



EN5ider Presents:

Digging for Lies

Part Three

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



Act Three: Xambria's Madness

IN THIS ACT, THE PARTY RETURNS TO FLINT TO STOP the villain from opening another deadly portal.

Back to Flint

Social. Montage.

Sijhen seeks an opportunity to strike and escape.

This scene must be planned carefully. Sijhen wants to get as much information as possible, then escape, but details depend on the PCs' actions.

By now, the party should have definitively figured out that Caius's organization is interested in these seals. Make sure they recover the memorandum to Finona (in Act Two), which reveals that Caius was supposed to attend a meeting in Vendricce in a few months. If the memorandum itself got lost or is unavailable somehow, you'll need to have Finona reveal that information in interrogation, because it provides the PCs' link to Adventure Four, *Always on Time*.

The party's next course of action likely is returning to Flint to look for more information. They have some issues to deal with first, and shortly after they set out the sudden departure of Xambria will reveal that the escapee from the ziggurat of Apet has been with them all along.

Sijhen and the Gidim.

Sijhen's people, the Gidim, come from a world that was itself sentient. Like a magnetic field that points north on most worlds, on the Gidim homeworld, fields of psychic energy surrounded the physical landscape.

Eventually the world's stray thoughts evolved to be able to manifest physical forms, using psychic energy as a food source. Most of these thoughtforms were anchored to the ground where they could feed on psychic vents. More advanced creatures developed the ability to control their metabolism, so they keep parts of their bodies only semi-corporeal, letting them float and drift to other food spots.

Slowly, predators and herd entities developed, and finally sentient beings appeared, though they could only maintain their consciousness for as long as they had access to a broad enough diet of thoughts from lesser creatures. These people, the Gidim, worshiped and served the world, calling it their Elder Mother. They traveled between worlds finding new thoughts to consume, both for themselves and for their mother.

Though weak at the time of the Axis Seal's creation, the Gidim today have taken whole planes as slaves. They harvest wild and delicious thoughts, which are fed into titanic tendrils that weave through portals to dozens of worlds, all finally back to their homeworld. They play a notable role during mythic level play, once the Axis Seal opens.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

Jennifer Taber, for her patience;

to the hundreds of gamers who backed the original release of ZEITGEIST on Kickstarter; and to the over one thousand generous patrons of EN WORLD EN5IDER whose support has made this Fifth Edition update possible.

OPEN GAME CONTENT

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Prisoners.

The party might have dig site and/or mercenary sailor prisoners. Constables are not allowed to kill prisoners, and even if all their foes died when reduced to 0 hit points, there are still a lot of bodies to dispose of. Feel free to gloss over this if you want, but the party should want to take at least some of the specialists as prisoners.

Not Worth the Hassle.

As for the mercenary sailors, the party has three likely options: to make arrangements to deliver them to mainland Ber, perhaps into the custody of local law enforcement; to let them and their ship go; or to recruit some of them for the journey back. The third option might even be necessary if the party wants to take ownership of *Il Dragon de Mer*.

The Important Prisoners.

Unless they came on the *Impossible*, the PCs likely have no brig on their ship. The party might try keeping the specialists on *Il Dragon de Mer*, but if they've enlisted any mercenaries, it might be too great a risk of them being set free.

Xambria offers a solution. The *Dagger* has a hold that can be easily secured, and she has convinced Captain Jack to keep the prisoners. In exchange, they'll be able to sail back with the PCs, preferring safety in numbers.

In order to transport magic-using prisoners, the official technique is to bind their hands with *mage cuffs*, as well as a gold thread to prevent teleportation. For added security, a locking hood can be added, to blind the prisoner.

Loose Ends.

La Inspiración might help with offloading mercenary prisoners, but Paco is eager to get back to his dig and see what has been damaged. He would prefer if the PCs let him take the golden seal, which he claims is the heritage and property of Ber. After seeing them fight, though, he's not going to press the point.

Interrogation.

Of the operatives at the dig site, only Finona is aware that Caius Bergeron worked for an organization with secret goals. Finona wears a golden ring inscribed with "Original Brave Ideas," marking her as a fifth-tier member of Golden Cell. She is tight-lipped and demands to meet with her employer. If interrogated, she can recount visiting several other buried seals, including one with Rock Rackus. She's got a sense Bergeron's superiors want to expand the possibilities of planar magic, but she understands that Bergeron had to keep her in the dark.

She will explain, though, that she had explicit orders to make sure nothing got out of this ziggurat. If the party hasn't yet found the memorandum to her from Caius, she'll ask for leniency in exchange for the location of the document.

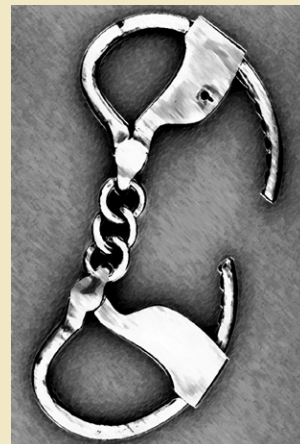
Sijhen's Departure.

Sijhen wants as much information as possible, and it also wants to kill anyone who knows about its presence in this world, but it's wary of the player characters.

Mage Cuffs.

Wondrous item, uncommon

If a creature wearing these handcuffs casts a spell or uses a magic feature, the handcuffs emit a warning whistle and deal 1d6 lightning damage to the wearer. If the wearer is brought to 0 hit points in this way, the creature is knocked unconscious but does not need to roll any death saves.



Other Seals.

If interrogated, Finona has explored four ziggurats: Mavisha in Ber, Apet in Risur, Jiese in Crisillyir, and Nem in the dead magic zone of Danor. None of these play any sort of prominent role elsewhere in the campaign.

Ideally, if the heroes don't suspect Xambria at all, Sijhen will wait for the PCs to bring any prisoners from the dig site to the surface. Preferably they would be berthed on the *Dagger*. The evening the two ships set back for Flint, Sijhen would discreetly kill the crew of the *Dagger*, then eat the prisoners' brains. It then creates a planar portal to Mavisha, sends the summoned monsters (see *Snatchers in the Night*, below) to swim and attack the PCs' ship, then uses a scroll to teleport to Flint. Right before leaving, it sets fire to all the ship's lantern oil, which causes the vessel to burn to a husk in under half an hour.

If the party travels in either the *Impossible* or *Il Dragon de Mer*, and they have the prisoners below decks, Sijhen uses a bit of clever distraction. Again it kills the *Dagger's* crew, then sends monsters to attack the PCs. Sijhen detaches its thoughtform from Xambria's body, and uses the distraction of the monsters to sneak aboard the PCs' ship, phase through the hull, and nibble on prisoner brains. Meanwhile, Xambria will be reeling and confused. With the utmost wariness to avoid combat with the party, Sijhen would glide back to the *Dagger*, re-merge with Xambria, set fire to the ship, and use the *teleport* scroll.

If the party travels in an excise cutter or steam cutter (see Act Two) and keeps the prisoners on their own ship, they'll have to keep them on the main deck, since neither ship has a lower deck – in that event, Sijhen won't be able to get to the prisoners without being seen. Sijhen also won't risk taking on more than one PC, so if all of them are on alert, it won't approach.

Sijhen still wants a head start on the party, so if it can't feasibly get the prisoners' brains, it will simply teleport away, and hope to finish the job when it attacks the RHC headquarters in Act Three.

If the PCs think that Xambria is acting oddly and lock her up, she might break free during the PCs' descent to the dig site, and be gone before they return. Sijhen's ability to exit Xambria's body and remove her bindings means it will be very hard for the party to keep them both captive.



Xambria's Consciousness.

If one of the PCs chooses to accept Xambria's mind, she floats in the back of the character's consciousness, able to sense what they sense and communicate with them mentally. She functions in many ways as though she were an artifact that does not take up an item slot or attunement.

Xambria's Consciousness.

As you struggle to pick the lock, Xambria walks into your field of vision, crossing her arms impatiently. "Don't mind me. Take your time." You shift over a bit to give this hallucination room, and she kneels and guides your hand. With a click the lock springs open.

Xambria's Psyche. You gain a +1 bonus on Dexterity (Acrobatics), Intelligence (Arcana), and Intelligence (History) checks, and on checks made to use thieves' tools. In addition, you learn the *mage hand* cantrip.

Xambria's Goals.

- Discover the secrets of the Obscurati and exact revenge.
- Learn all she can about the nature of the Ancients.
- Get a body of her own.

Roleplaying Xambria.

Free of Sijhen, Xambria's natural personality returns. Intensely curious, she would often put herself in danger, and so she encourages the PC to be bold. She is extremely well read on many topics, including history, magic, and culture, but surprisingly ignorant about others, especially modern technology.

Xambria's long time fusion with Sijhen has left marks on her psyche however, making her prone to rapid mood swings. She is obsessed with bringing down the Obscurati, who she blames for the deaths of her dig team and many others.

Xambria constantly observes her host's surroundings and offers advice when she can. She may sometimes ask to take control of the host body, especially when trying to connect to the remnants of her past life. If concordance is low, she may even take primary control of the body by force.

Concordance.

Starting Score 5

Host gains a level	+1d10
Host is proficient in History	+2
Host defeats an Obscurati plot	+1
Host discovers new information about the Ancients	+1
Host aids the Obscurati	-2
Host destroys historical artifacts	-1

Pleased (16–20)

"Together we can defeat the—is that a real Tarkash dynasty vase?"

Xambria has formed a close bond with her host. The two personalities may start to merge. Xambria's spirit can briefly manifest in the physical world.

The bonus from the Xambria's Psyche feature increases to +2 and you gain the following feature:

Xambria Wave (1/long rest). You can spend an action to have

Xambria flicker before you and shove the air, sending foes flying. Enemies within 15 feet make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your highest ability score modifier) or are knocked prone.

Satisfied (12–15)

"Yes, there's a voice in my head, but she's very helpful."

Xambria gets along well with her host, and has become accustomed to the new body. She discovers that even while she is not in primary control, Xambria can aid in a fight.

You gain the following feature:

Xambria Interference (1/long rest). On your turn, Xambria manifests for a moment within 50 feet and manipulates an object or does something similar.

Normal (5–11)

"We're going to spend a lot of time together. It's best we establish some ground rules."

Xambria is still adjusting to her new body, and the personality she shares with it. While she almost certainly prefers the character to Sijhen, she is not entirely sure she can trust her new host.

Unsatisfied (1–4)

"It wasn't me! It was the archeologist in my head!"

Xambria is unhappy with many of the PCs choices, and tries to take control of the body by force. Once every 24 hours the PC must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 8 + character level) or have Xambria take control of the PC's body. The GM may dictate the PC's actions during this time. Every time Xambria takes a long rest, the PC may attempt a saving throw to regain control.

Angered (0 or Lower)

"I think you're mistaking me for somebody else. My name is Xambria."

The PC's actions so frequently diverge from Xambria's that she tries to permanently wrest control away from the PC. At the beginning of every combat encounter the PC must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 8 + character level) or have Xambria take control of the PC's body. The GM may dictate the PC's actions during this time. Every time Xambria takes a long rest, the PC may attempt a saving throw to regain control. If concordance is less than zero, the PC takes a penalty to the saving throw equal to half the concordance value (minimum 0).

Moving On.

"Everything's so... quiet."

Xambria might move on in either of two ways. If she is gets along especially well with her host, the two might slowly merge together into they form a single personality that combines elements of Xambria and her host.

If a PC wants to be rid of her, certain rituals and spells make it possible, but Xambria will argue destroying her is murder.

Finally, Xambria may grow tired of living as a passenger in the host's body, and yearn for a life of her own. In Adventure Seven, *Schism*, she'll have an ideal opportunity to find a new body.



Snatchers in the Night

Action. Tactical.

Monsters from Apet distract the party while Sijhen escapes.

- 1 hydra
- 8 slime walkers

After several experiments with various planar portal rituals, Sijhen has figured out how to summon monsters. It still has trouble connecting to Apet for very long, but the proximity to the seal of Mavisha makes it easier for it to call upon aquatic monsters. They only linger in this world as long as the portal is open and for a few minutes afterward, but that's long enough to cause a distraction.

