A powerful force crushes any creature that enters as if pressed beneath tons of stone.

By making a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, PCs notice the familiar pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone decorates the floor up at three points near the edges of the trap (marked with yellow dots on the map). A dot lies on the fifth ring from the interior. A DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies this symbol corresponds with Urim, the Plane of Earth, which is fifth from the sun. A PC that has a result of 16 or higher the check notices, tiny shards of rock lie scattered all over the floor, as if a small boulder was crushed to pieces.

### Crushing Force Trap.

A ring symbol marks the center of this trap and above it waits an enchantment. The DC is 18 to spot the ring symbol. When this trap is triggered by a creature stepping beneath it, crushing force is unleashed downward throughout the room. Creatures starting their turn in or entering the area make a DC 20 Strength saving throw, taking 2d6 damage and falling prone on a failure. The crushing force continues until a stone weighting at least 20 pounds is placed on the ring symbol, suppressing the trap for 5 minutes.

## 5. Hall of Needles.

When the characters enter this hall, read or paraphrase the following.

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Wall carvings of this long hallway feature rows of orc, goblin, and minotaur soldiers wielding spears and obsidian blades against an army of horned humans with swords of gold.

A human body lies face-down in the hall, several weeks rotted.

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The hall is warded with three hail of needles traps. The needles are magical conjurations. The trap never runs out of needles, and all needles fade away after five minutes.

By making a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, PCs notice the familiar pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone decorates the floor up at three points near the edges





of the trap (marked with yellow dots on the map). A dot lies on the fifth ring from the interior. A DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies this symbol corresponds with Avilona, the Plane of Air, which is second from the sun. A result of 18 or higher on the Wisdom (Perception) check reveals tiny pinholes among the wall carvings, and that the floor looks like it could give.

A hail of needles trap is activated when an intruder steps on a hidden pressure plate. With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a character can deduce the presence of the pressure plate from variations in the mortar and stone used to create it, compared to the surrounding floor. Wedging an iron spike or other object under the pressure plate prevents the trap from activating. Blowing through a reed or similar pipe aimed at the ring symbol suppresses the trap for five minutes. The trap activates when more than 20 pounds of weight is placed on the pressure plate, releasing four extremely sharp darts. Each of the four sharp darts makes a ranged attack with a +8 bonus against a random target within 10 feet of the pressure plate (vision is irrelevant to this attack roll). (If there are no targets in the area, the darts don't hit anything.) A target that is hit takes 7 (3d4) piercing damage. The trapped area can be leapt over with a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check.

## 6. Hallucinatory Floor Room.

- 2 eyes of madness
- 8 crawling spikers
- Hallucinatory floor trap
- 8 spear traps

When the PCs enter the room, read or paraphrase the following.

Aberrations like those you witnessed at the arms fair have claimed this room as their home. Two fleshy orbs covered with dozens of eyes float a few feet above the ground. Other creatures crawl along the walls and ceiling like massive spiders, except they have only four legs, and long barbed tongues protrude from their mouths. Their forms all waver from solid to translucent.

The aberrant creatures in the room are obvious, but the greater danger of the room is the sliding floor trap. It activates when one of the PCs first goes halfway across the room. At this point thick walls of vines grow across the doorways, blocking the entrance and exit. Any PCs adjacent to the doorway can make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to jump to the other side as a reaction before being sealed in or out. Then the floor starts retracting into the wall.

An actual sliding floor was far beyond the Ancients' engineering talents. This trap is an illusion, intended to drive intruders to the spear traps along the walls.

### Tactics.

The monsters believe the illusionary trap is real. The eyes of madness use their eye beams, and try to goad one or two targets to enter their *paranoia* auras, or into the pit or spear traps. The crawling spikers simply try to drag prey away to feast on them.

### Terrain.

The vine walls blocking the exits have 25 hit points per square and AC 8. The ceiling here is 15 feet high.

By making a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, PCs notice the familiar pattern of seven concentric rings surrounding a central white stone decorates the floor up at three points near the edges of the trap (marked with yellow dots on the map). A dot lies on the fifth ring from the interior. A DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies this symbol corresponds with Av, the Plane of Dreams, which is the moon of this world. This world is third from the sun. A result of 18 or higher on the Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a seam running down the center of the room, north to south

### Sliding Floor Trap.

The sliding floor trap is a unique illusion capable of dealing psychic damage. On the trap's turn, every creature on the floor slides 5 feet toward either the east or west wall, whichever is nearest. If there is no free space for the creature to enter, it remains in place.

Any creature pressed into an area adjacent to either wall triggers a spear trap, if the trap has not already gone off.

On the trap's first turn, a 10-foot wide strip running north to south in the middle of the room pulls apart over an apparent bottomless pit. Each round thereafter, the strip extends outward 5 feet to the east, and 5 feet to the west.

A creature that cannot slide and is stuck over the pit, or who moves or is moved over the pit, hallucinates that it falls. Other creatures see the same hallucination. It can make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to "grab onto the ledge" and hang on. Otherwise the creature falls prone and takes 1d6 psychic damage each round until it falls unconscious. The creature can act as normal, but it believes it is hundreds of feet away from the battle

Once the floor has retracted into the wall, the floor moves back out into the room at a rate of 5 feet per turn until the pit is again covered. At this point the vine doors open up. The trap does not trigger again for 5 minutes.

**Trap Countermeasures:** A creature that tries to disbelieve the trap can spend a bonus action once per round to make a DC 8 Wisdom saving throw. If successful, the trap no longer affects the creature, even if it later resets. If an allied creature has already successfully disbelieved and acts in a way that shows it's just an illusion, the creature has advantage on its saving throw.

Although wildly unlikely, if someone places a flower on the ring icon in the center of the room's floor, the trap is deactivated for 5 minutes.

A DC 18 Dexterity (thieves' tools) or Intelligence (Arcana) check can modify the trap so that it does not open on its next turn once its locus is located with a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

The walls have enough decorations that climbing is feasible with a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. Simply holding on requires a DC 8 Strength (Athletics) check and a creature has advantage if it sticks to spaces either adjacent to the vine barrier, or where spear traps have already triggered, since they offer good hand-holds.



**Crawling Spiker**

Medium aberration (thoughtform), unaligned

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 15 (2d8+6)**Speed** 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 12 (+1) | 15 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 3 (-4) | 12 (+1) | 11 (+0) |

**Saving Throws** Wis +2, Cha +2**Skills** Acrobatics +4, Athletics +3, Stealth +4**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)**ACTIONS****Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.**Harpoon Tongue.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage and the target is grappled. At the end of its turn, the crawling spiker drags a grappled target 10 feet closer to it if the target fails an opposed Strength (Athletics) check.**Eye of Madness**

Medium aberration (thoughtform), unaligned

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 39 (6d8+12)**Speed** 5 ft., fly 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 15 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 15 (+2) | 2 (-4) | 16 (+3) | 17 (+3) |

**Saving Throws** Wis +5, Cha +5**Skills** Perception +10**Condition Immunities** prone**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)**All-Around Vision.** The eye of madness can simultaneously look in every direction and has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.**Paranoia Aura.** Creatures that end their turn within 10 feet of the eye of madness make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature moves toward a target of the eye of madness' choice. This movement does not require the creature's reaction and the eye of madness cannot make the creature enter any sort of hazardous terrain using this feature.**ACTIONS****Burst of Terror (Recharge 6).** The eye of madness emits a burst of psychic energy. Living creatures within 5 feet of the eye of madness make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or take 14 (4d6) psychic damage and contract Distant Madness (see page 4).**Eye Beam.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/300 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) force damage and the target makes a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or is overwhelmed with visions of dark waking nightmares tailored to its psyche, taking 7 (2d6) psychic damage.**Thoughtform.**

Creatures with this subtype are similar to incorporeal creatures.

Thoughtform creatures are immune to all nonmagical attacks, and are resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks and damage from spells and other magical effects. Thoughtform creatures take normal damage from psychic attacks.

Also, they ignore difficult terrain and can move through obstacles and other creatures, but they must end their movement in an unoccupied space.

Under certain conditions, some thoughtform creatures can lose the benefits of thoughtform (see "Mind Over Matter" below). If a thoughtform creature would be stunned or paralyzed, it instead becomes corporeal until the end of the attacker's next turn, losing its Insubstantial Movement Trait. A Spirit Medium automatically understands how thoughtform works.

**Mind Over Matter.**The Ancients learned to fight the warbeasts of the Gidim by wielding thought as a weapon. The PCs are unlikely to try *thinking at* their enemies in their first encounter, but they have a chance to learn this technique from certain sources later in the adventure.

A PC within 30 feet of any creature with the Thoughtform subtype can try to influence the creature with its thoughts as a bonus action. The PC makes a DC 10 Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check. On a success, the PC forces the thoughtform creature to make either a Dexterity, Constitution, or Wisdom saving throw (PC's choice).

- **Dexterity.** On a failed save, the thoughtform creature must use its speed to move up to 10 feet in a direction of the PC's choice.
- **Constitution.** On a failed save, the thoughtform creature loses its incorporeal trait until the start of the PC's next turn. If it's flying, it must land on its turn or fall.
- **Wisdom.** On a failed save, the PC is invisible to the thoughtform creature until the start of the PC's next turn.

**7. Rainbow Bridges.**

The Ancients constructed this room as a puzzle to keep outsiders away. Normally an elaborate ritual performed by priests would solve the "puzzle" and open the exit into the map room (Area 8). From there, the priests could deactivate the defenses of the ziggurat. Unfortunately, the second team sent by Caius Bergeron removed the control stone, so the ruin's defenses cannot be turned off.

Monsters freed from the seal have taken up residency in this room, turning a puzzle into a death trap. Worse, the dimensional magic of the ziggurat makes it impossible to leave the chamber until the puzzle is solved. PCs trying to go down the hallway back to the ziggurat's entrance feel like they're moving but the distance back to area 1 is effectively infinite. No matter how far they go the moment they turn around this room is mere steps away.

- 2 flashing orbs
- 2 mutated centipedes
- 8 implanters



When the PCs enter this room, read or paraphrase the following:

A leathery curtain blocks your view of the next room, but a slowly shifting spectrum of light peeks through on the floor. When you step through, it takes only a single step, but when you look back the previous hall seems miles away.

Within, most of the vast room before you has no floor. A brief plateau of stone stretches fifteen feet before dropping away perilously. A chasm in the center of the chamber separates you from several other plateaus around the room's edge. On the far side you spot a doorway out, but the path is blocked by six dull veils of colored light.

Two wooden stands on the entrance plateau hold a pair of large white stones, marked with paint, one blue and one orange. The paint is recent, covering a faded symbol of seven concentric circles. You can spot two similar stands and stones on other plateaus.

If you look down, a rough sea of stone spikes stare back at you from the floor, thirty feet down.

The base of the pit has flooded with marsh water, and something moves down there. The horrid things might once have been centipedes, but they have grown massive and tumorous.

A new light flares from one of the far plateaus, and a pair of flashing orbs begin to float toward you, their light screaming through all of your senses. Below you, the centipedes begin to crawl upward.

The puzzle consists of a series of walls and bridges of force, colored red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet. To reach the exit, you must drop the walls one by one. When the puzzle starts, all the bridges are down, and the walls are up.

The bridges and walls are tied to stones throughout the room, which Xambria's team marked with paint to make it easier for them to keep track of which was which. Touching a stone turns on any walls and bridges of that color that aren't already on, and turns off all the walls and bridges of an opposing color (see below). Touching the same stone twice in a row does not "toggle" the colors; if you want to switch back and forth with blue and orange, you have to take turns tapping each stone. To determine the effects of the stones, consult the following table.

| Crystal | Activates | Deactivates | Planetary Correspondence |
|---------|-----------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Red     | Red       | Green       | Jiese, Plane of Fire     |
| Orange  | Orange    | Blue        | Avilona, Plane of Air    |
| Yellow  | Yellow    | Violet      | Urim, Plane of Earth     |
| Green   | Green     | Red         | Av, Plane of Dreams      |
| Blue    | Blue      | Orange      | Mavisha, Plane of Water  |
| Violet  | Violet    | Yellow      | Nem, Plane of Ruin       |

The puzzle solution requires teamwork, and at least four PCs working together. If you have fewer than four PCs, they'll need to make use of flight, teleportation, or simple jumping. Or you can let the six walls in the center of the room stay deactivated once the PCs touch the appropriate stone, instead of toggling up and down.

The puzzle resets after five minutes of no activity.

## Tactics.

The monsters here were either native bayou creatures mutated when Gidim warbeasts fused with them, or are free-floating thoughtforms attracted by the light. They do not coordinate attacks, and seek only to feed on the first sentient thoughts to arrive in weeks.