Tactics.

The night after the party leaves the seal of Mavisha, their ship is attacked. The hydra climb onto the ship, and attacks as a distraction. The slime walkers clamber onto the deck, three per round, and try to keep PCs from aiding their companions.

If Sijhen has to sneak aboard the PCs' ship, it waits for a patch of clouds to provide extra darkness to block moon and starlight. It sends the monsters ahead and leaves the *Dagger* the round they attack. It takes two rounds for Sijhen, gliding above the surface of the waves, to get to the PCs' ship and phase through a lower deck. Sijhen will be invisible for the approach, but any character who is on the maindeck might notice its departure (passive Perception score of 20 or higher).

On round three Sijhen mentally stuns the prisoners. It spends rounds four through seven eating the brains of four prisoners, then withdraws and is back on the *Dagger* by round ten. On round fifteen, Sijhen merges with Xambria, sets fire to the ship, and teleports away. The monsters from Mavisha vanish after round twenty, and the fire on the *Dagger* becomes visible then.

Terrain.

The *Dagger* is traveling a hundred feet to port of the PCs' ship. The monsters generally stay on the starboard side of the party's ship, and very canny PCs might realize the creatures are trying to keep them from looking in the *Dagger*'s direction.

Aftermath.

The *Dagger* catches fire, but if the PCs hurry over and work to battle the blaze, they can keep the ship from sinking. Alternately, they might rush aboard to look for clues. The small ship's crew are all dead, but Xambria is missing.

If Sijhen managed to kill the prisoners, their jaws are all dislocated and their brains missing.

Sijhen's Way Home.

Sijhen likely beats the party back to Flint by several days. It plans to stay in Xambria's body long enough to open a portal to Gidim, but it has already tried and failed to create such a portal twice before.

By this point Sijhen has the golden seal of Apet stashed in a sewer tunnel off Stanfield Canal, plus either documents or the devoured knowledge of Caius's specialists. Sijhen knows it cannot use the same ritual that worked thousands of years ago, but it has figured out a way to create a tentative portal to Gidim.

Hydra

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 172 (15d12 + 75)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	2 (–4)	10 (+0)	7 (–2)

Skills Perception +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Hold Breath. The hydra can hold its breath for 1 hour.

Multiple Heads. The hydra has five heads. While it has more than one head, the hydra has advantage on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious. Whenever the hydra takes 25 or more damage in a single turn, one of its heads dies. If all its heads die, the hydra dies. At the end of its turn, it grows two heads for each of its heads that died since its last turn, unless it has taken fire damage since its last turn. The hydra regains 10 hit points for each head regrown in this way.

Reactive Heads. For each head the hydra has beyond one, it gets an extra reaction that can be used only for opportunity attacks.

Wakeful. While the hydra sleeps, at least one of its heads is awake.

ACTIONS

Multitattack. The hydra makes as many bite attacks as it has heads.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Slime Walker

Small elemental, neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (5d6+5)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 10 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	8 (–1)	13 (+1)	4 (–3)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws CON +3

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

Damage Immunities acid, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Aquan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Earth Glide. The elemental can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the elemental doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) bludgeoning damage and the target makes a DC 12 Strength saving throw. On a failure, the target is incapacitated by the slime walker's mud. As an action, the target can make a new save to break free. The target can also be freed by 1 round of immersion in water or by breaking the mud apart (AC 8, 10 hp).



First, it plans to open a portal to Apet. Normally this is impossible, but since Xambria has the *golden icon of Apet*, she can bypass the Ancient's extra seal on the plane. Once this portal is open, energy from Apet will pour through, which Sijhen can gather and harness. Apet provides the magical power needed to teleport, and a huge influx will power a portal that reaches much farther than is normally possible.

The portal will also release monsters, the mutated descendants of old Gidim warbeasts, which will intuitively serve as Sijhen's reinforcements.

Second, Sijhen will alter the existing portal ritual to point to Gidim. To aim the portal accurately, Sijhen needs the Ancient star map Lady Saxby has in her safe in the RHC headquarters.

Sijhen knows that physical matter cannot travel safely to worlds other than the few local planets, but it hopes that by detaching from Xambria and going through the seal as a thoughtform, it will be able to survive.

An Evil Genius's Plan.

Sijhen still sees itself as a scout and spy. It wants to get as much information as possible, report home, and make sure its presence goes unnoticed. It expects that soon after it returns home, the Gidim will attack this world, and it doesn't want the native races preparing for invasion. Confident in its genius intellect, Sijhen concocts a plan that will take it home and at the same time silence its enemies.

It needs the Ancient star map, but it fears Lady Saxby is taking extra precautions after Sijhen's failed break-in at her home. It wants Lady Saxby to let her guard down. So Sijhen plans to let the PCs capture it.

Plot's Timeline.

The morning of the 31st of Autumn, Sijhen kills workers excavating a subrail tunnel that passes near the underground jail of the RHC headquarters. It sets up the golden seal of Apet there as a focus, scribes various wards, and prepares a planar portal ritual.

That afternoon, using knowledge gleaned from Caius Bergeron, Sijhen sends a message to the Obscurati, warning that Lady Saxby will be meeting with the PCs at 9:30 this evening to reveal the conspiracy's secrets. Caius already had a contingency plan in place if the Saxby talked or the PCs learned too much, so Sijhen knows what to expect. It hopes the Ob agents will distract the PCs, or better yet kill them and cover the evidence of its presence.

Finally that evening the gala of Ancients will open at Pardwight museum at 7pm. At 8pm Sijhen, in Xambria's body, will attack. After pretending to be interested in retrieving the three relics—amulet, blade, and staff—Sijhen will give Xambria back control so she'll surrender. Sijhen expects to be arrested and brought to the RHC jail, which should take no longer than an hour. The jail is separated from the location of Sijhen's ritual by only 50 feet of stone.

At 9:30 PM, a clock timer will place the final component of the portal ritual. Waves of energy from Apet will flow out and flood the RHC headquarters, causing living creatures to cycle from solid to insubstantial and back.

Monsters will emerge from the portal and attack the RHC headquarters, providing a distraction. By moving in time with the

energy waves, Sijhen will be able to escape its cell. It will head for Lady Saxby's office and threaten her so she'll hand over the Ancient star map. Then it will head back down to the basement, through the wall, and into the subrail tunnel. It tries to avoid a fight, letting the monsters and the Obscurati keep the PCs busy.

With just a few minutes of concentration, Sijhen will be able to re-aim the portal to Gidim. It will shuck itself from Xambria's body and fly through the portal.

The Thing From Beyond.

Sijhen lacks the resources to ensure that the PCs will die, but it hopes its monsters will keep them from ruining its plan. If they find the ritual, though, Sijhen has special back-up.

From Sijhen's previous experiments opening portals to Apet, it knows that a massive monster lurks near the site of the old Gidim staging grounds. This is the mutated creature that formed after the soldiers of Gidim went mad from thought-starvation and began to eat each other. The Thing disturbs even Sijhen, so while it knows the creature will be loyal, it will only release the beast if the situation is dire.

What Could Go Wrong.

There's the chance the PCs might not take Xambria to the RHC headquarters after being captured. If Sijhen's plan goes off as it intends, it'll look like an evil genius. If the PCs decide to hold Xambria elsewhere, Sijhen will nudge Xambria to tell the party all she knows, hoping that the revelation about Lady Saxby will convince them to go to the headquarters.

If they simply kill Xambria, Sijhen can survive independently. It will hide in Xambria's body in hopes that they bring the corpse to the RHC. If the PCs won't even take the body there, Sijhen can slip away as an invisible thought-form. A courier might deliver a warning to get the PCs to the RHC headquarters just as strange things start to happen.

Back in Flint

Exposition. Montage.

The party tries to find the exile from Apet.

Home in a Hurry.

It takes the party at least 3 days, but no more than 7, to sail back to Flint, but if they're clever and willing to call in favors, they can shave this down. The party should not yet be able to teleport unless they purchased a scroll, but they can sail to Ber's capital, Seobriga, in about a day. There they can find a spellcaster who, for 750 gp, will teleport them to the bayou west of Flint. Alternately, the party might use *sending* to contact Stover Delft, who could arrange for a government spellcaster to teleport in and pick them up for the lower price of 250 gp.

They might have to abandon their ship in Ber, which they'll be on the hook for. If their ship sank, they'll either have to charter one back, teleport, or spend a month hiking across the Anthras Mountains.



Report In.

When the PCs return to Flint, a messenger finds them at the docks with a request from Stover Delft to meet him as quickly as possible at Pardwight Museum of Natural History. Delft is there with curator Hans Weber and a dozen police officers providing security. Delft asks to hear the PCs' story, then fills them in on strange occurrences he thinks are tied to their investigation.

There have been cases of the Distant Madness condition cropping up, mostly in Parity Lake, and every day they've found another innocent victim missing a brain. Hans Weber reported receiving a disturbing letter from Xambria, which warns that the relics of the Ancients might be targeted by whatever is behind all of this (see the People of Interest sidebar).

Since recovering the relics, Weber has kept them at a royal safehold, but he's going to take them out for the opening gala of the Ancients exhibit. Weber cannot afford to cancel the gala, so he hopes the PCs can provide security.

Also...

Before Delft leaves the party, he tells them that Lady Saxby wants to see them as soon as possible. See Consequences, page xx.

Looking for Xambria.

The gala opens the evening of the 31st of Autumn. If the PCs have time to kill, they might look for Xambria. Sijhen is very wary of being caught, though, so it has gone to great effort to cover its trail. It has performed test portal rituals and killed victims, but never in the same place twice. When going out during the day, it has concealed Xambria's appearance by dressing her as a hooded druidess.

Still, rather than simply frustrating your players by having no leads, you can instead showcase Sijhen's cleverness by having it leave a false trail. The golden seal of Apet keeps the party from locating Sijhen's lair via *detect planar energy*, but Sijhen might gather energy from Apet, contain it in an amberglass vessel, and place it on a barge that travels up and down Stanfield Canal and even to Pine Island.

To add extra insult, Sijhen even picks a barge operated by a red-haired woman, so after the PCs follow the fake leads, find the amberglass vessel leaking Apet energy, and meet the barge owner,



Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft.

A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft is your direct superior. He chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.

they'll realize that Sijhen was toying with them.

If you really need to keep the PCs busy for a while, maybe Sijhen lets itself be noticed in the turf of Lorcan Kell, so if the PCs go in they'll risk being attacked by hostile gangs. Alternately, you might just move up the opening date of the gala.

Gala of the Ancients

Action. Tactical.

Sijhen attack the gala as an excuse to be arrested.

Weber allows the PCs to access the museum gallery before the gala, and he specifically asks them to be present when the relics are removed from the royal safehold at 6:00 PM. Weber does his best to accommodate security related requests, though some requests (such as removing the sword, staff, and amulet) he simply cannot abide.

The museum exhibit includes many Ancient items, most from Xambria's dig. There are gobs of gold jewelry, plus primitive decorated pottery, weapons, household tools, two large stone statues, and dozens of statuettes.

The gala begins at 7:00 PM, though many guests are up to half an hour late. The guests are primarily other academics and patrons of the arts – feel free to include NPCs the characters have met, such as Nathan Jierre, Professor Lynn Kindleton, or Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen. Rock Rackus also shows up, much to Weber's chagrin. The assembled archaeologists can't resist critiquing the man's methods, but the more lay guests respond well to Rock's theatrics.



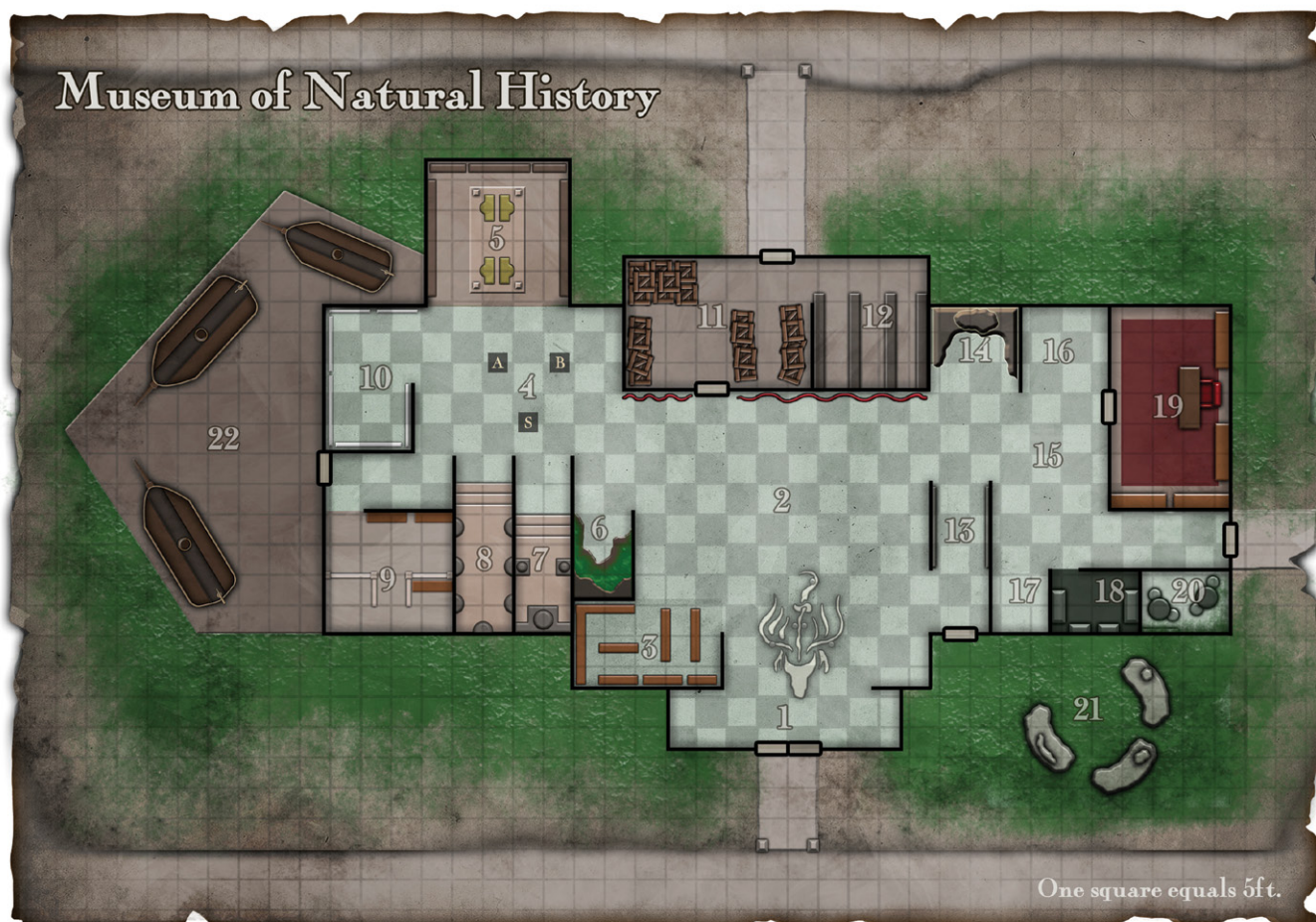
Museum Locations.

Areas 2, 4, and 15 have large skylights. During the nighttime gala, however, elegant oil lanterns along the walls provide light.

1. **Entrance.** Bones of a gargantuan dragon, posed in the entrance, are the pride of the museum.
2. **Plaza.** A common area for mingling. A curtain along the north wall is stitched with "The Ancients—Magic of a Forgotten Golden Age." Behind the curtain is the door to the loading dock.
3. **Gift Shop.** Full of furniture and shelves.
4. **Gala Hall.** Spaces marked A, B, S (for amulet, blade, and staff) are 15-ft. high glass cases displaying the most prominent relics.
5. **Ancients Gallery.** Four gold sarcophagi, and tables with jewelry and stonework.
6. **Cave Men Gallery.** A diorama of wax figures depicting the supposed appearance of typical Ancients, similar to the clothing of the mummies in the ziggurat of Apet, except as humans instead of orcs. (Yes, the museum is a little racist.)
7. **Risur's Founding Gallery.** Another diorama, this is a permanent exhibit of painted stone statues of King Kelland and his two greatest companions, plus other relics.
8. **Hall of Kings.** As above, but depicting famous and obscure kings over the seventeen centuries of Risur's existence.
9. **Offices.** Desks and cubicles mostly used for paperwork.
10. **Map Gallery.** Various maps of Risur and the world, including

a framed canvas rubbing of the floor map from the ziggurat of Apet.

11. **Loading Dock.** Various materials needed for the museum.
12. **Archives.** Shelves of history books and scholarly papers.
13. **Gem Gallery.** Permanent exhibit of geodes, cut gems, and jewelry.
14. **Dragon Gallery.** A popular permanent exhibit, with a wall painting of the dragon tyrants of Ber, with a diorama of battling dragons in front.
15. **Beast Theater.** Illusions here show various monsters. Candles burn along the wall, and subtle incenses in the wax provide the magical energy to keep the illusions active.
16. **Titan Gallery.** A centuries-old fresco depicts (inaccurately) the fey titans She Who Writhes, Father of Thunder, Ash Wolf, Granny Allswell, and the Voice of Rot.
17. **God Gallery.** Recovered frescoes from Crisillyir and Danor showcase popular foreign gods.
18. **Demon Gallery.** A lightless room with paintings and a diorama related to the now-defunct demonocracy. Guests have to bring their own light sources.
19. **Curator's Office.** Fancy couch, carpet, desk.
20. **Employee Lounge.**
21. **Ancient Druidic Shrine.** Recovered hengestones believed related to proto-primalist religion.
22. **Ancient Ships.** Three reconstructions of Ancient sailboats, based on ceramic paintings.





The Attack.

Sijhen attacks promptly at 8:00 PM, right as a nearby belltower chimes the hour.

- Sijhen/Xambria
- 10 implanters
- 1 worm maw

The skylight above the Ancient gala hall shatters, and a woman in black leather descends on a silk rope amid the crashing glass. She flicks her head to adjust a braid of red hair, revealing Xambria's face. But something in her eyes is different—cold, calculating, alien.

She carries Xambria's old miner's pick, but does not wear the golden icon necklace you've seen her with every time before.

A security guard takes a step toward her, but she pulls back her miner's pick as a threat, and the man pauses. A hush falls over the crowd.

"You know," Xambria says as she glances at a diorama depicting Ancient dress, "they really didn't look like that. You all clearly don't know what you're dealing with, so just give me what I want and none of you have to die."

If not stopped, Sijhen uses *telekinesis* through Xambria to retrieve the relics from their cases. Then, with an apologetic smile, she attacks the nearest PC. Simultaneously a swarm of six Gidim implanters clamber in through the skylight and attack the bystanders, and then a worm maw flies in after them. The swarm also enters as soon as anyone attacks Sijhen.

The remaining four implanters move to block the outside exits, two at the front, one at each side. The loading dock exit is safe, but if anyone opens another door they'll be blocked by monsters.

Bystanders.

Scatter the museum with thirty random bystanders, plus curator Hans Weber. They count as difficult terrain, and flee toward the nearest exits, where they get clumped up and fight to escape first. If a monster attacks a bystander, don't bother rolling; just remove the bystanders targeted by the attack. They're either dead or unconscious.

Rock Rackus, if present, comes to the PCs' aid.

Tactics.

Sijhen fights until Xambria reaches half-health, at which point it relinquishes control of its host body. A sudden look of astonishment and fear comes over Xambria, and she surrenders to the PCs. The monsters attack indiscriminately, but they won't harm Sijhen in Xambria.

If Sijhen gets hold of the *amulet of the Ancients*, when worn the magic item reduces 1 additional damage taken from acid, cold, fire, and electricity.

The Dynamic Duo.

Sijhen's possession of Xambria allows the Gidim to act through the archaeologist in strange ways. Due to their special bonding, whenever Sijhen is possessing Xambria, use the following special rules to represent her increased power:

- Xambria gains an additional action on each of her turns. That action can only be used to innately cast one of Sijhen's spells or use its ego whip.
- Sijhen may choose to leave Xambria's body, or can delay to take this action on a later turn. If it does, Sijhen's natural thoughtform body manifests adjacent to Xambria's body. It may use its *invisibility* spell as part of this action so it won't be seen.

In addition, when possessed, Xambria gains the following feature:

Twinmind Wayfarer. Sijhen/Xambria can move her speed in two different directions at the same time, ending in different locations. When Sijhen/Xambria is attacked she can choose to only be in one of those locations at which point the other copy vanishes. Sijhen/Xambria must choose to end this effect at the start of her next turn. Until that time, Sijhen/Xambria can make attacks and be targeted as if in either location.

Aftermath.

When Xambria surrenders, she believes she has fought free of Sijhen's control.

Xambria drops her weapon, falls to her knees, and screams. She yanks and tears off one of her leather sleeves, revealing three human eyes poking out of her skin. All these eyes twitch and look in every direction, then stare straight back at Xambria. She reels in horror for a moment, then shakes her head.

"That is bloody strange."

She looks away from her mutated limb at the madness in the gala, as if seeing it for the first time. Then she looks to you and leans forward, desperate.

"Don't kill me! I'm fighting it back. I can stop it. But cuff me, just in case. Lock me up somewhere it can't escape. I know things it knew, and that you need to know!"

Of course, a battle might still be raging, and if the PCs need help, Xambria might lend brief aid. She nervously stays away from the PCs, though, worried she'll hurt one of them. If pressed, she can start sharing information detailed in *The Interrogation*, below.

When combat ends, though, Xambria grows nauseous and goes into shock. Even if the PCs tend to her, it takes a while for her to have the will to delve into Sijhen's mind to look for more answers. She says she's afraid to go poking around until she's locked up somewhere safe, just in case the thing in her head gets free.



**Xambria**

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic good

Armor Class 15 (+1 studded leather)**Hit Points** 77 (14d8+14)**Speed** 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Dex +5, Cha +6**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Insight +3, Investigation +9, Perception +6, Persuasion +6, Stealth +5, Survival +3**Senses** passive Perception 16**Languages** Aklo, Common, Daemonic, Dwarvish, Elvish, Giant, Orc**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

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

Explorer's Luck (1/long rest). Xambria can use an action to give herself a +2 bonus on ability checks, saving throws, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls for 1 minute.

Loremaster. Xambria adds +6 when making an Intelligence check to recall information.

Practiced Explorer. Xambria can use a bonus action to use thieves' tools to open a lock or to take the Hide action.

Spellcasting. Xambria is a 7th-level spellcaster that uses Charisma as her spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14; +6 to hit with spell attacks). Xambria has the following spells prepared from the bard's spell list:

Cantrips: *light, mage hand, prestidigitation, true strike***1st level (4 slots):** *detect magic, faerie fire, healing word, heroism***2nd level (4 slots):** *see invisibility, silence, shatter, suggestion***3rd level (3 slots):** *dispel magic, major image***ACTIONS**

Multiattack. Xambria attacks three times or casts one spell and attacks once.

Magic Digging Pick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) magical piercing damage.

Dagger (3). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an enemy Xambria can see hits her with an attack, she can use her reaction to halve the attack's damage against her.

**Sijhen**

Medium aberration (thoughtform), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 85 (10d8+40)**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +6, Cha +6**Skills** Arcana +8, Athletics +5, Perception +6, Survival +6**Damage Resistances** fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magical weapons**Damage Immunities** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 21**Languages** all (as *tongues*), telepathy 100 ft.**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

All-Around Vision. Sijhen can simultaneously look in every direction and has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Innate Spellcasting. Sijhen's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, spell attack +6). Sijhen can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:

At will: *dimension door, telekinesis***1/day:** *invisibility*

Insubstantial Movement. Sijhen can move through other creatures and objects without penalty. It takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage if he ends its turn inside an object.