The mutated centipedes and six of the implanters begin in the pit. Four of the implanters managed to get themselves trapped behind the yellow light veil, and will fly out when the veil goes down. The flashing orbs hide amid the veils of light and are revealed only with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check.

## Terrain.

The lower level of the room is 30 feet deep (3d6 falling damage). Additionally any creature that falls is attacked by the spikes at the bottom. A spike has a +7 bonus to hit and deals 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage. Each character who falls into the pit is attacked by 1d4 spikes.

If a character makes it through the puzzle and presses the white stone on the floor by the exit, all the bridges activate and all the walls deactivate. A bright white flashes, and any remaining monsters are knocked unconscious. The creature who presses the stone witnesses The Sealing of Apet vision, below.

### Flashing Orb

Large aberration (thoughtform), unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 44 (8d8+8)

Speed fly 20 ft. (hover)

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 2 (-4) | 13 (+1) | 6 (-2) |

Saving Throws Wis +3, Cha +0

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

**Vicarious Strike.** After successfully grappling a creature, the next time the flashing orb takes damage before the end of its next turn, the grappled target takes 1d6 points of damage of the same damage type. Until the end of its next turn, the flashing orb loses its thoughtform type features.

### ACTIONS

**Tentacle of Light.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

**Chaos Storm (Recharge 6).** As an action, the flashing orb conjures forth a storm of memories and sensations made reality within 100 feet. The storm has a 5-foot radius and lasts 1 round. All creatures within the area make DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) points of random damage. Roll 1d6 and consult the table to see what damage is taken:

|         |              |             |
|---------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Acid | 3. Fire      | 5. Necrotic |
| 2. Cold | 4. Lightning | 6. Force    |

**Implanter****Small aberration (thoughtform), unaligned****Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 13 (2d8+4)**Speed** 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

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

**Saving Throws** Wis +3, Cha +2**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Stealth +7**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11**Languages** Common**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Death Burst.** Upon successfully implanting an idea into a target, an implanter explodes in a flurry of psychic energy instantly killing itself. All creatures within 5 feet of the implanter take 3 (1d6) force damage. A successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw halves this damage.

**Implant.** When attached to a target, the implanter implants an idea at the beginning of its turn. The target is immediately affected by the Distant Madness disease (see page 4). If already infected with the disease, the disease is considered to take effect immediately and the target must make another save as though an additional day had passed.

**ACTIONS**

**OVIPositor.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* The implanter grabs the target and attempts to burrow into its ear to insert dark thoughts directly into the victim's mind. The implanter's AC becomes 12, but it has advantage on checks maintain its grapple. An attached implanter can be attacked normally.

**Mutated Centipede****Medium beast, unaligned****Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 34 (4d8+16)**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 13 (+1) | 17 (+3) | 18 (+4) | 1 (-5) | 14 (+2) | 6 (-2) |

**Skills** Athletics +3, Perception +4, Stealth +7**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, prone**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)**ACTIONS**

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 10 (3d6) poison damage and gain the poisoned condition until this poison damage is healed.

**REACTIONS**

**Teleporting Retreat.** When an attack that the mutated centipede can see hits it with an attack, it can use its reaction to teleport up to 30 feet to a space it can see, halving the attack's damage against it.

**The Sealing of Apet.**

A character who finishes the solution of the rainbow bridge puzzle is briefly flooded with light, during which he experiences a vision of the three mummified guardians of the ziggurat, back when they were alive, at the sealing of the portal to Apet.

The three orcs, dressed in primitive hides and armed with their iconic relics – staff, sword, and amulet – stand in a bare cave surrounded by semi-translucent creatures similar to the tentacled monsters the PCs have recently encountered. They form a blockade in front of a golden plate set in the wall, and the monsters hesitate to attack.

The sword wielder barks something in his Ancient language, and the PC understands his words: “Warbeasts of Gidim! Toteth’s seal failed.”

“A trick,” growls the amulet-wearer. “They’re from Gidim, but I smell the dust of Apet on them.”

“Sniff them later,” says the sword wielder. “Think at them so I can cut them.”

The staff wielder closes his eyes as if in meditation. One of the monsters nearest the sword-wielder turns solid, and the warrior hews it in two with his obsidian-edged greatsword.

The PC gains the ability to speak and understand Ancient (a benefit which is, honestly, pretty useless until much much later in the campaign), and also learns that he can focus his thoughts to influence creatures of Gidim, as detailed on page 9 (thoughtform creature type).

**8. Map Room.**

When the characters enter this room, read or paraphrase the following:

The room is dominated by a large stone map on the floor. Above the map, a brass fixture hangs from the ceiling. Ropes support a brass plate which holds a white stone. From that plate, another larger plate hangs, also suspended by the ropes. Finally the ropes stretch down to the floor, where they’re looped through brass rings at the edges of the map.

The brass plates appear ancient, but strange modern contraptions of steel are attached to them, with complex gears and notches, like something you’d use to calibrate a scale.

A large icon of seven concentric circles is carved into the west wall. Tiny nooks sit in the wall intersecting each circle, but they’re empty.

The floor map depicts the continent of Lanjyr as it was during the time of the Ancients. While vaguely familiar, major natural and magical disasters have since reshaped the land. Most notably the Yerasol Archipelago is a solid landmass that connects modern day Risur to Danor. Many other borders of land and sea have also shifted.

The bronze fixture above the map consists of several parts. Four ropes loop through a ring in the ceiling. The ropes pass through modern contraptions, a sort of clamp crossed with a belay. The clamps hold the top brass disk, which has a slot in the center that contains a white stone. Further down the ropes, a second set of clamp-belay contraptions hold a second brass plate in place. Finally the ropes loop through rings on the floor.





The lower plate has two holes in it. The white stone in the top plate is the same variety seen in the concentric ring designs throughout the ziggurat. A character who succeeds a DC 13 Intelligence (History) check recalls that the Ancients used white stones to represent the sun in their iconography.

The intent of the apparatus is to use a magic *light* spell on the white stone, or otherwise place a light source there. Once they have done that, the light shines through the two holes in the disk, and drops two points of light on the map that correspond with this ziggurat, and the ziggurat of Mavisha.

The secretive Ancients wanted allies to be able to find other ziggurats, but left clues to the locations of only a few, in hopes that, if enemies succeeded in breaching this ziggurat, they would still have to face other defenders to find the location of all the seals.

Xambria's team used the more modern contraptions because the original ropes and wooden loops had decayed, so they had to try a variety of heights and positions to find the correct alignment. It's fine now, and all the PCs have to do is provide a light source.

There is no requirement that the PCs solve this puzzle. The PCs can follow other clues to find Caius's second team as they work to open the sunken seal of Mavisha.

### Control Stone.

The star system icon on the west wall was originally used to disable the traps throughout the ziggurat. Colored stones could be placed in nooks to turn on or off traps affiliated with specific planes. Caius's second team took the stones with them.

### Mine Bypass.

Xambria's team dug through the wall in Area 9 to reach this room, so they wouldn't have to solve the puzzle in Area 7 every time they wanted to come in.

### 9. False Seal Room.

When the PCs enter this room, read or paraphrase the following:

The walls of the room feature more mural carvings that depict orc in elaborate head-dresses performing a ritual beneath a sun and seven planets. Everything in the murals draws attention to a six-foot high rectangular indentation in the west wall. Both the huge indentation and smaller nooks in the walls sit empty, but dust within them suggests their contents were removed relatively recently.

Another concentric ring icon sits on the floor in the center of the room. On this one, the fourth ring is marked.

A DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies that the symbol represents Mavisha, the plane of water, which is the fourth planet from the sun. If the PCs place a bowl filled with water on top of the icon, they'll disable the toxic flood portion of the Final Trap (see page 13).

This room once held the false seal that Ancients created to fool potential raiders, as well as magic weapons and other relics. Caius's second team removed the false seal, and placed it in true seal's place in Area 10.

### 10. The Portal to Nothing.

The entrance to this room was originally a hidden door, but Xambria's team dug through. Now the door sits open. When the PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following.

Iron poles jammed into a primitive stone mechanism hold open a secret door. On the floor just inside the threshold, someone placed an ironic rug woven with the word "Welcome." A pair of dead bodies lie just past it.

The room beyond does not look like it should belong in a swamp. Dry gray stone, roughly cut apart by primitive tools, stretches away in the dark. Your light gleams faintly on something golden at the far end of this cave.

As your eyes adjust, you spot five more bodies on the floor near that golden gleam. Two are humans, three are tieflings. Their bodies have sprouted additional eyes, tentacles, and small vestigial limbs. One of the bodies lies fallen across a circle of symbols drawn on the ground, with an empty brazier nearby. The circle intersects the wall, and it would have formed a protective ward, but it looks damaged and broken.

In the far corners of the room, two stone pillars are carved to look like coiled feathered serpents. Between them, set in that far wall, is the source of the reflection: a plate of gold that must weigh a ton. The plate is carved with a scene of orcs, minotaurs, and goblins battling beneath a constellation of stars.

This was once the resting place of the true seal. A DC 17 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes the constellation on the seal as the Alesia the Wayfarer, said to influence the planet Apet, which affects teleportation and divination magic.



The two bodies by the door were some of Xambria's team, mangled by Gidim warbeasts. The bodies at the center of the room are the remains of the Obscurati group who opened the seal. Like the bodies outside the ziggurat, they have been disturbed and their possessions searched.

Characters who examine the ritual around the golden seal and succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check realize that there were actually two rituals. The first was a warding circle, meant to hold back creatures. The second was intended to suppress a powerful abjuration magic.

### Obscurati Trick

The seal in at the back of the room is actually the false seal from Area 9, though Caius's second team placed it in the true seal's location. They suspected others might come to investigation the ziggurat, and they wanted to cover their tracks. The rug just inside the room covers a concentric ring icon, on which the outermost ring is marked, representing Nem, the plane of ruin.

When Xambria's team breached this room, they carefully studied the Nem symbol until they figured out how to disarm it. Placing an orc skull on the icon (don't ask where they got the skull) disarmed the Dead Rising portion of the Final Trap.

Caius's second team, using journals from the camp as guidance, figured out how the trap worked, placed a rug to cover the symbol, and hoped other interlopers would be careless enough to go up to the seal and trigger the Final Trap.

The false seal is just granite covered in a thin layer of gold. A character might notice cracks in the gold coating with a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check when within 10 feet (made with advantage if within 5 feet). It does not radiate magic. The whole block of stone weighs about three hundred pounds.

### Beyond the Seal.

If a character moves the false seal, he reveals a portal to nothing. Prior to the creation of the Axis Seal, the portal led to the plane of Apet, however now that the Axis Seal has closed off the planes, the portal leads to a void between the planes. There is no light, no matter, and no gravity in the void, though it has invisible edges and only is about a hundred feet across.

A human body floats in the void. Its face was torn off by some Gidim beast, but it has not rotted at all.

### Serpent Pillars.

The pillars with the feathered serpents are part of the ziggurat's final trap. A DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check indicates that they are enchanted with some sort of defensive magic. A DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that the serpents' eyes seem to follow whichever creature is closest to the seal.

If any creature crosses between the serpent pillars, the Final Trap is triggered. This trap is subtle, so the party might continue to explore the room and search for clues as their doom approaches.

## Skyseer Vision of Apet.

Though the Axis Seal prevents creatures from physically traveling from Apet, the plane's power pours invisibly through the portal in this room. When a Skyseer sees the false seal, she instantly senses that it is not really sealing anything, because she can feel Apet's intense energy.

If you have personalized character plots, now is an excellent time for a skyseer PC to witness events anywhere in the world to provide clues or drive those plots forward. In addition, a Skyseer has the following vision, which alludes to events in the last five adventures.

The planet Apet drifts through the stars. You see it closer than ever: an orb of swirling gray clouds, and around it the silvery ring of the plane Reida. When skyseers peer into the heavens, they believe this ring shows the past and future.

But the ring is incomplete. An arc has been snapped out of the circle. Your own reflection on its surface stands mere feet from the end of time.

You step into your reflection, stand upon the edge of the ring. Cracked shards of icy silver crunch under your feet. You can look down and see the endless dust storms of Apet, look out and see the heavens wheeling about you. And when you look forward, thousands of miles away, you can see the other end of the snapped ring. If you looked long enough, you could see the dawn of history.

## The Final Trap

### Action. Tactical.

*The party flees deadly waters while the dead try to drag them to their deaths.*

When you decide it is time to activate the final trap, read or paraphrase the following:

You hear a faint trickling sound coming from the door. Some dark fluid is slowly pouring into the room, just an inch deep now, but swelling to ankle deep with an alarming speed. As the fluid crosses the threshold it carries away the rug, revealing a glowing icon of concentric rings beneath.

At the same time, the corpses on the ground twitch, open their eyes, and fix them on you.