Mind Grasp. When Sijhen begins its turn grappling a creature (either with a limb or *telekinesis*), it can use an action to attempt to dominate the creature. The creature makes a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or is dominated (as *dominate monster*). Sijhen can only dominate one creature at a time.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Sijhen attacks twice with its claws.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6+2) slashing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 13).

Ego Whip. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (4d10+3) psychic damage and the target makes a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or is stunned until the end of start of Sijhen's next turn.



Thoughtform Subtype

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

Implanter

Small aberration, 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 from the explosion. 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 xx). 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 attempts to burrow into the target's ear. The implanter's AC of 12, but holds on with great tenacity and inserts its dark thought into the grappled target's mind. The implanter has advantage on checks to maintain its grapple on a foe once it is attached. An attached implanter can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself—if its prey manages to win an opposed grapple check against it, the implanter is removed.



Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby. A former superstar investigator who cracked many famous cases in her time, Saxby was promoted to the rank of Chief Inspector and transferred to take over Flint operations a decade ago. Lady Saxby was a darling of the public when she married a much younger veteran, a soldier who'd been knighted during the Fourth Yerasol War, but the move was intended merely to improve her standing. Lady Saxby is highly intelligent, and her confidence borders on megalomania.

Despite her power and authority, Saxby grew bored with the role of an administrator, until Reed Macbannin recruited her in a clandestine project. She believed she was providing coverage for a critical secret military project, and she foresaw great rewards from the king when the project was complete. When Macbannin fell, she became far more concerned with maintaining her position than in rooting out threats to the nation.

While she now nears fifty, Lady Saxby remains quite fit and retains much of her youthful beauty. She demands authority wherever she goes, and uses many subtle reminders to let people know who is boss. For example, there is only one (expensive, comfortable) chair in her office: hers.

Thoughtform creatures take normal damage from psychic attacks.

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.

Worm Maw

Large aberration (thoughtform), unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)

Speed 5 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +2

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, radiant, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities grappled, petrified, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Languages

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Insubstantial Movement. The worm maw can move through other creatures and objects without penalty. It takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

ACTIONS

Multitask. The worm maw makes 4 tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 9 (1d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 14) and restrained until the grapple ends. The worm maw has four tentacles; each can grapple one target.

Swallow Mind. The worm maw chooses one creature it has grappled.

The creature instantly falls prone, ending the grapple, and takes 14 (4d6) psychic damage and must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature is stunned until the end of its next turn.

While the creature is stunned in this way, the worm maw loses its thoughtform subtype (see "Thoughtform Subtype," above).



Interrogation

Social. Real-Time.

Xambria reveals everything she knows to the PCs, and then Sijhen makes its jail break.

Most likely the PCs take Xambria to the RHC Headquarters jail. Once she feels safe enough that she won't harm anyone, she's willing to tell the PCs everything she knows.

Pacing Note.

The climax is a complex combination of multiple encounters. If you have to end a session some place, do it here, before the final action starts.

"So forgive me if this comes out a little non-chronologically; I think I've gone several shades of crazy. Getting everything out is more important than getting it clear. You might want to write some of this gibberish down.

"The thing in my head, its name is Sijhen. It's a Gidim. They're some sort of race from another world, and it was trapped behind the ziggurat's seal for thousands of years. Real lookers, from its memories.

"Do you know what brain tastes like? I do now. I'm not a fan. Imagine being brought by a friend you don't really like to the same restaurant that only serves-. You know, nevermind, you don't want to know. Never with my own mouth, thank you, though.

"It got out, got into me, made me forget. I'm still not sure what I don't remember, but it definitely was interested in the Obscurati. It only figured that name out later, after it ate old Mr. Bergeron's brain.

"You lot, you stopped Macbannin. He was with Bergeron. There are these cells, keep them all secret from each other. Only a few people at the top know how it all fits together, and Caius wasn't at the top. But the Obscurati-. That's a long name. The Ob. Sounds less ominous. Ob.

"So the Ob, they want to find out all about the Ancients and these seals. Caius was paying for us to do that for them. He reported up. I think he had a spell put on him to keep anyone from finding out who "up" was from him.

"Oh, and he's going to ride the train. Sijhen didn't care about that, because it's months from now, but I think it's important. Whoever is "up" will be there.

"Sijhen kept opening these portals, but it could never go through. Something stopped it. Portals instead of trains, hmph. He's just like Catherine Romana. Even a madwoman can read the papers, you know."

Sounds of commotion come faintly from the other end of the jail, beyond the common prisoner cells.

"Damn. There was something else I just remembered that was important, but it's fighting. It made me forget. Your boss! Your boss, Saxby has something it wants. Saxby wasn't up, wasn't down, but was sideways. She worked for Macbannin. You probably ought to deal with that."

The commotion grows louder, and then follows a scream from some dying prisoner.

"Oh, I got it! Sijhen doesn't care about the train because it plans to leave, and bring an invasion back. It planned to get captured, and I'm not really in control. Oh, bloody—"

A sudden wave of extraplanar energy washes over you, pouring out of the stone walls to the south. You stagger at the sudden sense of



dislocation, and as you struggle to regain your senses, every inanimate object around you not carried or worn turns impossibly translucent. You can see through stone, down to the sewer, out to the under-construction subrail tunnel, sideways to the band of black-clad murderers sneaking into the basement, up to the ground floor and all your equally confused coworkers.

And then the world turns transparent, nothing but contour lines and faded textures. The sight is too much for your mind to grasp, and vertigo drops you to your knees. But you do see one thing clearly. Xambria stands, jumps into the ceiling, digs fingers into invisible handholds, and pulls herself up through solid stone to the ground floor.

Your vertigo passes, and the world has started to darken back to translucence, and further still to solidity. But you can feel another wave coming, and for a moment, when everything was transparent, you saw monsters flying through the building above.

Things Just Got Real

Various Encounters.

The RHC Headquarters are flooded with energy from Apet, and most of the staff goes mad.

The party has multiple crises to deal with. We provide a rough timeline of the actions of the enemies, but that may change based on the party's efforts. Handily, the phasing of reality gives you an excuse to track everyone's location on a map even if the PCs couldn't normally see them.

Of the many possible paths, perhaps the most satisfying would see the PCs start to chase Sijhen upstairs, rescue a group of RHC workers beset by monsters, then be cornered by the Obscurati kill squad. After that major battle, the party would need to relocate Sijhen and Saxby and try to reach them, but Saxby will likely have handed over the star map to Sijhen in order to avoid death. Sijhen heads back to the basement, while Saxby tries to escape the building with her bodyguards. The party could capture Saxby, notice Sijhen at the portal, and then rush to stop the Gidim from getting away.



Headquarters Layout.

Some locations have bystanders when the building falls under attack, most of them clerical or janitorial staff, couriers, or security guards. Unless stats are provided for them, they are non-combatants. As at the gala, don't bother rolling attacks against bystanders. If a monster attacks a bystander, the bystander is either knocked out or killed. Keep track of how many bystanders survive, in case the PCs rally the RHC.

FIRST FLOOR: A total of 17 bystanders start here.

1. **Entrance.** Five bystanders.
2. **Lower Hallway.** Lit with gaslights on the ceiling. Three bystanders.
3. **Western Stairwell.**
4. **Eastern Stairwell.**
5. **Interrogation Rooms.** Two bystanders.
6. **Quartermaster Office.** One bystander. Keys to rooms 7 and 8 are locked in desk (thieves' tools DC 13).
7. **General Supplies.** Door locked (thieves' tools DC 17).
8. **Evidence.** Door locked (thieves' tools DC 17).
9. **Secretary Pool.** Four bystanders.
10. **Guard Room.** Two bystanders in each.
11. **Morgue.** One bystander.

SECOND FLOOR: A total of 10 bystanders, plus three constables, Stover Delft, and Lady Saxby.

12. **Inspector's Desks.** Three bystanders each in the two west rooms. The northeast room has constables Carlae, Dima, and Serena, who Saxby recruits as bodyguards.
13. **Delft's Office.** Stover Delft is here.

14. **Support Offices.** Empty.

15. **Break Room.** One bystander.

16. **Upper Hallway.** Three bystanders.

17. **Saxby's Office.** Saxby is here. Saxby's safe is concealed under her desk, and trapped (Perception DC 20). The safe has a tumbler lock (thieves' tools DC 20), and a concealed keyhole to disarm the trap (thieves' tools DC 20). If opened without being disarmed, a small explosive blasts upward dealing 7 (2d6) fire damage to all creatures within 10 feet (DC 14 Dexterity saving throw for half damage). In addition to the Ancient star map, it contains large amounts of gold and documents for three fake identities. Saxby is ready to leave in a hurry.

BASEMENT: A total of 8 bystanders here, though the PCs might not risk releasing them.

18. **Holding Cells.** Eight bystanders, all of them prisoners who are locked up. Two guards were here, but they are killed by the Obscurati Kill Squad the moment they enter.
19. **Magic Cells.** Spellcasters are kept here. The cells are enchanted to function like *mage cuffs*; any attempt to use magical powers sounds an alarm and deals 7 (2d6) force damage to the prisoner. A golden ward also blocks teleportation and summoning. Two columns glow with pale white light, which grants everyone within 25 feet resistance to acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, psychic, and thunder.
20. **Under Construction Subway Tunnel.** This section is separated from the jail cells by 50 feet of stone, but the energy of Apet makes it possible to sprint between the two areas.

Planar Phasing.

Waves of magical energy from Apet, affected by the psychic energy of the Gidim warbeasts gathered on the far side of Sijhen's portal, pour into this world. When these waves hit, creatures within a few hundred feet of the portal briefly become thoughtforms. They perceive the world to be fading in and out, but in truth the world stays the same, while they become alternately solid and phasing.

Keep track of rounds in cycles of 5, switching over at the start of every round.

- **Round 1—Normal.** Reality is normal and opaque.
- **Round 2—Translucent.** Creatures can see through terrain as if it were cloudy glass, and have a general awareness of the locations of other creatures that are only separated by one or two walls.
- **Round 3—Transparent.** Creatures can see through terrain, though they're still aware of its locations and contours. They gain the phasing trait, which allows them to move through solid objects and ignore difficult terrain, but they cannot end their turns inside a solid object.
- **Round 4—Translucent.** As per Round 2.
- **Round 5—Normal.** As per Round 1. After this round, start a new cycle, back at Round 1.

During Round 3 of the cycle, all creatures effectively have the Thoughtform subtype (see page 11). However, since attackers and

targets are in synch with each other, attacks deal normal damage to incorporeal creatures, not half damage.

If the PCs learned how to use thoughts to affect thoughtform creatures, they can use those techniques on any creature during Round 3 of these cycles.

Most of the enemies in this scene don't realize they can move through walls and floors. The PCs have a mobility advantage because they saw Sijhen do it, but their enemies might cue in to the trick if the party does it often enough.

Encounter Overview.

This scene contains several smaller encounters. They can occur independently, or possibly combine into one deadly encounter if the PCs aren't careful. The design of the RHC Headquarters and the planar phasing provide avenues for the PCs to get a reprieve from a dangerous situation.

- **Monsters of Opportunity.** At random intervals, additional monsters might swoop in and attack whoever looks vulnerable, perhaps even aiding the PCs. Normally, though, the PCs will need to save their coworkers.
- **Obscurati Kill Squad.** Ob operatives search for the PCs and try to kill them.
- **Rally the RHC.** By snapping Stover Delft out of his temporary madness, the party can turn their allies from imperiled bystanders to a small army.



Gear Up.

The PCs are outnumbered, but they're on home turf. If they raid the General Supplies (Area 7), they can retrieve up to twenty *potions of healing*. The supplies also contain various mundane weapons, armor, and equipment. Perhaps more useful, the PCs might head to the Evidence room (Area 8), where the experimental weapons recovered from the Arms Fair await, including the knock gun and the steam suit.



- **Saxby's Flight.** Lady Saxby tries to get away, and has RHC members protecting her.
- **Sijhen at the Threshold.** The Gidim wayfarer flees back to its homeworld, and unleashes a monster to cover its tracks.

Climax Timeline.

Time is the main limiting factor to the PCs' actions. Barring PC intervention, events occur as follows.

When the portal to Apet opens, everyone except Sijhen is stunned. Sijhen climbs via phasing through the ceiling and up to the second floor. It then runs east through the hallway and kicks open the door to Saxby's office right at the moment the PCs recover from their vertigo. On Round 1, Sijhen threatens to kill Saxby unless she opens her safe and hands open the Ancient star map. It takes until Round 5 for Saxby to agree.

On Round 6 and 7, Saxby disables the safe's trap, opens the safe, and hands over the map. Then she tries to attack Sijhen while it's distracted, and she shouts for help. But in Round 8 reality becomes transparent again, so Sijhen turns invisible and dives down through the floors, back to the basement.

Starting on Round 9, Saxby shouts for back-up and corrals three constables to be her bodyguards—Carlao, Dima, and Serena.

On Round 13, when reality is transparent, Sijhen glides invisibly through the basement wall and into the subrail tunnel where its ritual is active. Sijhen has to let its invisibility lapse, but is hard to spot even when reality is transparent. For the next few rounds it prepares the portal ritual to change targets, and spends the rest of its time making sure with the Ancient star map that it is picking the right star.

On Round 14, Saxby and her bodyguards warily head down the eastern stairwell to the ground floor. Dead bodies and overturned examination tables block the morgue exit, so they head for the front entrance. If not hindered, they get out the front door at the end of Round 20. Saxby's bodyguards volunteer to head back in and try to get other people to safety. Saxby says she'll alert the police, then runs away and tries to hide.

If the PCs take a rest at any point, then somewhere around Round 80 (8 minutes after all hell breaks loose), they feel the waves grow stronger, and can easily pinpoint the source of the energy. They have 20 rounds to reach Sijhen's portal in the subrail tunnel before Sijhen escapes and catastrophe strikes.

Monsters of Opportunity.

RHC staff are scattered throughout the building, most of them gripped by Distant Madness and unable to move. The first time the PCs come upon a group of their coworkers, they find them under attack by a few Gidim warbeasts. Additionally, every time Round 3 in the cycle comes up, a few new monsters appear in the building, phasing through walls and going after vulnerable targets.

Monster Groups.

Choose one of the following combinations. Unless the PCs go looking for monsters, they should be attacked no more than four times during this scene.

- **Option One—Hanging Lights.** The spikers pinion people and pull them off the ground while the orb shoots the immobilized targets.
 - 3 crawling spikers
 - 1 flashing orb
- **Option Two—Seven Bad Ideas.** The monsters just swarm.
 - 4 implanters
- **Option Three—Crazy Eyes.** These monsters favor large crowds, which will be driven to attack each other.
 - 2 eyes of madness
- **Option Four—Don't Go Outside!** The monsters set upon anyone who leaves the building.
 - 2 flying things

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 xx).

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.

**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)

Vicious 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 damage of a random type—roll 1d6 see what the damage type is: 1 Acid; 2 Cold; 3 Fire; 4 Lightning; 5 Necrotic; 6 Force.

Crawling Spiker

Medium aberration, 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.



Lorcan Kell. Head of a thieves' guild based out of a "theater of scoundrels" in eastern Parity Lake. The Kell guild is said to be responsible for industrial smuggling, petty theft and extortion, burglary, and murder for hire. Kell was somehow affiliated with Reed Macbannin, but the people in his district are loyal, and his enforcers are too dangerous for Flint police to confront him.

Flying Thing

Medium aberration (thoughtform), unaligned

Armor Class 14**Hit Points** 26 (4d8 + 8)**Speed** 5 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Stealth +6

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, radiant, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities grappled, petrified, prone, restrained**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11**Languages** —**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

Insubstantial Movement. The flying thing can move through other creatures and objects without penalty. It takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

ACTIONS

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

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

Ray of Dark Light. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) necrotic damage and the target can make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target suffers 1 point of negative energy damage at the start of each of its turns. At the end of each of its turns, it can attempt another Wisdom save, ending the effect on itself on a success. While a target is taking ongoing damage from the ray, the flying thing loses its thoughtform subtype.

Obscurati Kill Squad.

- Obscurati dark stalker
- Obscurati dark slayer
- 2 Obscurati dark creepers
- 2 Kell-Guild pistoleers (see page XX)

The kill squad enters through a rusted ring in the wall of the stairwell, but they're only mostly in this world. After five minutes, or if they pass back through the ring, they return to the Bleak Gate. Until then they can interact with the PCs normally, but they appear dark, as if viewed through a black veil.

The stalker is in charge, and has the creepers and pistoleers fan out in pairs, staying within shouting distance. They all have detailed descriptions of the PCs, and the moment any of them spot the party, they attack. The stalker and slayer are too professional to worry about the energies from Apet, and the others assume this is some side effect of traveling through the Bleak Gate.



Not So Professional.

One of the killers taunts the party, saying “Lorcan Kell sends his regards. Do you like our new friends?” The stalker snaps back, “Quiet! We have a strict no-gloating protocol.”

Tactics.

The stalker's first action is to cast *darkness* to encompass as many PCs as possible. The creepers advance and look to sneak attack the PCs, while the slayer attempts *inflict wounds* as appropriate. This encounter would be challenging on its own for the party, and amid all this chaos could be overwhelming if the PCs don't think to make tactical withdrawals. If the slayer and stalker are defeated, the remaining agents will strongly consider fleeing.

Obscurati Dark Slayer

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 44 (8d8+8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws DEX +6, CON +3

Skills Athletics +2, Perception +2, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 120 ft. (sees in magical darkness), passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Cunning Action (1/turn). The dark slayer can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Death Throes. When the dark slayer is slain, the magic keeping it in this world ruptures in a crack of thunder that booms in a 10-foot radius. Creatures in the area make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) thunder damage and are deafened for 1 minute (or half as much and not deafened on a successful save). The dark slayer's gear, treasure, and body are pulled into the Bleak Gate.

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

Innate Spellcasting. The dark slayer's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, spell attack bonus +4). The dark slayer can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:

At will: *chill touch*, *detect magic*

3/day: *darkness*, *inflict wounds*, *spiritual weapon*

Sneak Attack (1/turn, 2d6). The dark slayer deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it 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 the dark slayer that isn't incapacitated and the dark slayer doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Soul Harvest. When the dark slayer has advantage on an attack roll and successfully hits or deals sneak attack damage, it deals 1d6 additional damage and gains a number of temporary hit points equal to the additional damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dark slayer attacks twice.

Kukri. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4+4) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

Obscurati Obscura.

While the PCs have been investigating the Obscurati, crime boss Lorcan Kell has made contact with their branch in the Bleak Gate. With the death of Caius Bergeron, Leone Quital the steelshaper is desperate for allies in the normal world. He has made an arrangement with Lorcan to use the man's gang as muscle when necessary.

On this evening, experienced Obscurati operatives are leading several Kell-guild thugs on a mission to take out the PCs. All of them have been enhanced by Obscurati rituals so they can slip into this world, though the magic is experimental and prone to dramatic failure. They enter the basement of the headquarters, using the rusted ring, moments before the portal to Apet opens.

Obscurati Dark Stalker

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	9 (–1)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws DEX +6, CON +4

Skills Athletics +4, Perception +2, Sleight of Hand +6, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 120 ft. (sees in magical darkness), passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Cunning Action (1/turn). The dark stalker can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Death Throes. When the dark stalker is slain, the magic keeping it in this world ruptures in a flash of white-hot flames that lick in a 20-foot radius. Creatures in the area make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) fire damage (or half as much on a successful save). The dark stalker's gear, treasure, and body are pulled into the Bleak Gate.

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

Innate Spellcasting. The dark stalker's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 11). The dark stalker can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:

1/day: *darkness*, *detect magic*, *fog cloud*

Sneak Attack (1/turn, 3d6). The dark stalker deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when it 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 the dark stalker that isn't incapacitated and the dark stalker doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dark stalker attacks twice.

Shortswords. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6+4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.





Obscurati Dark Killer

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d8+12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws DEX +4, WIS +2

Skills Athletics +2, Perception +2, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft. (sees in magical darkness), passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Cunning Action (1/turn). The dark killer can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Death Throes. When the dark killer is slain, the magic keeping it in this world explodes in a flash of white light in a 10-foot radius. Creatures in the area make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1d6 rounds. Obscurati have disadvantage on this saving throw. The dark killer's gear, treasure, and body are pulled into the Bleak Gate.

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

Sneak Attack (1/turn, 2d6). The dark killer deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it 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 the dark killer that isn't incapacitated and the dark killer doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dark killer attacks twice.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

Rally the RHC.

- 1 worm maw (see page 11)
- Stover Delft

When the dimensional disturbance first occurs, Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft grabs his sword-cane, ready to fight the monsters. But a group of implanters manifest just inside his office and manage to afflict him with Distant Madness. In his delusional state Delft manages to escape an approaching worm maw, but he locks himself in his room, and when the next wave hits he completely loses his grip on reality. He becomes quite thoroughly convinced that everyone in RHC has been replaced with doppelgangers, and he is next on their list.

Delft barricades himself in his office, and fires his pistol at anybody who comes near, shouting, "I see you doppelgangers! You won't steal my brain."

Tactics.

The worm maw waits outside his office door, and on every Round 3 of the cycle it tries to phase through, but Delft's attacks keep it at bay. When the PCs reach the second floor, they likely find the monster smashing at the door.

Stover Delft

Medium humanoid (human), lawful good

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 90 (20d8)

Speed 20 ft. (due to a wounded leg)

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

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +5

Skills Acrobatics +6, Deception +5, Insight +5, Investigation +4, Perception +5, Stealth +6

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Canny Pursuer. Stover has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to overhear conversations and can use Perception instead of Survival when making a Wisdom check to follow tracks.

Cunning Action (1/turn). Stover can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Evasion. When Stover 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.

Loremaster. Stover adds +6 when making an Intelligence check to recall information.

Sneak Attack (1/turn, 5d6). Stover deals an extra 17 (5d6) 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 Stover that isn't incapacitated and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Stover attacks twice with his magic sword cane.

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

Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 50/150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+3) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

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

Delft's madness interferes with his ability to employ advanced tactics. He prefers to stay at range with his pistol. If forced into melee he reveals a thin sword hidden within his cane and attacks whoever looks the most threatening.

No, Slapping Him Isn't Enough.

Convinced that the doppelgangers will kill him no matter what, Delft fights until he is reduced to 0 hp, at which point he'll be defenseless but conscious. At this point, or if the PCs manage to kill the worm maw, then grab Delft and show that they mean him no harm, it's possible to talk him out of his delusion with a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) or Wisdom (Medicine) check.

At that point, he is restored to at least 1 hit point, and he acts as a rallying point for any surviving bystanders. Bystanders who see Delft get their wits and start to fight back.



Royal Homeland Constabulary Office

First Floor



Second Floor

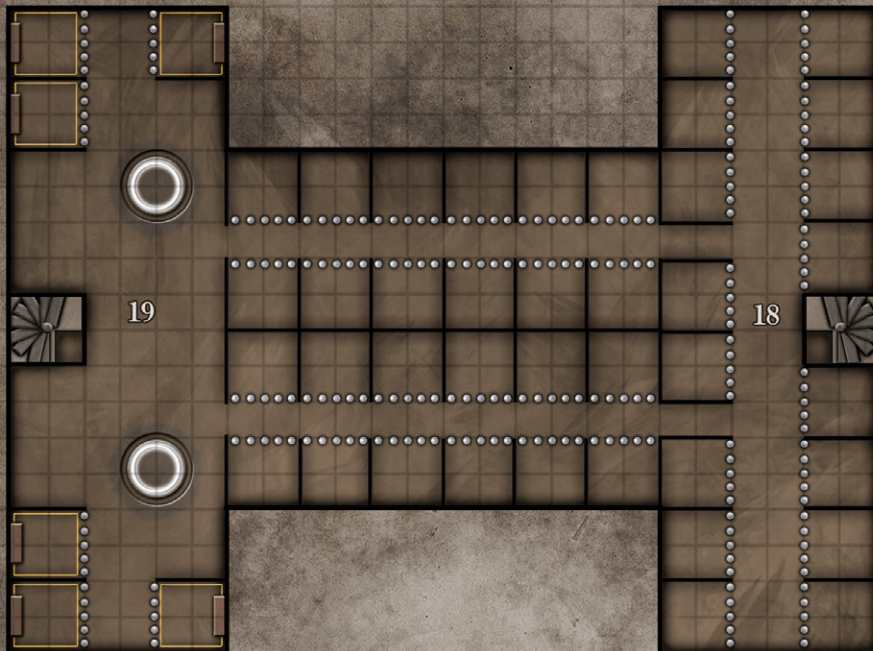


One square equals 5ft.