This encounter takes up the entire ziggurat, and does not end until the PCs escape. The constant factor of the encounter is the toxic flood trap. Flowing 4 squares in all directions each round, the flood fills the ziggurat knee deep in less than two minutes, and then completely overflows it within five.

### Toxic Flood Trap.

Dark green waters pour through the halls, growing deeper by the moment. On the first round after being activated, the toxic flood fills every space in Area 9. These areas are ankle-deep.

At the beginning of each following round, the flood spreads 20 feet in every direction, making those areas ankle-deep. All squares already ankle-deep become knee-deep.



Spaces within 40 feet of the ankle-deep waters have an inch of water, which is harmless but warns creatures of the oncoming flood.

Knee-deep water is difficult terrain.

Any creature that ends its turn standing in a knee-deep square, or prone in an ankle-deep square, takes 3 (1d6) acid damage.

## The Dead Rising.

As they run, the PCs have to worry about any monsters they haven't already killed, as well as the traps that are still active, since they might not be able to spare time to carefully disable them.

A compound threat, however, comes from the mummies throughout the tomb, and any other dead bodies scattered about. When the trap of Nem activates, those bodies animate and wait to block the PCs' escape. As specialized undead, these creatures are immune to the toxic flood's damage.

## Area 10.

- 7 zombie shamblers

### Zombie Shambler

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (3d8+9)

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** bludgeoning, piercing

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Light Sensitivity.** While in bright light, the zombie has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the 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.

## Hallways.

- 12 mummy harriers

The mummies in the spear traps remain hidden until a creature comes within 10 squares. Then they emerge (spending 2 squares of movement to exit the cubby) and attack.

## Area 6.

- 8 mummy harriers

The mummies ignore the sliding floor, intuitively realizing it's an illusion.

### Mummy Harrier

Medium undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 39 (6d8+12)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 17 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 3 (-4) | 11 (+0) | 8 (-1) |

**Skills** Athletics +5, Intimidation +3

**Damage Resistances** fire; bludgeoning or piercing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** cold, lightning, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Languages** understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Heavy Hitter.** The mummy can choose to have disadvantage on melee attack rolls and deal an additional 5 damage on successful melee weapon attacks until the start of its next turn.

**Light Sensitivity.** While in bright light, the mummy has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Undead Resolve.** The mummy is immune to the *magic missile* spell and has advantage on saving throws made to resist being turned.

### ACTIONS

**Longspear.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

## Area 1.

- 1 Ancient mummy warrior
- 1 Ancient mummy spellcaster
- 1 Ancient mummy brawler

### Ancient Mummy Warrior

Medium undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 30 (4d8+12)

**Speed** 40 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 15 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 8 (-1) | 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) |

**Skills** Intimidation +3, Perception +4, Stealth +4, Survival +2

**Damage Resistances** fire; bludgeoning or piercing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** cold, lightning, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Languages** understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Heavy Hitter.** The mummy can choose to have disadvantage on melee attack rolls and deal an additional 5 damage on successful melee weapon attacks until the start of its next turn.

**Light Sensitivity.** While in bright light, the mummy has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.





**Rage (1/long rest).** On its turn, the mummy can enter a rage as a bonus action. The mummy's rage lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if the mummy is knocked unconscious, if it hasn't taken damage since its last turn, or if its turn ends and it hasn't attacked a hostile creature since its last turn. The mummy can also end its rage on its turn as a bonus action. While raging, it gains the following benefits:

- The mummy has advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws.
- When the mummy makes a slam attack gains a +2 bonus to the damage roll.
- The mummy has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

**Undead Resolve.** The mummy is immune to the *magic missile* spell and has advantage on saving throws made to resist being turned.

#### ACTIONS

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) bludgeoning damage.

#### Ancient Mummy Spellcaster

Medium undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 26 (4d8+8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 16 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 11 (+0) | 15 (+2) |

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Wis +2

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Arcana +2

**Damage Resistances** fire; bludgeoning or piercing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** cold, lightning, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Languages** understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Innate Spellcasting.** The mummy's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: chill touch, produce flame, shocking grasp

3/day: enlarge/reduce, ray of enfeeblement

**Light Sensitivity.** While in bright light, the mummy has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the mummy to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the mummy drops to 1 hit point instead.

**Undead Resolve.** The mummy is immune to the *magic missile* spell and has advantage on saving throws made to resist being turned.

#### ACTIONS

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6+4) bludgeoning damage.

#### Ancient Mummy Brawler

Medium undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 19 (3d8+6)

**Speed** 40 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 15 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 6 (-2) | 12 (+1) | 11 (+0) |

**Saves** Dex +4, Int +0, Wis +3, Cha +2

**Skills** Acrobatics +4, Perception +5

**Damage Resistances** fire; bludgeoning or piercing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** cold, lightning, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Languages** understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Light Sensitivity.** While in bright light, the mummy has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the mummy to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the mummy drops to 1 hit point instead.

**Undead Resolve.** The mummy is immune to the *magic missile* spell and has advantage on saving throws made to resist being turned.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The mummy makes two slam attacks.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) bludgeoning damage.

## Facing Down Death

### Social. Real-Time.

*A fey titan thinks the PCs are agents of the king, and demands tribute.*

The PCs likely emerge from the ziggurat with only moments to spare, but they are not safe. From the mouth of the ruin they spot shapes moving beyond in the rain, advancing from all directions. The three corpses from the camp stand nearby, reaching out to attack them, and out in the swamp it seems as if every dead creature within a mile has risen and is shambling toward them.

The deadly flood makes going back beneath the ziggurat impossible, and there must be thousands of creatures – peat-coated skeletons, zombified crocodiles, hollow carapaces of spiders, and swarms of centipedes, bats, and blood-thirsting birds. Beneath the cries of the throng, they hear a deep sound, like a growling voice.

It seems the only safe path is to climb the ziggurat. If the PCs hesitate, they hear a slithering whisper urge them, “Climb.”

When the horde is within charging distance, a massive shape moves in the rain, almost as if the swamp itself is rising up, alive. Swaths of the hungry dead are pulled beneath the surface, and then the head of the marshy shape snakes out of the rain from the side and cuts off the approach of the undead. A titanic serpent, its half-rotted skull 20 feet long, snaps its teeth down upon the front line of the horde, and as it devours the dead it locks one enormous, milky gray eye on the party.



Elëni Tsami 2011

This is the Voice of Rot, fey titan of the High Bayou, who has slumbered for centuries without disturbance by man. But when the warbeasts of Gidim broke free, his rest was disturbed, and he has waited for representatives of Risur to come and answer his demands.

With a few brief thrashes of his coils, the titan—who is so large that the party can hardly make out the scale of his body through the haze of rain—destroys the gathered undead. Then he withdraws into the drizzle, partially hidden. The party can only make out his general silhouette, but the dull light from a single eye shines like a beacon.

An entity of this power has little time for conversing with mortals. He makes his demands known, perhaps clarifies one or two things, then vanishes into the rain. The voice of the titan is at once both guttural and sibilant.

---

"My slumber is disturbed. You, agents of King Kelland, shall redress this offense.

"Most that fled your mortal trap were mute beasts. One had reason. It can be judged.

"Follow the scent of its homeland's blood. Find it. Cut its flesh, then do as you please.

"Kill it, and it will rot. Send it home, and it will despair. Either, and I shall be appeased."

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### Tracking the Escapee.

Every spellcasting PC in the party becomes capable of casting the *detect planar energy* spell, if they did not already acquire it from Gale in adventure two. Their time in the ziggurat counts as contact

### Detect Planar Energy.

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

1st-level divination (ritual)

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** 1 mile

**Components:** V,S

**Duration:** 1 hour

Choose a plane you have visited or have otherwise had contact with. For the spell's duration, you can sense the direction to and intensity of energies from that plane, to a maximum range of one mile. These energies tend to fade after a few hours or days, but it is possible to track creatures native to other planes by following the trails of planar energy they leave in their wake.

The spell can be foiled by strong sources of energy from the same or other planes. For instance, Cauldron Hill in Flint is a powerful beacon of shadow energy, so you would be unable to pinpoint any sort of foreign energy there, not even fey or elemental energy.

### Badger Gun.

*Weapon (musket), uncommon*

Despite a deceptively "regular" appearance, this musket has unique ties with the realm of the Dreaming. Three times per day, the wielder of the weapon may summon a **badger** conjured from the Dreaming after hitting a target with a ranged weapon attack using this weapon (no action required). The badger appears within 5 feet of the target.



with the plane of Apet, so the party can track the energies of Sijhen, who spent a great deal of time there.

The party can return safely from the ziggurat, with no danger from the bayou's inhabitants.

If the party does not obey the titan's wishes (i.e., deal damage to Xambria/Sijhen at some point), then at the end of the adventure each PC experiences a vivid dream in which the Voice of Rot floods the town of Agate and leave the villagers' bodies to feed the beasts of the bayou.

### Forced Resurrection.

If anyone in the party died in the ziggurat, the Voice of Rot controls the waters of the marsh to pull their bodies to the surface, then restores them to life as if through the *raise dead* spell. Until the creature completes the mission from the Voice of Rot, it cannot stomach any food that has not been left to rot for at least three days.

Characters resurrected this way become unwitting agents of the Voice of Rot. Whenever the character is at or below 0 hit points, but not dead, his body will remain limp, but his head will jerk about and his eyes strain to see what's going on. All he sees while in this state, the Voice of Rot knows. When he dies or regains consciousness, a half-rotted snake will slither out of his mouth.

This revolting condition can be dispelled by a *remove curse* or *greater restoration* spell.

## Planar Trails

### Puzzle. Montage.

*Energy from Apet smells like a distinct memory you've forgotten.*

If the PCs plan to use *detect planar energy*, they can come to a few useful conclusions.

- **DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana).** Tracking the trail in the wilderness is fairly easy, but in a city it'll be harder. Numerous minor energies from magic items and spellcasters will muddle faint trails, but strong bursts of planar energy should be easy to locate. Those might lead to useful trails, but also could produce false leads left by people who just happened to come in contact with the energy.
- **DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana).** Some magic exists to block planar energy. Reed Macbannin had purification rituals. Certainly whatever magic originally sealed the portal in the ziggurat could conceal or erase a trail.
- **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana).** Apet is the source of magical energy used in divination and teleportation, so practitioners of such magic might be false leads.

In the most basic sense, the trail leads to Agate, to Bole, then back to Flint, where it branches because several creatures were also exposed to the energy. Along the way, depending on when and where the party uses the spell, they might find some other information.

- **Ziggurat; DC 15 Wisdom (Perception).** One entity left here over a month ago, trailing a lot of Apet energy. Some time between then and now a group left here, trailing lesser amounts of energy. Several other creatures have left the ziggurat, but they have very faint trails of Apet energy.

If a PC tries the spell to detect Bleak Gate energy and succeeds the Perception check, it's revealed that the second group did leave traces, suggesting they might be affiliated with Macbannin's allies.

- **Agate; DC 8 Wisdom (Perception).** A boat has a large amount of Apet energy. This was the boat rented to Caius's second group. As above, the party might detect Bleak Gate energy here.
- **Bole; DC 19 Charisma (Persuasion).** The PCs might get a lead at the train yard about one railcar that was used by a secretive group of people transporting a large wrapped object (the golden seal). The PCs can use the spell on the trains to find the right car. By speaking with the train and station staff with a successful DC 8 Wisdom (Insight) or Charisma (Persuasion) check, they can get descriptions of the travelers—a tiefling woman, two unarmed humans, and two dwarves with weapons and armor. See Finona's group (page 25) for details.
- **Flint; DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) or Charisma (Persuasion).** At King's Station, if the party got a description of the team Caius sent to the ziggurat, they might learn from the staff that the group came met up with a tiefling matching Caius's description, then departed in a pair of carriages.

From the Flint train station, the energy trail is impossible to follow precisely, because it doubles back on itself many times. Clearly the entity has been in town for a while. The best the party can hope to do is perform the spell in interesting places and hope they detect a strong trail nearby. A few likely spots include:

- **Arms Fair.** Starting near the stage where the PCs first fought Gidim warbeasts, the PCs find two local sources of Apet energy. The first is the stage equipment of Rock Rackus, which were stored under the stage after the performer was arrested. Rackus travels by teleportation regularly on his adventures, and one of the pieces of his stage show – a sacrificial dagger – was stolen from an Ancient ziggurat. The PCs might suspect he's involved with the Ob. If they talk to him, see Jailhouse Rock (page 19).
- Additionally, the gnomish weaponsmiths Fildi and Dilfi have been modifying their *badger gun*, using a pair of badgers that were mutated when the Gidim monsters attacked. They've been keeping the critters in a secret cage under their expo booth. This is just a red herring.
- **Pardwight Museum.** None of the relics of the Ancients on display possess any energy from Apet except the *staff of the Ancients*. The staff is overcharged with energy and risks summoning monsters when used, but the other two relics the PCs recovered in Act One were removed from the ziggurat before the seal was opened.
- **Caius's Inn.** This location is detailed in the next encounter.
- **Xambria's Apartment.** The spell detects strong energies here, but by the time the PCs arrive, Xambria has already left the city. If the PCs enter the place, they find signs of a struggle between Xambria and some attacker, but no sign of forced entry. The apartment was locked up, and there's no indication of where Xambria is.