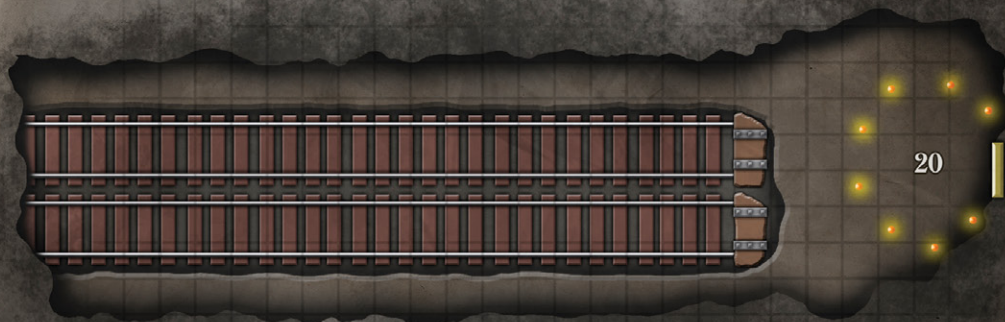


Royal Homeland Constabulary Office

Basement



Subrail Tunnel



One square equals 5ft.



Saxby's Flight.

- Carlao, RHC knight
- Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby
- Dima, RHC cleric
- Serena, RHC assassin

Unless the PCs are very fast, they likely reach Lady Saxby after Sijhen has gotten the Ancient star map. Saxby, unsure of how much the PCs know, tells three other constables that people might be driven mad, and that they need to protect her. Her goal is to get out of the RHC, reach a safe house in Bosum Strand, and flee the city the next morning.

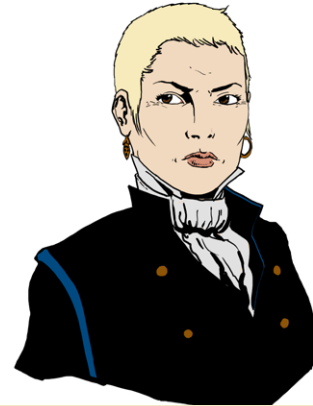
Tactics.

Carlao stays beside Saxby at all times, with Serena scouting a few feet ahead and Dima bringing up the rear. They fight to cover Saxby's escape, but if Saxby sees an opening, she'll try to take out a PC to slow pursuit.

Saxby's three constable bodyguards are wary of the PCs, but open-minded. If the PCs accuse Saxby, she'll try to ignore them, saying they're lying as she continues fleeing. If the party attacks, the other constables defend her, but will ask the PCs to stand down and explain themselves.

Aftermath.

If the PCs are convincing, the constables might turn on Saxby and attempt to subdue her. Afterward, they prefer to rescue trapped staffers and civilians in nearby buildings, while letting the PCs handle Sijhen, but if the PCs press the point, there's no reason to deny them allies in the final encounter.



Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby

Female humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (+1 studded leather, dagger fighter)

Hit Points 91 (14d8+28)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws STR +4, DEX +7, INT +4

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +2, Insight +4, Perception +4, Stealth +7

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Bravery. Margaret has advantage on saving throws against fear.

Cunning Action (1/turn). Margaret can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Dagger Fighter. While wielding a weapon in one hand and a dagger in the other, Margaret's AC increases by 2. When Margaret attacks with both of her weapons on her turn against the same target, the target takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls against her until the start of Margaret's next turn.

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

Mobile. Whenever Margaret makes an attack against a creature, she doesn't provoke opportunity attacks from that creature until the end of her turn.

Potions. Margaret carries two *potions of healing*.

Sneak Attack (1/turn, 2d6). Margaret deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when she 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 Margaret that isn't incapacitated and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Margaret attacks twice with her magic longsword and once with her dagger.

Magic Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) magical slashing damage.

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

Carlao

Medium humanoid (human), lawful good

Armor Class 18 (breastplate, shield)

Hit Points 45 (6d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws STR +4, WIS +3

Skills Animal Handling +3, Athletics +4, Insight +3, Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Declared Challenge (1/long rest). Carlao can use a bonus action to choose one creature he can see. Until combat ends he deals 4 additional damage with weapon attacks against the challenged. After making a declared challenge, creatures other than the challenge creature gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls against Carlao.

Help Companion. Carlao can use an action to help an adjacent ally fight better, granting a +2 bonus to AC, attack rolls, and weapon damage rolls until the beginning of his next turn.

Potions. Carlao carries two *potions of healing*.

ACTIONS

Magic Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) magical slashing damage.



Dima

Medium humanoid (dwarf), lawful good

Armor Class 17 (half plate, shield)

Hit Points 50 (8d8+24)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws STR +2, CON +5, WIS +5

Skills Religion +3

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Celestial, Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Channel Healing Energy (25 points). As an action, Dima presents his holy symbol and evokes healing energy that can restore up to a maximum of 25 hit points. He chooses any creatures within 30 feet and divides those hit points among them. This feature can restore a creature to no more than half of its hit point maximum. Dima can't use this feature on an undead or a construct, and after he has restored 25 hit points using this feature he can't use it again until he's finished a short or long rest.

Dwarven Resilience. Dima has advantage on saving throws against poison.

Spellcasting. Dima is a 4th-level spellcaster that uses Wisdom as his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13; +5 to hit with spell attacks).

Dima has the following spells prepared from the cleric's spell list:

Cantrips: *guidance*, *resistance*, *sacred flame*

1st level (4 slots): *bane*, *cure wounds*, *detect evil and good*, *detect magic*, *healing word*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *zone of truth*

ACTIONS

Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage.

Serena

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 44 (8d8+8)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws DEX +6, INT +2

Skills Acrobatics +6, Deception +3, Perception +1, Sleight of Hand +10, Stealth +10

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Cunning Action (1/turn). Serena can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

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

Powerful Sneak Attack (1/turn, 4d6). Serena deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when she 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 Serena that isn't incapacitated and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll. In addition, Serena treats any sneak attack damage dice that roll a 1 as if they had rolled a 2.

Potions. Serena has a *potion of climbing*.

ACTIONS

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

Hit: 8 (1d6+5) magical piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an enemy Serena can see hits her with an attack, she can use her reaction to halve the attack's damage against her.

Sijhen at the Threshold

Action/Social. Tactical.

While no match for the party by itself, Sijhen has a monstrous ally should they try to interrupt its ritual.

- Sijhen
- The Thing from Beyond

When the PCs find Sijhen, the Gidim wayfarer might be too busy to notice them, especially if they approach from farther down the subrail tunnel. Sijhen wears the *golden icon of Apet*, and holds the Ancient star map, a masterfully crafted disk of gold two feet in diameter, consisting of concentric rings with colored stones for planets and relief patterns representing constellations and distant stars.

Sijhen stands just outside a ring of eight lanterns that glow with harsh silver light, each inscribed with a sigil in the Gidim language. The lanterns hum and screech, and monstrous growls coming through the portal can cover the sound of the party's movements with successful DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

On the eastern wall sits the golden seal of Apet, shining in the lantern's glow. Sijhen has opened a portal in the wall behind the

Transferring Xambria.

Sijhen may transfer Xambria's consciousness to a willing humanoid creature as a standard action. Likewise when Sijhen dies, Xambria's consciousness flies to the nearest (or most interesting) PC in an attempt to survive. The character can refuse to let the consciousness enter, but if he allows her in, he must make a DC 9 Wisdom check to avoid being knocked unconscious for 1d4 rounds by the mental strain.

If Xambria's body dies, a spirit medium can sense her mind trapped in Sijhen's body. If the spirit medium uses his power, Xambria's mind manifests into her original body for a round, long enough that perhaps healing can restore her to life. Failing that, her mind can slip into one of the PCs.

If a character merges with Xambria, he gains the benefits of the *Xambria's consciousness boon* (page 4).





seal, but the seal is not flush with the wall, so energy leaks through. Two 10-foot wide sets of tracks run along a 5-foot deep notch, then dead-end at wooden barricades mere feet from Sijhen's ritual.

A 15-foot long rail car sits parked on each track: one at the west edge of the north track, the other in the middle of the south track. These combination steam engine/cargo pallets were used for moving supplies and workers.

Talking and Tactics.

Unless the PCs attack on sight, Sijhen attempts to stall. It takes a moment to set the ritual into its final stage (see below), and then it asks the party to simply let it go in peace, and it will not bother them anymore. If the PCs don't buy this lie, or if they attack on sight, Sijhen warns them that if they kill it, they'll kill Xambria too. Even if Xambria's body is dead, her consciousness survives as part of Sijhen's thoughtform. Sijhen offers to transfer Xambria to one of the PCs if they'll refrain from attacking.

Sijhen might still wear Xambria's body. If so, it uses Xambria's tactics until her body is mortally wounded, then feigns death for a moment before manifesting invisibly. The PCs might notice Sijhen's presence with Perception checks, but if not, the Gidim wayfarer waits for its chance to dash through the portal at the ritual's completion.

If Sijhen is about to lose, or if the PCs are close to ending its ritual, it moves beside the golden seal and pulls it away from the wall, which unleashes The Thing From Beyond.

The Trains.

Because they can move, the train cars are not shown on the map, but they are both 2-by-3 square objects that count as difficult terrain. The engine car has a parking break, which can be disengaged as a move action. It can then be pushed as an action with a successful DC 11 Strength check, which imparts it a speed of 5 feet, or increases its speed by 5 feet. Alternatively, if the steam engine is targeted with an attack that deals at least 5 fire damage, the engine jolts to life and accelerates the train to a speed of 15 feet, then to a speed of 30 feet on its next turn. The train moves its speed on initiative count 0.

Once the train reaches the barricade, it can no longer accelerate, but its momentum carries it one final turn. Any creature in its path is pushed forward, and takes 10 damage, plus 2 damage for every 5 feet of the train's speed. If the creature is crushed against the wall, it takes an additional 25 damage.

If the golden seal is still next to the portal, hitting it with the train slams it fully shut, with the same effect as a safe closure.

Sijhen's Ritual.

If the PCs have arrived before Round 80, monstrous tentacles try to poke through the gap between the golden seal and the stone. Sijhen adjusts the rings while chanting words that echo off both the walls and the PCs' subconscious minds. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check determines that Sijhen is adjusting the star map in an attempt to lock the portal onto some targeted world. A skyseer automatically senses this.

At this stage, the portal is stable, and attacking Sijhen won't affect the portal. The party's actions, however, might close, collapse,

or rupture the portal (see below).

It only takes Sijhen a few moments examining the Ancient star map to be fairly confident where Gidim is, but it's being careful. Should the PCs attack, however, Sijhen spends a move action on its first turn to change the portal's target to the Gidim homeworld. A 20-round countdown begins, tracking each round at initiative count 0.

If the PCs don't get here fast enough, Sijhen targets Gidim on round 80 of the previous encounter. The 20-round countdown starts the moment the PCs become aware of the change in energy, and that it's coming from the subrail tunnel.

The Final Countdown.