- **Saxby's Manor.** A trail leads from Xambria's apartment to the back fence outer wall of Saxby's manor, and a similar trail leads away. The guards won't let the party in, but if the party asks pointedly with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) check, they learn there was a break-in the night of the 9th. If asked, Saxby denies any such thing happened.  
The break occurred was when Sijhen/Xambria tried to find the Ancient star map. Saxby handled the matter internally, and found nothing missing.
- **Stanfield Canal.** In the unlikely event the party uses the spell along Stanfield Canal, they can trace Apet energies to a small locked warehouse rented by Caius Bergeron. Getting past the lock requires a DC 19 Dexterity (thieves' tools check). A bloody, wheeled cart sits outside, suggesting perhaps a meatlocker inside. Instead, the interior is empty except for a few pallets, and one huge crate that has been opened up and its contents removed. Swaths of blood and scrambling footprints on the ground can be found with a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check indicating at least three people were killed, and then one person – either a woman or a slight man – dragged the bodies away.
- **The Docks.** If the party got the description of Caius's second team, by inquiring in Bosum Strand and succeeding on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check they might be able to learn that a tiefling woman, two humans, and two dwarves boarded a ship named *Il Dragon de Mer* (see page 22 for more details).

## Staff of the Ancients.

*Staff, rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)*

This wooden staff is covered in a spiral of symbols that denote the primal elements of air, earth, fire, and water. When you attack, the wood turns briefly to gold.

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

Additionally, the staff has 10 charges to be used for the following properties. The staff regains 2d8 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls, but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regains 1d8 + 2 charges.

**Elemental Strike.** When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 1d6 acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage (your choice) to the target.

**Spells.** While holding this staff, you can expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC and attack bonus:

- *magic missile* (1 charge)
- *burning hands* (choose acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage; 1 charge)
- *forbiddance* (5 charges)

## Martial Scientists.

As detailed in *That's Classified*, if a PC martial scientist delivered a corpse of a gidim warbeast to the Battalion military academy, he receives a packet of useful information when he returns to Flint.

If the party uses the spell, they can sense Apet energies came through here and headed out to sea. Cross-checking the pier the energy was strongest on with the port authority's records yields information that a small ship named *Dagger* set out from that pier on the 9th. Some dock workers can be convinced to share a recollection of seeing a woman matching Xambria's description with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

## There Goes the Main Suspect

### Puzzle. Real-Time.

*The party finds Caius Bergeron murdered.*

Either the party tracks down Bergeron themselves, or they're called to the Silver Swan when the police learn of his death. Caius dies on the 7th of Autumn, but he valued his privacy and asked not to be disturbed, so his body might go undiscovered for several days.

When the PCs investigate the scene of the crime, read or paraphrase the following.

The room is in startlingly good condition for the scene of a grisly murder. The dead tiefling lies on the bed. Blood trails from his mouth onto the sheets below. His desk is covered with ledgers and loose papers. A large bureau stands in the corner, and a traveling trunk sits next to it.

The only openings other than the door are two glass-paned windows on the wall. They must be very tightly insulated, because the stench of the dead body didn't seep out.

Both the door and windows of the room were locked. Bergeron still has his copy of the room key, as does the innkeeper, who insists that the key was secure at all time. The windows each have a secure latch with a lock, and the frames are lined with a thread of gold to prevent teleportation.

Looking through Bergeron's possession locates several interesting items. A map of the continent of Lanjyr is unrolled on his desk. Somebody (Bergeron) recently drew two stars within circles on the map. The PCs recognize the location of one star as the ziggurat in the swamp that they already visited. The other is in the water off the coast of Ber. Precise coordinates are written onto the map.

Beside the map sits a book containing notes on the Ancients, but nothing they don't already know. The drawers contain all the journals of Xambria's dig crew, which were recovered by Caius's second team. Xambria's own journal is not present.

The wardrobe is unlocked and contains fine cloths, but little of interest. A DC 19 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check opens the locked trunk which contains a variety of coin, gems, and jewelry, plus ten *scrolls of sending*. The chest has a false bottom revealed by a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check but it is locked in such a way that it only can be opened when exposed to fire and a successful DC 23 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check (made with advantage if the character can produce fire through cantrips or features), though the hidden compartment below is empty. (It held Bergeron's ciphered notes about his various projects.)



## Bergeron's Ring.

Prominent members of the Obscurati wear rings with secret codes, so other agents of the Ob can identify them, if they know what to look for. Sometimes cell leaders give rings to their underlings as gifts, not revealing their purpose.

Each ring has a three word inscription. The first two words can be anything, as long as their initials are O.B. The number of letters in the third word indicates what tier of the conspiracy he's in. A gold ring indicates he's part of Golden Cell. A silver ring is Lantern Cell. A bronze ring is Colossus Cell. Other cells use some local tree's wood.

Lady Saxby was told by Macbannin to keep an eye out for prisoners wearing rings, and to report to him if they had the initials O.B. If she sees Caius's ring, she knows it's important, but doesn't know what it means.

Anybody who examines Bergeron's body automatically notices that this lower jaw has been unhinged. A closer look finds a gaping hole torn through the soft palate, and that the brains have been completely removed. There are no other signs of injury on Bergeron.

He wears a gold ring on his right pinky and inspecting it with a DC 19 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals an inscription on the interior that reads, "Old Bergeron Gold."

Characters who search for witnesses and make a DC 9 Charisma (Persuasion) check find several regulars of the Silver Swan who remember that the night before the murder, Caius had an animated discussion with a woman who matches Xambria's description. They remember her raising her voice to say something about a "star map," and he hushed her, then had his bodyguards escort her out forcibly.

## How She Did It.

The truth behind the murder is that during the night Sijhen waited for Xambria to sleep, then detached its thoughtform from her body. It sealed the outer walls of the inn, used psychic power to turn briefly incorporeal, and glided through the wall into Caius's room. Sijhen hit Bergeron with a psychic blast to keep him incapacitated, then devoured his brain. It searched the room and found the map and several interesting notes about Xambria's dig site and the sunken ziggurat off the coast of Ber. It took the notes and Xambria's old journal.

The most information came from Bergeron's mind. In the process of devouring it, Sijhen absorbed many of Bergeron's memories. It learned that Bergeron's society calls itself the Obscurati, and that prominent members wear a ring with markings along the inside that designate their rank and role in the organization. It knows Bergeron's general mission to find out about the seals, but a *geas* placed on Bergeron applied even in his death, hiding the most revelatory information about the Ob's goals.

Sijhen did, however, learn the location of the warehouse where Caius's people brought the *Golden Seal of Apet* (see Stanfield Canal, above). Shortly thereafter it found the seal, killed the guards, and tried to perform a ritual to return home to Gidim, using the seal as a focus.

When the ritual failed, Sijhen disposed of the guards' bodies in the canal, then loaded the seal onto a wagon and hid it in a sewer tunnel. The nature of the seal meant it was not marked by the energy of Apet, so the PCs cannot use their ritual to track it down.

## Following Up.

The coordinates on Caius's map bear investigating. If the party doesn't think to look into it themselves, they might simply stumble onto it by following the trail of Apet energy out to sea. You can nudge them in the right direction through Stover Delft, if they seem lost.

## Jailhouse Rock

### Social. Real-Time.

*The party tries to get useful information from a buffoonish performer.*

If the party traces Apet energy to Rock Rackus, or otherwise wishes to contact him, he's in jail in Central district. A small crowd of dockers constantly protest outside the jailhouse. As the party makes their way through the crowd, gathered dockers make a point of stopping them to give these 'government stooges' a piece of their minds. Parties with Prestige 3 for Flint are treated much better, however, and encouraged to get Rock released.

The crowd is full of protesters and rabble-rousers, and a dozen chants and slogans fill the air as people call for justice in Parity Lake, help for the poor in the Nettles, freedom in Bosum Strand, and better pay all around. Just after the party gets into the police station, someone throws a flaming bottle of liquor at the cops, which kicks off a small riot outside.



**Rock Rackus.** Entertainer Rock Rackus has stumbled his way to national celebrity. A one-time dock worker, he signed up for a tour on a merchant ship, crashed in the Malice Lands, found treasure on his way back to civilization, and became modestly famous selling his story. He would open for curious audiences before operas and symphonies, and venues loved using his street-born flavor

to lure in people who would normally never attend.

Then, a year ago, he made an impromptu cameo in an opera, upstaging the lead actor and skewing the plot to one much more raunchy and violent. The public was fascinated, and he was asked to repeat the performance. For four months he ruined an excellent Rock Rackus show, and brought in record ticket sales. Before the novelty wore off, he left, saying he was going on a new adventure, and that he would bring back treasure for "his people in the streets."

He returned a month ago, armed with a diamond-encrusted gold pistol and claiming he had traveled to the moon, met the Unseen Court, and cuckolded the fey king. He began performing a bevy of sexually vulgar songs in taverns throughout Bosum Strand, and financed the works of dozens of other dockers with money allegedly stolen from the temple of a god Rock left bleeding from a gunshot wound.

The dockers love his wild new style. Scholars dismiss his tale of interplanetary travel as obvious fabrications, pointing to his most preposterous claims, like his having visited a forest that is on fire and has never burned out. Most in Flint and throughout Risur see him as an idiot at best or a blasphemer at worst. The controversy has only made him more popular.



People in the crowd see Rock as a figurehead of their movement, unjustly arrested, and they expect that when he's released he'll lead them, somehow, somewhere. Due to his quirky personality and rapid rise as a celebrity, everyone knows who he is, but few know about his political positions. The police are close to releasing him on bail just to get rid of the crowds, and the dockers might be in for a rude surprise. Rock Rackus is not a leader of men.

### Entitled Prisoner.

Rock has gotten his own personal cell with some decent amenities, and the party probably finds him tapping and humming tunes as he works out possible new songs. Unlike the rest of the prisoners, he's cleanly-dressed and has on plenty of jewelry, with no less than eight monocles to choose from tucked into his pockets.

He'll gladly talk, mostly about himself and his own travels, but he constantly interjects how eager he is to get out of here. Some of his tales include:

### Meeting Caius Bergeron.

Rock claims that in the Malice Lands he found a burnt-out library full of magic scrolls. He took a few, and when he started selling them back in Flint to get quick cash, he was rounded up and brought to a tiefling, Caius Bergeron. The man offered him better money to get the rest of his scrolls, and to keep quiet, but Rock kept a few that he particularly liked because they had some "real deep philosophy" written in the margins.

These scrolls were plundered from the ruins of Pala, a short-lived nation of enlightened thinkers eventually brought down by the Clergy. The quotes Rack found were written originally by the nation's founder and famed philosopher William Miller (who secretly is the campaign's main villain, under the name Nicodemus the Gnostic). And the scrolls were a type of *teleportation* spell, aimed at very old teleportation rings near Ancient ruins.

### Ziggurat? Yeah, I Did that Once.

Caius hired him to go on a bit of an expedition to some old ruin in Crisillyir, which had been built over centuries ago. Once it had been an Ancient ziggurat of Jiese, the plane of fire. He took some trophies from there, but he didn't like the attitudes of the people he worked with, so he declined to work with them again. They got past a bunch of fire traps, did some work, stole some giant golden plate, and then he came back to Flint.

### Going to the Moon.

One night, bored with his first bout of celebrity, Rock decided to go adventuring again. He cracked out one of the scrolls he'd kept, performed the ritual, and ended up deep in a forest. Following the sounds of music and women's voices, he stumbled upon a gathering of high fey. They fled, and he chased them through a silver mirror. Suddenly it was daylight, and up in the sky he saw the world.

He claims he was brought before the Unseen Court as a criminal, that he claimed his right of trial by combat, then shot the fey who challenged him. After that it was sort of a blur – lots of sex and debauched parties. Then he woke up back in the woods and found his gun had been turned to gold and covered with diamonds.

### I've Got Places to Be.

Rock has gotten very good at teleportation magic, but it's not cheap, and he has expensive taste in destinations. He's been all over the continent sampling fine fresh cuisine, sleeping with women, and picking up new fashions. Now he needs more cash, and he's got an offer for the party.

If the PCs can get the charges against him dropped, he'll owe them one free round trip by teleportation. He hired a skyseer once to do some divinations, and though the guy said he saw no future in Rock, he said the constabulary would solve his murder. Rock doesn't really trust old charlatans like skyseers, because he's pretty sure he'll never die. But he thinks it was really nice of the RHC to solve his future murder, so he wants to be nice in exchange.

### Civic Duty.

Rock is dimly aware that people think he's important, but right now he's looking out for *numero uno*. When released from jail he intends to ride his celebrity to bed some women and land some new performance gigs. He might even write a song about killing monsters with the party. But people will rally behind him, and he'll be talked about in the papers and on the streets, and when he turns out to just be a self-centered asshole, the docker movement will be discredited.

The party should have no trouble telling that this man is not worthy of the movement's respect, at least not as is. The PCs might be able to convince him to lay low, or convince some other leaders in the docker movement to lower people's expectations, to mitigate the fall-out. But if they can somehow steer him another direction, he might actually become a force for positive change.

Give the party a chance to talk politics and philosophy with Rock Rackus. He'll interrupt a lot, and mostly wonder how all this "book learning" will help his reputation, but the party might be able to inspire him (or just trick him into saying what they want him to say). Rock might discover that he can actually help people who are in the same position he used to be in. If he shows up at the Gala of the Ancients, it's a fine opportunity for him to get in trouble and have to be rescued by the party, to help provoke a change of heart.

If the party succeeds in helping the docker movement, they'll increase their Prestige with Flint at the end of this adventure. If they do nothing, though, Flint will have no strong defenders against some of the great dangers in later adventures.

## Journey to the Sunken Seal

### Exploration/Social. Montage.

*Race by sea before another portal unleashes monsters into the world.*

The PCs have a ship assigned to them, which is fast enough to reach the northeastern coast of Ber, where the sunken seal lies, in seven days. If the party calls in a Level 6 Favor from Risur, they can instead enlist the *Impossible*, the RHC's fastest ship, commanded by Captain Rutger Smith. The *Impossible* can make the journey in three days, but getting clearance to use the ship would take longer than the time saved sailing. Should naval combat break out during the voyage, its recommended that the GM narrate up until the adventurers can get in on the action.





The *Impossible* does, however, have a larger crew, handy as back-up. If the party doesn't try requesting the larger ship, Stover Delft might recommend they bring along back-up. He suggests they request four soldiers to sail with them for a week, a Level 5 Favor. If they're in a rush, they might get a single soldier as a Level 4 Favor.

The party might have discovered that Caius's team set out on a ship full of mercenaries. Without at least some help, the party risks getting over their heads.

#### Allied Risur Soldier

Medium humanoid (any race), lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 14 (breastplate)

**Hit Points** 39 (6d8+12)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) |

**Skills** Insight +3, Stealth +3

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Soldier Healing Ration (1/long rest).** The allied Risur soldier carries a potion of healing.

#### ACTIONS

**Club.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage.

**Pistol.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 50/150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10+1) piercing damage

#### Situation.

The sunken seal lies a half mile off the coast of a small fishing village, Pezarillo, a couple hundred miles northwest of Ber's capital city Seobriga. The waters along the way are fairly well patrolled, so the sea journey is uneventful. When the PCs near the site, however, they see three boats have already beaten them to the location.

Two of the ships stay close to each other: a small unarmed vessel, *La Inspiración*, flies a Ber flag, and near it floats a tiny cutter named *Dagger*, flying under the flag of Risur. This is the ship Xambria chartered.

Third is a tall and impressive clipper, *Il Draçon de Mer*, flying a Crisillyir mercenary flag and clearly armed with a gunnery deck of a dozen cannons. As the PCs' ship draws near, *Il Draçon de Mer* signals with flags for them to keep their distance or they will be fired upon. If the party moves to move closer, *Il Draçon de Mer* fires warning shots before attacking.

If the PCs decide to wait, Caius's specialists feel a bit of pressure from the presence of a new ship. Their *sending* spells to Caius are failing and they don't know why, and they don't know who else to contact. (That's one drawback of a compartmentalized secret society.) They speed up their careful preparations, and finish their business one day later, removing the golden seal with no catastrophe.

They leave wards in place to hold at bay the creatures trapped in the void between the lesser seal and the Axis Seal. *Il Draçon de Mer* hoists the golden seal aboard, and they try to warily depart. At that point, Xambria will implore the PCs to act. It's likely, however, the party will intercede well before then.

## Yerasol Veterans.

If any PC is a Yerasol Veteran, before the PCs set out refer to the scene A Possible Promotion in Appendix: The Audit (page 32), which might result in the party's ship being better equipped for their journey.

### La Inspiración.

*La Inspiración* is a relatively small Beran sailing vessel, with a total crew of six sailors and three passengers, captained by an orc veteran of the Beran navy named **Diego Dolorosa**, who is none too happy about *Il Draçon de Mer*.

If Diego is angry, his passenger, a goblin archaeologist named **Paco de Los Loros**, is livid. Paco was hired by Caius Bergeron early in the summer, after Xambria's expedition found her ziggurat's map room. Caius provided funding and promised Paco would be famous as the first Beran archaeologist to unearth Ancient ruins, connecting the old culture with Ber's modern aspirations.

Shortly after Caius's second team of specialists returned from the ziggurat of Apet, Paco discovered a golden disk that radiated powerful magic. Bergeron demanded Paco cease his activities, then dispatched his specialists here to prevent a repeat of Xambria's disaster. The specialists arrived in *Il Draçon de Mer* on the 7th of Autumn. They ordered Paco and his team to keep their distance by threat of force. Every day since a group of five has dropped below the waters and not returned for several hours.

Paco believes the PCs are also foreign agents, but if befriended he'll share his story and become willing to help out. Though intelligent and educated, Paco's goblin upbringing leads him to suggest various imaginatively gruesome punishments for Bergeron's team of specialists.

### Paco's Excavation.

The ziggurat slid into the sea ages ago, and most of its structure collapsed, probably due to an earthquake. Unlike Xambria, Paco could not simply outwit traps and kill monsters, he had to dig out tons of rubble. He was aided in this by a winch and crane on *La Inspiración*, but most of the work entailed long hours underwater.

Rather than rely on traditional *water breathing* spells, which do nothing to keep at bay aquatic predators, Paco used expensive *diving bell lanterns*, custom created with Bergeron's coin. These crystal lanterns, mounted on iron poles about the size of a hatrack, hold water at bay in a 10-foot radius. If the lantern is moved, the area of air moves with it. The enchantment cycles fresh, breathable air out of the surrounding water.

The lanterns can last indefinitely, but have to be custom made for a particular depth and water temperature, and if they're moved far from their designated location, their enchantment breaks. (The PCs might reverse engineer them, but they cannot be looted.)

Paco originally had a larger team, but all of them are staying at the nearby village of Pezarillo, waiting in case they're needed. They spent several months determining the contours of the ziggurat, divining for possible danger, and eventually digging out the central chamber that houses the golden seal. He has no idea what the specialists are up to now.



## Golden Icon of Apet.

*Wondrous item (amulet), artifact*

This primitive gold medallion has symbols of the planet Apet. As a bonus action, you can teleport yourself or a creature you can see within 30 feet from its current location to an unoccupied space you can see. Unwilling creatures can make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw, resisting the teleportation on a success. Once this feature has been used, it cannot be used again for 24 hours.

## Dr. Meredith, I Presume?

Xambria's ship, *Dagger*, arrives at the sunken seal on the 15th of Autumn, so she likely is present by the time the PCs arrive. She has convinced the captain of her ship, a drunken lout named **Jack Glassmaker**, to stay within sight of *Il Draçon de Mer*, only taking occasional trips inland to resupply. She's paying well enough for him and his crew of three to sit and wait, but they have no desire to risk their lives for a crazy university professor.

Xambria is happy to speak to the party. She learned from Caius that another seal had been discovered, and she tried to convince the tiefling not to open it. Shortly afterward, she claims she was attacked by something horrible that she fled from in a panic. She only recalls tendrils and eyes, but everything else is a blur. When she came to her senses, she had run to the docks. Wanting to avoid the creature pursuing her and to stop another seal from being opened, she chartered the *Dagger*. She was not prepared for ship combat, and is in holding pattern, trying to decide how best to proceed.

Xambria is capable of casting spells, and brought along scrolls of *water walk* and *water breathing*. She tried sneaking underwater once already, but luckily before she got too close she spotted the bodyguard for Caius's team: a druid with loyal sharks and octopi.

Xambria also has a secret spell book that contains a *teleport* spell and the gate key to reach a portal in Flint that lies near a military garrison in the bayou west of Pine Island. Sijhen is nervous someone like the PCs might figure out it is possessing Xambria, but as long as it can get ten minutes of solitude it can escape in a hurry.

## Sijhen's Goal.

The Gidim wayfarer followed Caius's specialists here in hopes of acquiring a clearer understanding of how the golden seals work. Sijhen was originally helping head the Gidim invasion of this world, so it already knows how to open a portal to another plane, but its several attempts to do so in Flint all failed.

After consuming Caius Bergeron's brain, Sijhen theorized it needed an Ancient star map to compare stellar positions between then and now. Sijhen thinks the PC's boss, Lady Saxby, has such a map, but it is wary of attacking the RHC headquarters. Looking for additional information, it wants to acquire whatever information Caius's specialists have, whether in the form of documents or brain tissue.

## Uncomfortable Questions.

If the PCs question Xambria about her activity in Flint while they were away, she claims Caius dragged her to his inn, and wanted to know if she had found a "star map" at the ziggurat. She told him she

didn't remember, and he threatened her. Then he said the star map had been sent to "Macbannin," and she recognized the name from the news. She asks the party if they know about any "star map."

Afterward, she remembers being accosted by some strange creature, and fleeing her apartment in a panic. In truth what happened was that Sijhen detached its thoughtform from Xambria's body so it could kill Caius, and when it returned and tried to merge back with Xambria, she had a moment of clarity and fought back. Sijhen is mostly in control now, though.

The star map question is a ploy by Sijhen. Xambria did indeed recover a star map from the ziggurat back in the Spring, and sent it along to Caius, who delivered it to Macbannin for examination. The star map ended up in the possession of Lady Inspectress Saxby after Macbannin's downfall.

Sijhen needs the star map to aim its portal ritual back to Gidim, and it learned from Caius's mind that Saxby was a patsy for the Ob. On the night of the 9th it had Xambria break into Saxby's home, but they didn't find the star map. (It is hidden in a safe in Saxby's office.)

Should the party ask about anything Sijhen wants to keep secret, such as the theft of the golden seal or Caius's death, Xambria's memories of those events have been hidden away.

The party might try detecting planar energy of Apet on Xambria, which turns up a strong hit. She explains away the energy, showing off the *golden icon of Apet* she has had with her since leaving the ziggurat.

Despite the early Autumn heat, the good doctor does not expose any more skin than necessary. She has her own private quarters, and though Captain Jack has hit on her, the crew respects her privacy.

## Il Draçon de Mer

### Action. Real-Time.

*This Crisillyiri mercenary vessel protects the Obscurati specialists.*

Captained by **Bernardo Molinelli**, *Il Draçon de Mer* is prepared for a fight. Only professional courtesy from Caius's specialists are deterring the mercenary crew from attacking the archaeologists sharing its waters. When the PCs arrive, the ship starts to prowl wary circles. Any approach by the party provokes a flurry of activity as *Il Draçon de Mer* arms for battle. If they are spotted going overboard, the Crisillyiri mercenaries do their best to ensure the party has no ship to return to.

The party's ship is likely unarmed, but it's not safe to go after Caius's team before first dealing with the hostile vessel. Three main routes present themselves: rush *Il Draçon de Mer* at top speed, sneak up aquatically, or misdirect the mercenaries and attack while they're distracted.

*Il Draçon de Mer* has a crew of 30, dramatically outnumbering the PCs, but with the right plan they have a chance to succeed.

## Into the Mouth of the Dragon.

The encounter begins at great distance and the PC's vessel must maneuver closer while taking fire from *Il Draçon de Mer*. Encourage





adventurers to be creative in how they can participate, allowing them to help close the distance, avoid damage, and possibly attack back once close enough.

Depending on how this largely narrative sequence plays out the party's ship may be sunk or crippled before then in which case *Il Draçon de Mer* closes in to kill and plunder. This still leads to tactical combat, but with the party at a major disadvantage. Most likely the party reaches weapons range with some amount of damage, then boards the enemy vessel.

### Naval Terrain.

Three locations are likely to matter for this scene.

**Open Water.** *Il Draçon de Mer* stays tries to stay in the deeper, open water north of the dig. There are no hazards here.

**Above the Seal.** The sea directly above the dig site has turbulent water due to the energies of the ziggurat of Mavisha. At the end of the Location stage, each captain must make a DC 13 Dexterity (vehicle [water]) check or else the ship is struck by intense waves. It has disadvantage on vehicle (water) checks for the rest of the turn, and creatures in area burst 1 somewhere on the main deck must make a save or be swept overboard.