During the 20-round countdown, the golden seal shudders as streaks of light strobe out of the portal, like stars flashing as you fly past them in the heavens. A skyseer intuitively knows that the portal is sweeping through stars in the constellation called The Flood. Unless stopped, the portal connects to Gidim at the end of the countdown.

When the countdown finishes, the golden seal is blasted away from the wall, and for the briefest moment the PCs can see an alien world where pulsating thoughtform flora cling to red stones and a titanic purple tendril of psychic light sways into the sky from beyond the horizon. They are convinced that the world beyond has noticed them.

Sijhen, if still alive, shucks its corporeal flesh and flees through the portal as a thoughtform. Then the portal ruptures.

Stopping the Ritual.

The eight lanterns are the key to controlling the ritual, but they're just as fragile as normal lanterns. Any attack that hits a lantern destroys it.

The golden seal of Apet is the ritual's focus, and it also holds hostile creatures at bay. A PC might get the bright idea to move the golden seal of Apet away from the portal. This has the poor consequence of letting The Thing From Beyond into this world.

Closure.

As long as all the lanterns are intact, a character can attempt to gain control of the ritual. To do so, a character must stand beside a lantern and spend a bonus action to make a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check. A character holding the Ancient star map gains a +5 bonus. A success causes the lantern to glow gold instead of silver. After all 8 lanterns glow gold, if the golden seal is next to the portal, the ritual ends.

If the seal is not beside the portal, the ritual can still be safely completed by moving the two ton gold plate adjacent to the portal.

Collapse.

If any of the lanterns are destroyed, a safe closure is impossible, but a dangerous collapse can be achieved. After all 8 lanterns are destroyed, if the golden seal is next to the portal, the ritual ends. As above, the ritual cannot end if the seal is not next to the portal.

Additionally, if the Thing From Beyond hasn't already escaped, it emerges right as the link to Apet ends.



Rupture.

If the portal ritual manages to connect to Gidim, the power of the plane of ruin, Nem, manifests in an effort to stop travel across the Axis Seal. Immediately the entire eastern wall begins to disintegrate into frozen charcoal. The portal's edges crack and shatter, and then everything goes dark and the world turns silent except for a single bell's toll. Truly catastrophic magical energy of Nem sweeps outward, the portal disintegrates, and when the light returns everything has been laid to waste.

Repeat the attack from Collapse above, except it affects every creature and object within a thousand feet. The RHC headquarters and every building for several blocks is cast into ruin, as if a thousand years had passed in an instant. Most creatures die and collapse into dust.

Thing from Beyond

Huge aberration, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 138 (12d12+60)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	13 (+1)	21 (+5)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Wis +4

Skills Athletics +10, Perception +4, Stealth +4

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Cracked Shell. The Thing from Beyond's shell begins to crack open.

All terrain within 5 feet of the Thing from Beyond becomes difficult terrain until it is slain, and any creature (aside from the Thing from Beyond) that ends its movement within the difficult terrain takes 3 (1d6) necrotic damage from the tortured spirits that emerged from the wounds.

From a Distant Plane. A 30-foot radius of magical darkness extends out from the Thing from Beyond. Creatures outside of the area cannot affect creatures inside the area with attacks, spells, or other features, as if they were too far away. Attacks made with golden weapons or implements ignore this restriction. Creatures inside the area cannot move outside the area on their own, though they can leave due to forced movement, or if the Thing from Beyond's moves and leaves them outside the aura.

Horrid Amalgam 1 (90 hp or less). When the Thing from Beyond is lowered below 90 hit points it can use Cracked Shell and Prismatic Scream, but it is unable to use From a Distant Plane or Shredding Mouths.

Horrid Amalgam 2 (45 hp or less). When the Thing from Beyond is lowered below 50 hit points, it can use Join with Master and it can use From a Distant Plane again, but it cannot use Cracked Shell, Prismatic Scream, or Shredding Mouths.

Join With Master. As a final effort, the Thing from Beyond teleports Sijhen (even if dead or inside another creature) into its form. Sijhen's consciousness now controls the Thing from Beyond (meaning a likely change in tactics) but the Gidim no longer has any of its old features. Any negative effects or conditions affecting the Thing from Beyond are immediately ended.

Skyseer Vision of Gidim.

If a skyseer witnesses the portal connect to Gidim, she knows this is not a world the skyseers have any knowledge of. In an instant before the portal closes, she glimpses a completely different starscape above the Gidim homeworld. The next time she sleeps, she has the following vision.

"You lie back on the sentient grass. It sways around you in a glutinous breeze. You ponder the heavens, and your curiosity satiates the grass.

"Above you float flames and waves and wind and stone, but not the same you saw when you looked up as a child. They trace foreign paths and hum with impossible futures. You cannot read their fates. Beneath this alien sky, nothing is written."

Shredding Mouths. When the Thing From Beyond begins its turn with a creature grappled by a tentacle, it can attempt an opposed Strength (Athletics) check to swallow the creature. On a success the creature is swallowed and takes bite damage. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the Thing from Beyond, and it takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage. When the Thing from Beyond's Horrid Amalgam features are activated, any swallowed creatures are immediately ejected in an adjacent area.

Vulnerable Tethers. Creatures that hit The Thing From Beyond with a melee weapon attack can try to free a creature caught in its tentacles. To do so, the grappled creature must be within reach of the attack. If the attack hits, it has its normal effect, plus the grappled creature can make a check to escape.

ACTIONS

Multitack. The Thing from Beyond attacks once with its bite and twice with its tentacles.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8+7) piercing damage.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 25 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d6+7) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 18). A target grappled by the Thing from Beyond's tentacle takes 10 (1d6+7) bludgeoning damage at the start of the target's turn.

Prismatic Scream (Recharge 6). The Thing From Beyond emits a blinding burst of beams accompanied by tormented psychic screams. These beams strike together and create a 15-foot radius burst centered on any area within 50 feet. All creatures within the burst must make a Dexterity, Constitution, and Wisdom saving throw. Compare their results to the following:

DC 14 Constitution: Creatures that fail this save take 7 (2d6) thunder damage, are knocked prone, and deafened for 1 round.

DC 14 Dexterity: Creatures that fail this save take 7 (2d6) lightning damage and are blinded for 1 round.

DC 14 Wisdom: Creatures that fail this save take 5 (2d4) force damage and are stunned until the start of their next turn.

REACTIONS

Whipping Tendrils. After the Thing from Beyond has used its reaction to make an opportunity attack, before the beginning of its next turn it may make one free opportunity attack against a provoking creature. This second opportunity attack cannot target the same creature as the first.



Meet the New Boss

Social. Real-Time.

Word has come down from management: give them what they need.

Even if the PCs avert the destruction of the RHC Headquarters, it takes some time for the place to return to normal. With Saxby out of the picture—likely dead or on the run—the constabulary needs leadership. In a ceremony attended by dozens of reporters, most of Flint's nobles, and more than a few concerned criminals, Lord Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill charges Stover Delft with the office of Chief Inspector.

The Lord Viscount commends Delft in his opening remarks, and Flint's Governor Roland Stanfield briefly congratulates the PCs for their actions. Then it is time for Delft to speak. His words have been written for him, and they're only noteworthy for how little is actually said. The official story is that a monster got free from an Ancient ruin, came to Flint, and killed people in an attempt to recover old relics.

No one says anything about any creatures from other worlds, or of Saxby's betrayal, and certainly nothing about any secret conspiracies.

Delft has always trusted the PCs, and now that he's in charge he's going to give them everything they need to get to the bottom of this "Obscurati" conspiracy. With more care and caution than he has ever mustered before, Delft makes sure before the big ceremony to speak to each PC individually. He warns them not to share anything they know with anyone aside from him, no matter how trustworthy they might seem.

A day later, the new Chief Inspector asks them to meet him aboard their ship. Delft points out that the conspiracy doesn't know how much they've learned. It seems like they're overconfident in their ability to keep secrets, but the PCs have a time and place where they know this "Obscurati" will be gathered: the 20th of Winter, in Vendricce. It's time to plan their next move.

NPC Quick Reference

- **Lady Spectress Margaret Saxby.** Head of local RHC office. Treats party like they're not there. Refined. Political aspirations. Overbearing. Gets others to fight for her.
- **Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft.** Party's boss. Chews tobacco. Cane. Spits. Good-natured.
- **Lord Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill.** In charge of the RHC overall. Pitted and scarred face. Opposes corruption. Understands human frailty, tries to inspire others to be better.
- **Kvarti Gorbatiy.** Dwarven sniper and gunsmith. Old military uniform. Rifle's stock carved from giant bone, with ancient engraving. Contentedly philosophical.
- **Rock Rackus.** Celebrity explorer and musician. Permanent sneer-smirk. Diamond-encrusted gold pistol. Unbelievably arrogant. Makes ridiculous claims. Doesn't know what to do with his fame.
- **Caius Bergeron.** Tiefling philanthropist. Funds archaeology for the Obscurati. Maintains plausible deniability. False graciousness. Ring - Old Bergeron Gold. Sharpened nails and tail. Scratches when irritated. Eats live octopus.
- **Morgan Cippiano.** Leads Flint branch of Family. Bald. Gravely voice. Wears hook pendant of the Clergy. Talks fashion. Very reasonable and friendly. Wants to "trade favors."
- **Kaja Stewart.** Arcanoscientist. Planar theorist. Summons guns. Affects a "common" accent despite education. Fascinated by the possibilities of technology.
- **Lorcan Kell.** Leader of thieves' guild. Ugly face. Fancy clothes and top hat. Lots of hidden knives. Torments "good" people by threatening to harm them if they try to stop innocents being tortured. Not too clever. Relies on minions to run his guild.
- **Dr. Xambria Meredith.** Archaeologist. Fearless. Slightly traumatized from recent disaster. Slightly unhinged. Miner's pick, various tools. Athletic, but dresses conservatively. Driven to solve mysteries. Strong moral code.
- **Sijhen.** Gidim wayfarer. Wary of discovery. Confident in own intellect, and for good reason. Naked. Tentacles. Four eyes. Smells like dust. Views locals as food animals.
- **Captain Rutger Smith.** Bold. Idealistic. Loves philosophy. Smokes cigars.

Appendix 1: Radical Vekeshi Plot

ROCK RACKUS HAS ANGERED MANY WHO SUPPORT the Unseen Court and traditional Risuri values. Most people just complain, but the Vekeshi Mystics are quite comfortable with killing those who offend their worldview. Now a member of the cult has called for Rackus's death, but he does not speak for all the movement's adherents.

Just a Little Misunderstanding.

Rear Admiral Morris Dawkins presides over the naval defenses of Flint, but a convenient illness kept him from the launch ceremony of the *R.N.S. Coaltongue* in Adventure One.

He also is one of the most respected leaders of the Vekeshi Mystics, and often attends celebrations and ceremonies. Dawkins wears an antlered mask, and no one knows his identity, so mystics can only identify him by voice, and by his distinctive hands, which are marked by scars and calluses. They call him the **Old Stag**, both for his mask and because he is sometimes seen in the company of a beautiful faerie woman, a representative of the Unseen Court.

In Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, the Old Stag asked a Vekeshi PC to recruit the fey terrorist Gale to their cause.

Shortly after the events of *The Dying Skyseer*, Dawkins attended a celebration in the Cloudwood that any PC Vekeshi Mystics would have been at. The topic of Rock Rackus came up, and Dawkins offhandedly suggested the man deserved to be killed, if not for his insults to the Unseen Court, then for his terrible music. Most present simply laughed at the comment, but one witness, **Tyler Starke**, took it as a serious decree.

A Crazy Misunderstanding.

Starke is one of the bad seeds who make it easy for the public to decry the mystics as madmen and killers. The idle son of Flint's Attorney General, he styles himself a writer and scholar with a particular fondness of maritime law, and his interactions with other mystics are rare enough that most do not realize how unstable and petulant he is.

His induction to the mystics occurred after he murdered a Crisylliri priest who was a guest in his father's house. He claimed he was striking a blow against oppressors, but he just killed the priest because the man had mocked him in front of his father. Though weak-minded, he survived the initiation ritual into the Vekeshi Mystics by losing grip with reality and constructing an ever-wilder web of delusions.