During tactical combat, there's a 10% chance each round that a wave hits the encounter area from a random direction, forcing

every creature on deck to make a DC 8 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or be knocked prone and pushed 2 squares.

**Tropical Rocks.** South of the dig and closer to shore, jagged shards of stone dotted with foliage and palm trees stick out of the water. At the end of the Location stage, each captain must make a DC 18 Dexterity (vehicle [water]) check or else the ship hits rocks. The ship suffers 10 points of damage (ignoring damage threshold), and it is immobilized for the rest of the turn. An immobilized ship automatically fails vehicle (water) checks.

During tactical combat, scatter the sea with five or six 2-square rocks that might block ship movements and provide stepping stones for characters.

### Simple Assault.

It's easiest to hand-wave the PCs' ship taking fire as it approaches *Il Draçon de Mer* instead of engaging with vehicle rules. If the PCs are in a steam cutter or excise cutter, their ship is hulled within 100 feet of the enemy vessel. It begins to list and flood, and risks sinking as the mercenaries attempt to board.

If the PCs are aboard the *Impossible*, they suffer some rigging damage and enough hull damage for the ship to start listing, which prevents the party from retreating once combat begins.





## Enlisting Allies.

The *Dagger*'s captain is horrified of the thought of battle unless he's told he's just a diversion and in no real danger and the PCs make a DC 20 Charisma (Deception) check. Paco and Diego are easier to recruit with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check, as long as Paco's given assurances he'll get access to the dig once the party is done here.

By coordinating with allies, the PCs can confuse the Crisillyiri mercenaries. One PC can spend an action directing the other ships with a Charisma (Deception) check. The PC has advantage on this check if both ships are allied with the party.

If the party's ship is crippled or sunk, however, *Il Draçon de Mer* pursues the other ships and bombard them with cannons for a few minutes before returning to finish off the party.

## Amphibious Alternative.

The party might try using *water breathing* spells to swim up and catch their foes by surprise. If the party decides to set out from beyond Long range, they must each succeed a DC 9 Dexterity (Stealth) check or else lookouts aboard *Il Draçon de Mer* see them go overboard, which provokes a naval attack that makes it much harder for the party to catch up with a moving ship.

If undetected, swimmers must succeed on a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check or gain one level of exhaustion from the long swim: they've either passed through turbulent waters over the seal, or they've had to swim a much longer route to avoid them.

If swimming PCs decide to debark within Long range, the Dexterity (Stealth) check is made with disadvantage, but the Strength (Athletics) check is easier and made with advantage. Getting any closer provokes an armed response by the mercenaries.

When the PCs near the ship, each must make a DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check or else be spotted by lookouts when they're 30 ft. away. At night, hiding from the lookouts is easier and the PCs gain a +2 bonus, but the druid Krantos has sent one of his sharks to circle the ship and deter any tricks, and so the Dexterity (Stealth) check is made with disadvantage.

## Look Over There!

By enlisting allies, the party might create a distraction. They could try sailing away, then returning under cover of dark. Meanwhile, an ally might rig lights along its deck to give the impression of being a different ship, drawing attention.

If the party comes up with a convincing plan, at each range (Long, Medium, and Short) one PC must make a DC 20 Dexterity (Stealth) or Charisma (Deception) check, or two PCs can each make one of those checks. If both checks are successful, *Il Draçon de Mer* is unaware of their approach and doesn't fire back. If the party makes it all the way to Short range, the mercenaries are caught unawares when the party attacks.

# Boarding Action

## Action. Tactical.

*The decks will soon be awash with blood.*

- Captain Bernard Molinelli
- 2 mercenary crossbowmen
- 31 mercenary crewmen (pirates and thugs)

This is a daunting encounter for the party, but if they have surprise or allied Risur soldiers (*q.v.*) on their side, they can triumph. Simply charging in without a plan will likely get them captured and ransomed back to Risur several months later.

Because of the sheer number of enemy crew, the bulk of the mercenaries are a type of variant terrain more than a creature. Do not use miniatures for these crewmen. Instead, mark each with a flat counter (such as a coin) that won't get in the way of other miniatures. If the PCs have the *Impossible*'s crew on their side, use different types of counters for each side.

## Tactics.

Captain Molinelli of *Il Draçon de Mer* plans to ransom the party back to Risur. He tries to close the distance, then his crew stay the sails and drop a 20-foot long hook-tipped ramp across the gap between the two ships.

Sailors try to stream across the ramp, while crossbowmen 50 feet up in the crow's nests try to take out anyone blocking the way, or target PCs making ranged attacks. Occasionally Captain Molinelli orders a contingent of crew to leap across the gap between the ships if there's clear space on the other ship's deck.

Molinelli constantly shouts at the party to surrender before he changes his mind. Should the PCs be overwhelmed by the crewman, Molinelli can toss some gold onto the deck as an in-battle reward to his crewmen, who bicker over it at the GMs discretion. When reduced below half-health however he tries to withdraw, using his men as cover, and when Molinelli goes down his crew becomes increasingly nervous (and might eventually surrender).

## Terrain.

If the ships are adjacent, moving between them just counts as difficult terrain. Conditions will vary greatly based on the results of the preceeding naval combat sequence.

A ship that is suffering fire has a 5-foot area filled with flames. Creatures that enter or end their turn in the zone take 3 (1d6) fire damage.

A ship suffering from smoke has reduced visibility. Any creature more than 5 feet away has concealment.

A ship that is listing has one side sloping toward the sea. Any creature that cannot hold onto a railing or other support treats all movement as difficult terrain. A creature that is knocked prone slides 10 feet toward the water.

If a ship is flooded, at the end of the ship's turn each round, the ship has a 50% chance of descending. Once, it begins to descend, it moves 5 feet per round. If the roll is under 10%, the ship stabilizes, floating but perhaps partially submerged.



### Aftermath.

In the quarters of Caius's team, the party finds a map of the dig site below, scrolls of the following spells—*comprehend languages*, *knock*, and *water breathing*, plus sufficient sufficient extras of *water breathing* for the party to each be able to breathe water and descend to the seal. The book also explains the nature of the seals and the general purpose of the excavation.

Perhaps more impressively, the PCs might claim *Il Draçon de Mer* as their own, though they'll have trouble sailing it back unless they enlist extra sailors. The mercenaries might be convinced to work for a while, but the RHC would want to replace them with loyal crew once the party returns to Flint.

Alternately, they might some of the larger brigantine's cannons to their own ship. A small vessel can carry at most 6 cannons, however, using a +5 attack bonus.

The party will have to descend to the seal below to deal with Caius's team. Xambria would prefer to stay on the surface. She asks to have a chance to read the documents found on *Il Draçon de Mer*, since they deal with the magic of the Ancients.



### Rowboat



#### Bernard, Mercenary Captain

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

**Armor Class** 15 (studded leather)

**Hit Points** 75 (10d8+30)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 16 (+3) | 8 (-1) | 10 (+0) | 13 (+1) |

**Saving Throws** DEX +6, INT +2

**Skills** Athletics +7, Deception +4, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6; vehicles (water) +6

**Senses** passive Perception 16

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Evasion.** When Bernard is subjected to an effect that allows him to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, he instead takes no damage if he succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if he fails.

**Initiative Advantage.** Bernard has advantage on initiative checks.

**Kip-Up.** Bernard can stand up from prone without using any of his movement.

**Old Sea Legs.** Bernard has advantage on checks made to pilot a ship and resist the prone condition while on a ship.

**Sneak Attack (6d6, 1/turn).** Bernard deals an extra 21 (6d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of his that isn't incapacitated and Bernard doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

#### ACTIONS

**Enchanted Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6+6) magical piercing damage.

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

#### REACTIONS

**Parry.** Bernard adds 3 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, he must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

**Strike and Dash (1/long rest).** When Bernard hits a creature with a melee weapon attack, he can move up to 30 feet without provoking opportunity attacks.

**Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker Bernard can see hits him with an attack, he can use his reaction to halve the attack's damage against him.



## Memorandum.

A note within a spellbook aboard *Il Draçon de Mer* provides insight into the goals of Caius Bergeron and his associates. The following is translated from the Common dialect of Danor.

Memorandum for Finona Duvall,

I was impressed by the flawless professionalism of your clean-up at the High Bayou excavation. The previous expedition was staffed with cavalier fools, but you emerged unscathed from peril, which highlights your intellect and acumen. I think you have the potential to benefit my associates greatly, and if your work continues to be of this masterful caliber, I shall recommend you to be brought in more fully.

To wit, I trust you will handle this your fourth dig site with the same skill. However, for your new Drakran bodyguards, this will be their first time opening a seal. I am confident neither is so loutish and disruptive as Master Rackus was at the ziggurat of Jiese. Nevertheless, it is imperative that we avoid a disaster like what occurred at the bayou ziggurat.

The magic and defenses at these ruins are complex and secretive, so while I thoroughly trust your familiarity with the dangers, we need take no unnecessary risks.

Firstly, each of the golden seals were crafted by the Ancients specifically to close a portal to another world. Examination of the relief images on each suggests hostile creatures had been entering our world through these portals, and that the Ancients used the seals to slow an invasion. The creatures were not of any known modern race. Be certain your allies are forewarned, and keep close eye on their mental stability. At least once disaster has struck because someone panicked at the revelation that the world was much larger than their current conception.

Second, the peculiar nature of the seal magic appears to have trapped a small mote of the other world on the far side of the portal. I suspect that this somehow redirected the existing portals to this pocket dimension, and that perhaps simply closing the portal was beyond the skill of the Ancients. Though ages have passed, and we can only assume the invasion forces were stopped somehow, each time we have opened one of these seals, creatures have survived within. Make sure everyone is armed at all times and ready for battle.

Third, the hostile creatures appear to have belonged to different factions, as the seals of Jiese, Nem, and Apet depict distinct sorts of creatures. The Ancients clearly dealt with threats from worlds beyond those known to us

today, since the beings that emerged from the ziggurat of Apet do not match any of the current lore of that world. Indeed, the strange beasts were not even the same sort as portrayed on the seals. Do not presume that simply because you are opening a portal to the plane of water that any creatures beyond must share the same elemental affiliation. Use multiple warding circles in your initial explorations; we can afford the expense.

Fourth, either time or magic has had the effect of concentrating the inherent planar energy within the mote beyond the seals. When the Mavisha seal is finally opened, expect intense energy to pour out. This probably will just be elemental water energy, but as always, precautions rule the day. Make sure first to know the nature of the energy, and set up appropriate wards. If possible, do not be nearby when the seal opens.

Finally, while we have endeavored to maintain a certain discretion in our activities, we have attracted the unfortunate attentions of an RHC squad, and I fear we might be being watched by agents of the Unseen Court. Be prepared for attack from without as well as within when you're at the dig. Afterward, maintain the greatest discretion in transporting the golden seal. If necessary, abandon it so you can make sure to reach me with your research. While a ton of gold is valuable in its own right, we're fairly certain any gold suffices for these seals, so your examinations of the abjurations are more valuable than the physical artifact.

Please try to enjoy your journey. Seobriga in Autumn is lovely, and I trust the more rustic charms of the land around the ziggurat of Mavisha will provide a pleasant respite from the stress of avoiding ancient curses and otherworldly carnivores. I await your return with an admitted enthusiasm, and I insist you recount your journey with the utmost detail while enjoying the finest wines from my family's vineyards.

Do be safe, Finona.

Your benefactor and cohort,

**Caius Bergeron**

P.S. If complications arise, do try to wrap up before Winter. It would be a treasure if you could accompany me by train from Beaumont on the 11th. I have a meeting to attend on the 20th in Vendricce, after which I plan to stay in Crisillyir for a few months. I would love the company of a vivacious young woman, since my host is somewhat too aged and philosophical for my tastes.

### Mercenary Crossbowmen

Medium humanoid (dwarf), chaotic neutral

**Armor Class** 14 (studded leather)

**Hit Points** 45 (6d8+12+6)

**Speed** 25 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 11 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 8 (–1) | 13 (+1) | 7 (–2) |

**Saving Throws** Dex +4, Con +4

**Skills** Athletics +2, Perception +3, Stealth +4; vehicle (water) +2

**Damage Resistances** poison

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Common, Dwarvish

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Dwarven Resilience.** The mercenary has advantage on saving throws against poison.

**Precision Shooter.** The mercenary doesn't have disadvantage on attack rolls made with their crossbow at long range, and when using their crossbow they ignore anything less than total cover.

#### ACTIONS

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

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10+2) piercing damage.

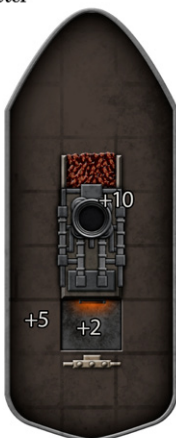




Excise Cutter



Steam Cutter

**Pirate**

Medium humanoid (any race), chaotic neutral

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)**Hit Points** 11 (2d8+2)**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 11 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) |

**Senses** passive Perception 10**Languages** any one language (usually Common)**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)**ACTIONS****Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) slashing damage.**Light Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8+1) piercing damage**Thug**

Medium humanoid (any race), chaotic neutral

**Armor Class** 11 (leather armor)**Hit Points** 32 (5d8+10)**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 15 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) | 11 (+0) |

**Skills** Intimidation +2**Senses** passive Perception 10**Languages** Common**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)**Pack Tactics.** The thug has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the thug's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The thug makes two melee attacks.**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

## The Wreck and the Ruin

**Action. Tactical.***The specialists defend their excavation.*

- 2 hunter sharks
- 2 specialist bodyguards
- Kranto, half-orc druid
- Finona Duvall, tiefling summoner
- 2 octopi (tough)
- 2 specialist wizards

From the turbulent water above the seal, the PCs can look down and see an eerie light glowing on the rocky seabed, fifty feet below.

A tiefling summoner, **Finona Duvall**, leads the specialists at the dig site. She bribed a mercenary druid, the half-orc **Kranto**, with a promise to defend his territory if he helps them avoid being attacked while excavating the golden seal. For the PCs to reach the dig site they'll have to avoid the patrols of Kranto's animal companions.

**Patrol.**

Kranto swims a slow ring around the dig site, taking occasional breaks in an overturned shipwreck. At night he normally ascends to *Il Draçon de Mer*, bringing one shark to watch the ship and leaving the other shark and two octopi by the dig site.

If the sea creatures notice any intruders, they rush to alert Kranto, who then hurries to warn the specialists. Finona has no idea who the PCs are or what their agenda is, but no one is supposed to be coming down here unless *Il Draçon de Mer* asks first. Finona's clever and will respond to entreaties to talk, but she's worried of a trick and ready for a fight.

As the PCs approach they can each make a Stealth check. If they fail, the specialists have at least a minute to prepare and take cover. If they all beat DC 16 they get close enough that the specialists only have 5 rounds to prepare. If they all beat DC 23 they can arrive without being spotted. There is not much terrain to hide behind during the approach, but clever ideas, such as using a ship's shadow to conceal their movement, could grant bonuses.

**Consequences of Inaction.**

If the party takes out *Il Draçon de Mer* and then simply waits for the specialists to come up, they're in for a surprise. After realizing their allies on the surface are defeated, Finona concocts a ritual to tap the power of Mavisha. An hour later the water for miles around becomes rough, and it only grows in danger as time goes on. Before the party can get a chance to take a rest, strong currents threaten to beach their ships or capsize them.

If left alone for six hours, Finona manages to create a safe channel of easy water, and she and her team reach land. Thanks to *sending* scrolls, within a few days they'll rendezvous with a trio of Crisillyiri mercenary ships and come back and try again to claim the seal.

**Tactics.**

Kranto waits for the PCs to approach, hiding with his sharks within the wreckage of the ship while the octopi hide on the other side of the dig (relying on camouflage). The PCs might spot Kranto with a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check if they look inside the wreck,



and they might see the octopi if they pass within 25 feet and make a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Kranto and his creatures try to strike as soon as the PCs pass by, in hopes that they'll be able to pincer them and drive them to Finona's team. He commands the octopi to focus on melee fighters and orders the sharks to attack softer looking targets (spellcasters in particular). When the druid is slain, the animals continue to attack until they are reduced to half-health, at which point they flee.

The specialist bodyguards do their best to pin down melee warriors and keep them away from Finona. The specialist wizards focus their attacks on injured foes. None of the specialists can breathe water at this time.

### Terrain.

Swimming here requires a DC 8 Strength (Athletics) check to move at half speed, though the higher up you go, the more severe the current becomes. The ground here is a crumbly mix of stone and shells, so in areas cleared of water by the *diving bell lanterns*, there is no mud. Climbing the loose rock requires a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check.

The specialists have set up a tent and winch near the golden seal, all of which are inside the magic shells of the *diving bell lanterns*. The bells' initial locations are marked by "B"s on the map, but they can be easily moved. It takes just a move action to pick one up, and they weigh only 10 pounds. Water moves away without disturbing the surroundings, but creatures might find themselves suddenly transitioning from water to air or vice versa.

The lanterns brightly illuminate everything in their radius. During the day, everything else is dimly lit; at night it is too dark to see.

The seal is protected by a glowing warding ring. The specialists are using careful magic to remove the golden plate while keeping

## Aquatic Combat Reminders.

Aquatic combat is fairly similar to land combat with a few exceptions, as summarized in the combat rules. Some important things to remember:

- When making a melee weapon attack, a creature that doesn't have a swimming speed (either natural or granted by magic) has disadvantage on the attack roll unless the weapon is a dagger, javelin, shortsword, spear, or trident.
- A ranged weapon attack automatically misses a target beyond the weapon's normal range. Even against a target within normal range, the attack roll has disadvantage unless the weapon is a crossbow, a net, or a weapon that is thrown like a javelin (including a spear, trident, or dart).
- Creatures and objects fully immersed in water have resistance to fire damage.
- Aquatic combat allows characters to travel in three dimensions. One simple way to track this is to place a die next to each creature, and use the face up side of the die to track how many feet (or 5-foot squares) beneath the surface the creature swims.
- Remember that the air bubbles from the *diving bell lanterns* clear water out from ground level, plus 10 feet above.

the warding magic in place long enough to just bury the portal, but in the thick of combat, disaster might strike. If any creature enters the area within the ring (including any space up to 15 feet above it) the ward is broken and the seal opens. See Seal of Mavisha, below.

In the southeast corner, a bright blue orb glows as a beacon so the Crisillyiri mercenaries could easily find the site.

### Aftermath.

If the PCs disturb the wards around the golden seal (or if you conveniently have a dying shark swim through the edge of a *diving bell lantern's* aura and fall into the ring), the portal opens.

#### Hunter Shark

Large beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 45 (6d10 + 12)

**Speed** 0 ft., swim 40 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 15 (+2) | 1 (-5) | 10 (+0) | 4 (-3) |

**Skills** Perception +2

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 12

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Blood Frenzy.** The shark has advantage on melee attack

**Water Breathing.** The shark can breathe only underwater.

#### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

#### Specialist Bodyguard

Medium humanoid (dwarf), lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 18 (scale mail, shield)

**Hit Points** 26 (4d8+8)

**Speed** 25 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 8 (-1) | 13 (+1) | 7 (-2) |

**Saving Throws** DEX +4, CON +4

**Skills** Athletics +4, Insight +3, Perception +3, Stealth +4

**Damage Resistances** poison

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Common, Dwarvish

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Dwarven Resilience.** The specialist has advantage on saving throws against poison.

**Heavy Hitter.** The specialist can choose to have disadvantage on melee attack rolls and deal an additional 5 damage on successful melee weapon attacks until the start of their next turn.

#### ACTIONS

**Battleaxe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+2) slashing damage if wielded in one hand or 7 (1d10+2) slashing damage if wielded in two hands.

#### REACTIONS

**Fighting Style: Protection.** When a creature the specialist can see attacks a target other than them that is within 5 feet of the specialist, they can use their reaction to impose disadvantage on the attack roll. The specialist must be wielding a shield.

**Kranto**

Medium humanoid (half-orc), chaotic neutral druid (land: coast) 4

**Armor Class** 14 (leather, shield)**Hit Points** 26 (4d8+8)**Speed** 30 ft.

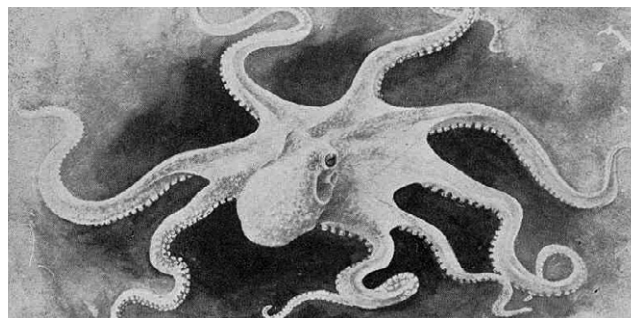
| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 12 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) |

**Saving Throws** INT +1, WIS +5**Skills** Animal Handling +5, Athletics +3, Nature +1, Perception +5, Survival +5**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15**Languages** Common, Druidic, Orc**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)**Natural Recovery (1/long rest).** During a short rest, Kranto chooses expended spell slots to recover with a combined level of 2 or less.**Relentless Endurance (1/long rest).** When Kranto is reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright, he can drop to 1 hit point instead.**Savage Attacks.** When Kranto scores a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, he can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.**Spellcasting.** Kranto is a 4th-level spellcaster who uses Wisdom as his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13; +5 to hit with spell attacks). Kranto has the following spells prepared from the druid's spell list:**Cantrips:** guidance, produce flame, resistance, shillelagh**1st level (4 slots):** cure wounds, faerie fire, fog cloud, speak with animals, thunderwave**2nd level (3 slots):** barkskin, flaming sphere, mirror image, misty step**Wild Shape (2/short rest).** As the druid feature (action to use; beasts of challenge rating 1/2 or below without a flying speed).**ACTIONS****Club.** Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage.**Finona Duval**

Medium humanoid (tiefling), lawful neutral sorcerer (fiendish) 4

**Armor Class** 17 (fiendish natural armor)**Hit Points** 22 (4d6+8)**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR    | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 15 (+2) |

**Saving Throws** CON +4, CHA +4**Skills** Arcana +3, Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Stealth +5**Damage Resistances** fire**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11**Languages** Common, Elvish, Infernal**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)**Infernal Legacy.** Finona knows the *thaumaturgy* cantrip.**Sorcery Points (4/long rest).** Finona can use sorcery points to gain additional spell slots or sacrifice spell slots to gain additional sorcery points.**Creating Spell Slots and Sorcery Points.** As the sorcerer class features (can create spell slots no higher than 2nd-level).**Metamagic: Quickened Spell.** When Finona casts a spell that has a casting time of 1 action, she can spend 2 sorcery points to change the casting time to 1 bonus action for this casting.**Metamagic: Twinned Spell.** When Finona casts a spell that targets only one creature and doesn't have a range of self, she can spend a number of sorcery points equal to the spell's level to target a second creature in range with the same spell (1 sorcery point if the spell is a cantrip). To be eligible for Twinned Spell, a spell must be incapable of targeting more than one creature at its current level.**Spellcasting.** Finona is a 4th-level spellcaster who uses Charisma as her spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12; +4 to hit with spell attacks). Finona has the following spells prepared from the sorcerer's spell list:**Cantrips:** acid splash, minor illusion, ray of frost, shocking grasp, true strike**1st level (4 slots):** color spray, false life, magic missile**2nd level (3 slots):** scorching ray, shatter**ACTIONS****Flaming Dagger.** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) fire damage.**REACTIONS****Hellish Rebuke (1/long rest).** Finona glares at a creature within 60 feet that has damaged her. The creature makes a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.**Octopus (Tough)**

Small beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 11 (2d6+4)**Speed** 5 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR    | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 8 (-1) | 17 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 3 (-4) | 10 (+0) | 4 (-3) |

**Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4**Senses** darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 12**Challenge** 1 (100 XP)**Hold Breath.** If out of water, the octopus can hold its breath 30 minutes.**Underwater Camouflage.** The octopus has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made while underwater.**Water Breathing.** The octopus can breathe only underwater.**ACTIONS****Tentacles.** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 1 bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 11). Until this grapple ends, the octopus has disadvantage on attack rolls against other targets.

**Ink Cloud (1/short rest).** A 5-foot radius cloud of ink extends all around the octopus if it is underwater. The area is heavily obscured for 1 minute, though a significant current can disperse the ink. After releasing the ink, the octopus can use the Dash action as a bonus action.





### Specialist Wizard

Medium humanoid (any), neutral wizard (enchantment) 2

**Armor Class** 15 (*mage armor*)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d6+4)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 11 (+0) | 15 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 13 (+1) | 10 (+0) |

**Saving Throws** INT +5, WIS +3

**Skills** Arcana +5, History +5, Investigation +5, Perception +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Common, Dwarvish, Giant

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Arcane Recovery.** Once per day when the specialist finishes a short rest, they can choose to recover 1 expended spell slot.

**Spellcasting.** The specialist is a 2nd-level spellcaster that uses Intelligence as their spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13; +5 to hit with spell attacks). The specialist has the following spells prepared from the wizard's spell list:

**Cantrips:** *light*, *mage hand*, *true strike*

**1st-level (3 slots):** *charm person*, *detect magic*, *false life*, *mage armor*, *hideous laughter*

#### ACTIONS

**Hypnotize.** The specialist can use an action to enchant a target within 5 feet who is able to hear or see the specialist. The target makes a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw; if the saving throw fails, the target gains the charmed condition, reduces its speed to 0, and is obviously incapacitated. The target remains charmed until the end of the specialist's next turn unless the specialist spends an action to extend the duration by 1 round, if the specialist is more than 5 feet away from the target, or if the target takes damage. After a creature has been targeted by this feature it is immune to its effects until the specialist finishes a long rest.

**Quarterstaff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 5 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage if wielded in one hand or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded in two hands.

### Skyseer Vision of Mavisha.

When a Skyseer sees the golden seal of Mavisha, she instantly knows what plane it is attuned to. If the portal is opened, she has the following vision, which alludes to the events of Adventure Seven, *Schism*.

"You break the surface of the waves, under a weary night sky. An island made of ghosts and shadows lies ahead of you, but the masses of people framed by the sea are blinded by high walls and dark paintings, and they cannot perceive the shifting tides outside.

"Inside now. Rains streak glass along this hall of portraits. A face looks down at you, canvas and frame and watercolor dyes. And down the center of the face, a schism appears, like a river trying to flow two ways at once. Paint runs and flows free of its borders, leaving one face on the canvas, and another struggling, bereft of form, to find a home or else swirl away and die."

## Seal of Mavisha

### Action. Tactical.

*Neither side wants what's behind the seal getting out.*

- 1 Mavisha water elemental
- 6 fishmen of Mavisha

If the warding circle around the circle is disturbed, read or paraphrase the following.

The golden seal flashes brightly, then it clatters to the ground. A wave of pain courses through your body as though something were trying to rip you apart from the inside. Where the seal had been, a hole in the rock pours out water and fishlike creatures. Some of the water seems different from the rest, visible because of its pure of grit and dust. The massive being lashes out with tentacles made of pure water.

A deep thrum of movement sounds from every direction as the whole sea around you comes alive. Rocks tear free from the sea bed and begin to spiral in a huge arc around the dig site, the makings of a titanic and destructive whirlpool.

### Power of the Plane of Water.

Each creature within 50 feet of the seal must make a DC 13 Constitution or Wisdom saving throw to resist being infused with hydromantic energy. If the creature fails, it is staggered until a successful save is made (each subsequent round allows for a new saving throw at the start of a creature's turn). NPCs take damage equal to one quarter their maximum hp. If this damage kills a creature, it dissolves into a puddle of water mixed with blood.

If the creature's saving throw has a result of 17 or higher, not only does it resist the energy, but it manages to use the power to its advantage, regaining 2d6 hit points and granting it a second action that it can take during its current turn.

### Terrain.

The fishmen emerge and, insane with an eternity trapped behind the seal, they charge whomever they can see. The elemental, due to special planar restrictions, cannot move through the spaces in the aura of the *diving bell lanterns*, but it can lash out with watery tentacles, pushing the lanterns away. When it moves them, the water from the seal fills in the vacated space instantly.

### Teamwork.

If any of Finona's team are present, they'll panic for a moment, then shout for the PCs to help close the seal.

To close the portal, first the magic must be primed. To do this, creatures must spend an action to make a DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check within 25 feet of the portal. After succeeding three such checks, the edge of the portal starts to glow with faint gold light. After 10 rounds, if the portal is not yet shut, the checks must be made again.

While the magic is primed, if any sort of gold is put into the space of the portal, it forms a temporary block. Nothing can pass through the portal for 1 round, and so the elemental cannot attack through.



To completely shut the portal, it simply needs to be covered entirely. This might be done by collapsing part of the rock wall above it, if the party has the capability. Alternately, the original seal could be put back in place, using the winch on the ledge above. A creature would have to stand beside the golden seal and spend an action to hook up the winch, and then another creature could spend an action to control the winch and move it into place.

Of course, the PCs might just kill the monster first.

### Failure.

If the party leaves without sealing the portal, they're caught in a maelstrom and dashed against rocks until they are dead. The elemental gets free and harasses the shipping lanes for a few months.

### Success.

Resealing the portal merely resets the status quo, but it means the next time the PCs have to seal a portal to another world, they'll know what they're doing.

#### Mavisha Water Elemental

Large elemental, neutral

**Armor Class** 14

**Hit Points** 114 (12d10+48)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 90 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 18 (+4) | 5 (-3) | 10 (+0) | 8 (-1) |

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

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Aquan

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Freeze.** If the elemental takes cold damage, it partially freezes; its speed is reduced by 20 feet until the end of its next turn.

**Water Form.** The elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The elemental makes two slam attacks.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

**Whelm (Recharge 4–6).** Each creature in the elemental's space must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, a target takes 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If it is Large or smaller, it is also grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and unable to breathe unless it can breathe water. If the saving throw is successful, the target is pushed out of the elemental's space. The elemental can grapple one large creature or up to two Medium or smaller creatures at one time. At the start of each of the elemental's turns, each target grappled by it takes 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. A creature within 5 feet of the elemental can pull out a creature or object out of it by taking an action to make a DC 14 Strength and succeeding.

#### Fishman of Mavisha

Medium humanoid (aquatic), neutral

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 10 ft., swim 60 ft.

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

**Saving Throws** CON +2

**Skills** Perception +3, Survival +5

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Aquan

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Limited Amphibiousness.** The fishman can breathe air and water, but it needs to submerge at least once every 12 hours to avoid suffocating.

#### ACTIONS

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage if wielded in one hand or 4 (1d8) piercing damage if wielded in two hands.



**Captain Rutger Smith.** The bold and idealistic captain of the R.N.S. *Impossible*, Captain Smith earned his first command five years ago. Now 37, he has never led his ship into battle. That, combined with his fondness for the Malice-era philosophical writings of the monk William Miller, has made him the target of mockery by more established naval officers. Smith seems content to just drill his crew twice as hard, encouraging them with philosophical aphorisms between puffs on a cigar.

Captain Smith only appears in this adventure if the party recruits the *Impossible* in Act Two, instead of taking their own ship.



# Appendix: The Audit

## Lord Viscount

### Social. Real-Time.

*The head of the national RHC arrives to oversee an audit of the party.*

Lord Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill wants to meet the PCs face to face. Lady Saxby, worried about them making her look bad, holds the meet-and-greet in her office, where the lack of chairs makes long conversations awkward, thus keeping things brief. The Lord Viscount congratulates the party for their work in bringing down Macbannin, but he says that after finding one incident of such egregious corruption, he thinks it is critical to be on watch for more.

After that, Saxby takes over and gives the PCs their marching orders. They're to stay on their normal case and simply cooperate with any requests from the Lord Viscount's staff. Delft will handle the majority of the paperwork.

Give the PCs a few minutes to speak with the Lord Viscount if they're interested. He's especially interested in any Yerasol Veterans, since it's always good publicity for a veteran to be promoted. Before long, though, Lady Saxby politely reminds her boss that there are other teams of constables to meet, and she glares at Delft as if to say, "Now get them out of here."

## A Possible Promotion

### Social. Real-Time.

*Yerasol Veterans always get first crack at promotions.*

During Act Two, any Yerasol Veteran PCs get invited to the guest manor where the Lord Viscount is staying, on the island of the governor's mansion. There's a formal ball, and the Lord Viscount is giving the PC(s) a chance to make a splash amid the nobility.

Though the nobles are generally distinguished and polite, Risur is a tropical country, so they party well. Energetic music, lavish choreographed dances, and heated arguments fill out the night, culminating in a drunken general throwing a pie out a window for reasons that aren't quite clear.

At some point during the night, the Lord Viscount chats with the PC on a balcony, watching the sea while smoking a cigar. He wants to know if the PC has any interest in politics or higher stations, perhaps in the RHC, the army, or the navy. If the PC comports himself well, the Lord Viscount says he's not comfortable sending important future leaders on missions without assistance. With the PC's permission, he'd like to send along some crack sailors on the party's mission to Ber.

If the PC agrees, the party will have five allied Risur soldiers (page 21) on their side, and the ship's captain has advantage on vehicle (water) checks.

## Digging for Dirt

### Social. Montage.

*Will the party set aside solving the mystery so they can cover their asses?*

Morgan Cippiano. Gale. Locan Kell. Various fugitives, drug dealers, and other unsavory types. Make a list of anyone the party has had dealings with that might make them look bad. Investigators are sent to speak with them, or to look into their interactions with the PCs. If Delft is aware of any particular indiscretions by the party, he'll suggest they try to get to these people first to get stories straight and cover their asses.

Of course, the Lord Viscount Inspector has done this before. He's got people watching the PCs, tailing them. Noticing the tails is tough and the PCs get a DC 19 Wisdom (Insight) check every four hours to do so, though it might be easier in some areas where hiding in a crowd is harder. Shaking a tail is up to player ingenuity, and should consist of more than just a single skill check.

The tails start the morning of the 1st of Autumn, even before the PCs are told they're being audited. They persist whenever the PCs are in Flint, until the Lord Viscount is satisfied.

## Harassment

### Social. Montage.

*Crime boss Lorcan Kell harasses the party from afar.*

When Kaja's smuggling operation is brought down, Lorcan Kell is furious at the PCs. Kell won't move directly against the PCs, since he's not sure what reaction that would provoke. But he's testing them for weakness, gathering intelligence, and looking for a way to take them down.

The morning after they arrest Kaja, the PCs each receive a letter, delivered to their homes, telling them to release her or suffer the consequences. By that point, though, Kaja's likely already dead.

The next day, the PCs' neighbors mention seeing tough-looking men watching the PCs' homes.

By the time the PCs leave for the ziggurat of Apet, Lorcan has learned that the PCs are being audited. He decides to frame one or more of them while they're out of town by planting evidence at their homes.

### Fake Evidence.

Lorcan has no shortage of people he wants to kill. So he picks one of them, has the man killed in a way consistent with what the PCs would do, then leaves a letter identifying the target at one PC's house, as well as thanking the party for taking over the smuggling operation from Kaja. He tries to paint it such that he and Kaja had a falling out, and that he is bringing the party into his operation. A sizeable payment, about 400 gp, awaits discovery on a table.





It's somewhat sloppy, but Kell isn't the cleverest crime boss. If the PCs are careful, they might have a friend watch their place. Otherwise, when they get back from the ziggurat the audit has turned up the evidence. The PCs will have to answer for it, and if they make a bad show of defending themselves they might be punished.

## Consequences

### Social. Real-Time.

*Lady Saxby shares the Lord Viscount's report with the party.*

When the party returns to Flint early in Act Three, Lady Saxby has Delft tell the party to come to her office. She is not patient, and will send local police to escort them if they dally. When they arrive, though, she has them wait for half an hour while the Lord Viscount is summoned. Shortly before he arrives, Saxby brings the party into her office and goes through the report.

The report has three main sections. She's not the yelling type; she relates her comments in a dismissive tone. She's never disappointed, because she never had high expectations for the PCs in the first place. Even if they've done well, she paints it instead as being merely passable. Only if they've done really terrible things does she get emotional: amused, though, rather than angry.

### Inappropriate Actions on Job?

If the PCs have been roughing up witnesses, killing criminals instead of capturing them, or causing unnecessary property damage, Saxby lists what they've done wrong.

### Unseemly Affiliations?

Here she highlights suspected corruption, kickbacks, or strong-arming, as well as friendships with criminals or people whom the press could write articles about. If any PC is really corrupt, she might later recruit that PC to her side to help protect her interests.

### Excessive Expenditures?

At the end of this adventure, each PC should be 6th level, and have wealth roughly equivalent to 16,000 gp (assuming they are 6th level when the audit occurs). If a PC has much more, Saxby lists what the character will have to hand over. Much less, and she'll sigh and remind them they have spare money for requisitions, and that if it doesn't get spent, the politicians will cut the RHC budget next year.

Also, if a PC has been holding on to items that should have been turned over as evidence and hasn't tried to hide them, the items have been discovered. Saxby demands the PC turn over any such items to the quartermaster downstairs before leaving, and she threatens the PC with criminal charges. Indeed, the PC will find that he or she can't leave the building without handing over the items, but the criminal charges won't materialize before Saxby's driven out at the end of this adventure.

### Final Word.

Finally, the Lord Viscount arrives, and he gives the PCs either a quick congratulatory speech or a wise, fatherly reminder that they've shown themselves possessed of better natures than most people, and that they shouldn't waste themselves on petty pursuits. If any PC was particularly egregious, he'll make sure to take him aside afterward for a one-on-one chat.

Before departing, he says he has high hopes for them, and will see them again in a few months when the peace summit comes to Flint. 🗨️