A few months ago, Starke began to spread word that Rock

Rackus was marked for death, and due to the secretive nature of the Vekeshi Mystics and the large gaps between their group gatherings, no one has been able to disabuse him of this notion. He gathered funds to hire Kvarti Gorbatiy to assassinate Rackus, and when that fails, Starke tries to recruit a PC Vekeshi Mystic to finish the job.

Recruiting for Murder.

Starke, somewhat missing the point of being in a *secret* society, mails a letter to the PC's home a few days after Rackus gets arrested at the arms fair (see Vekeshi Letter, on page xx). The letter has the remnants of a wax seal affixed, as if the writer were so used to signing and sealing his letters that he almost mailed it with his name affixed. There is no return address, but a trained investigator should be able to trace it, if he wants. The PC might get help from Kvarti Gorbatiy, if he needs the aid.

This is mostly a test of the character's morals, and an opportunity to protect the reputation and secrecy of the mystics.

Rock Is Dead.

If a PC kills Rock but does not implicate the mystics, the dockers treat the fallen performer as a martyr and blame the government for his death. Starke is not nearly as discreet as the PC, though, and word spreads through the mystics that the PC did the deed. Shortly after the resolution of the adventure's main events, the PC is summoned in the night to a ship in Flint's harbor.

The Old Stag and several attendants berate the PC for his foolishness, then drag out a panicked and piss-stained Starke. The Old Stag explains that this man is more objectionable to their beliefs than Rackus ever was, and he offers the PC a chance to redeem himself by killing Starke. Despite the misunderstanding, the PC is still valuable to the cult's leadership, and they will have more important tasks for him in the future.

Terror in Flint

If a PC botches the assassination and either fails or implicates the mystics, Rock's celebrity causes the story to fill the headlines for weeks. Kell's guild manages to off a few difficult politicians and pin it on the mystics, and within a month, half the city is afraid the Vekeshi are plotting countless wild attacks on Flint.

Similar to above, one night the PC is drugged and abducted. He awakens in a ship's hold with Starke, and they are dragged out before the Old Stag, who says they both deserve to die for what they have done to the movement, but he is merciful. He hands a dagger to the PC, and Starke cries out in terror.

A Constable's Job.

A PC might decide to reject Starke's directive and prevent him from killing anyone. If confronted, Starke threatens to reveal to his father the Attorney General that the PC is a member of the Vekeshi. In a fight, Starke is no threat to a PC by this point, but getting to



him when he is not protected by bodyguards and household security is a challenge.

After dealing with Starke, the PC is summoned to meet the Old Stag, who thanks him and suggests they can use his skills in the future. The party's Prestige with the Unseen Court increases by 1.

Not My Problem.

If no PC is a Vekeshi Mystic, or if a PC refuses, Starke eventually tries to go after Rackus himself. Rackus shoots him, and Starke is arrested. In interrogation he gives up the identities of every mystic he knows, perhaps forcing a PC to lie or face harsh questioning. The

Vekeshi issue a letter to denounce Starke as not speaking for them, but public outcry and political fearmongering leads to arrests and witch hunts.

Future Vekeshi Plots.

In Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, the Vekeshi Mystics ask the PC to uncover a secret about the fall of Srasama, hidden in a prison island along the Avery Coast railroad. If the PC has not yet revealed his affiliation with the Vekeshi to the rest of the party by then, the discovery will spill the secret and force the group to question the goals of the mystics.

Appendix 2: Items and Miscellany

New Magic Items

Amulet of the Ancients.

Wondrous item (amulet), uncommon–very rare (minor–greater)

This stone amulet is engraved with ancient pictograms depicting a tree surrounded by the primal elements of earth, water, wind, and fire. When you are attacked, the amulet turns briefly to gold. Each time you take acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage, you take less damage (2 for minor, 4 for major, or 6 for greater).

Badger Gun.

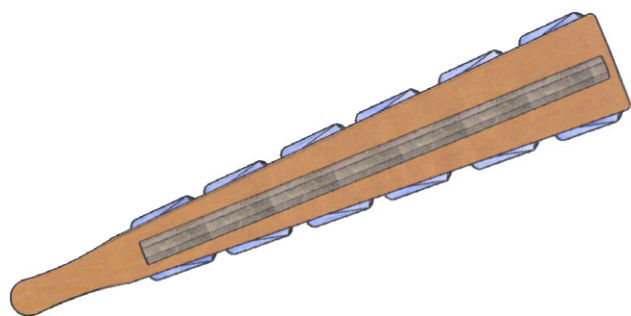
Weapon (musket), uncommon

You pull the trigger, and a badger springs forth to attack your foes. 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.

Blade of the Ancients.

Weapon (greatsword), rare

This 8-pound sword is a *macahuitl*, a shaft of wood that has a row of saw-toothed obsidian blades along its edge. Within the obsidian crystals crackle the energies from countless worlds. When you attack, the wood turns briefly to gold. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon, and on a critical hit you deal an additional 1d6 elemental damage (either acid, cold, fire, or lightning, chosen by you before rolling damage). In addition, you deal an additional 1d6 damage against creatures of the aberration type.



Diamond Encrusted Piece.

Weapon (pistol), rare

Your enemies seem dumbstruck at the sight of a gun of solid gold, encrusted with diamonds. Every time you fire one of its 24-karat bullets, you throw away enough money to feed a family for a month. Who but an unrepentant jackass would own such a thing?

Experimental Steam Suit.

Armor (Large-sized plate), legendary (pure technology)

Who wants to be the first to strap on a steam engine and wade into battle in a half ton suit of burnished steel? A Medium-sized creature can climb into or out of this suit by spending two actions. The suit is normally inert and too heavy to move, causing the creature inside (the pilot) to be treated as helpless. However, the creature's AC increases by 6 (this bonus stacks with armor and other abilities that increase AC). Even though the suit is effectively super-heavy armor, no proficiency is required to use it.

Once every 24 hours, the pilot can activate the suit as an action. While the suit is active, the pilot can use weapons and implements as normal. The pilot can walk and run, but cannot climb, jump, or swim. The pilot's lifting capacity is quadrupled, and the pilot gains a +2 bonus to damage rolls with melee attacks.

Whenever an attack hits the suit, the pilot must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. If the pilot fails 3 of these saving throws, the steam suit breaks down and must be repaired before it works again. Repairs can be done over the course of a long rest.

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.

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. The staff can be wielded as a 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)



New Weapon

Nock's Gun.

This gun weighs a good thirty pounds. The blast from the seven barrels tears its targets to shreds. Each barrel may be fired separately or all at once (only dealing 1d4 or 1d6 damage depending on size). When all barrels are fired at once, the wielder has disadvantage on the attack roll, but the shot requires only one attack action instead of seven. After striking a target, the wielder must succeed on a Constitution save with a DC equal to the damage dealt by the attack or fall prone.

Ranged Martial Weapon. Cost 10,000 gp; **Damage** 7d6 bludgeoning; **Weight** 30 lbs.; **Properties** ammunition (range 10/20 ft.), heavy, loading, two-handed

New Boon

Tentacle Technique.

Recalling a thesis you read, Methods of Extricating Warriors from a Variety of Tentacled and Tendriled Monsters, you shout for an ally to aim at the ideal spot on a limb that has him grabbed.

If a character with the Martial Scientist theme presents a corpse of one of the Gidim beasts to The Battalion martial university, he'll receive a copy of the thesis mentioned above, and gain this feature.

Tentacle Technique (1/short rest). As a bonus action, you can direct one creature within 30 feet that has the grappled condition, granting advantage on their next check to escape the grapple.

Appendix 3: Ancient History

TO HELP YOU KEEP DETAILS OF THE WORLD'S HISTORY straight in your head, we present this appendix that compiles information doled out bit by bit to players over the course of several adventures.

The Ancients.

Thousands of years before Risur was founded, a civilization of primitive orcs fought against the numerous otherworldly forces trying to claim this plane as their territory. Since this civilization had no writing system, the adventurers and archaeologists who explore the few scattered ruins they left behind have dubbed them simply the Ancients.

A handful of heroes among these stone-age orcs nevertheless managed to understand, at least in general terms, the nature of the multiverse and how their enemies were invading this world. With that knowledge they were able to erect the Axis Seal and allow the mortal races to flourish, even though their own civilization did not survive.

Fighting the Invaders.

There are countless planes in the cosmos, and portals can theoretically link any two worlds. From across the multiverse came savage demons, titanic dragons, the angels of numerous gods, and many more, all trying to claim their own territory. But two main invasion forces had the greatest claim: the psychic and semi-humanoid Gidim, who consume the thoughts of whole planes to feed their sentient homeworld; and the Golden Legion of Egal the Shimmering, a lord of hell clad in treasure and able to wield his enemies' pride and vanity like blades.

The Ancients discovered a ritual to seal a portal and create a permanent dimensional lock in a wide area. Whenever they found one of the portals the invaders were using, they would stage desperate raids to seal those doors, then build enchanted ziggurats laden with traps over the closed pathways.

In an infinite multiverse, these seals were only temporary solutions. Clever foes would always find a new route to a world with precious resources. But what this slow and methodical tactic accomplished was to create tiny safe havens: buffer worlds from which the Ancients knew no further threats could come.

The architect of the Axis Seal, a wise orc whose name has been lost to time, intended to cut off his own world altogether, slicing it free from the rest of the multiverse. He knew, though, that a world completely cut off could not sustain itself. His world—any world—would continue to need the energies of other planes to allow life to flourish and magic to endure.

The Axis Seal.

The Ancients sealed as many of the invaders' portals as possible, and found worlds among those sealed that would provide the necessary energies: elemental air, earth, fire, and water, as well as the more esoteric Gidim energies of life, death, space, and time. When the time was right, the greatest heroes of the Ancients gathered in the heart of their territory and performed the Ritual of the Axis Seal. Simultaneously, eight other buffer worlds were linked to this one, and all of them were pulled across the multiverse, creating a system of planets.

Some of the worlds that provided the required energies were chosen specifically; others were chosen simply because they were available and convenient. For example, Urim, once just a slice of the greater Plane of Earth, provides the world's necessary earth magics. It also has a trait that makes teleportation impossible for those bounded in gold, making it a clever defense against any possible later invasions by the Golden Legion. By contrast, Avilona, the plane of air, has fairly weak energy but it was the only air plane the Ancients could secure.

The power of the ritual cracked the surface of the world, flooding huge areas and creating what is today the Yerasol Archipelago. The great flood sent the Ancient civilization into disarray, leaving them too weak to defend against misfortune.

Fatal Flaw.

The Ancients made one great mistake. The cunning Gidim had realized what the orcs were planning and hid an invasion force on the world of Apet—the plane of space—which the Ancients thought abandoned. Once the Axis Seal was in effect and they had no competition from other planes, the Gidim struck.

The Ancients fought back, and they managed a hurried revision to the Axis Seal ritual, which turned Apet into a prison plane. While the massive world still orbits the sun and shares its mystical energies, it cannot be reached by any magic. The Gidim were ultimately defeated, but their strike devastated the vulnerable Ancient culture. With their heroes dead and their people separated by flooded rifts, the mortal races fell back to nomadic tribalism for millennia.

Legacy.

All that remains of the Ancients today are scattered, inexplicable ruins, many containing gold weapons looted from Egal's Golden Legion. (This greatly confounds archaeologists, who can find no evidence of the extensive Ancient mining necessary to have produced so much gold.)

In recent years agents of the Obscurati have funded expeditions to plumb the secrets of the ziggurats, which are scattered across Lanjyr. Priceless gold artifacts are less useful to them than the clues of how these primitive people connected to other worlds. Only the conspiracy has a sense of what the Ancients accomplished untold millennia ago.



The Ancients and their ruins come to the party's attention in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, but then do not play a significant role again until Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

During the course of the published adventures, the party only ever is expected to explore the ziggurats of Apet, Mavisha, and Avilona. Feel free to use the others however you wish. Each could contain traps and monsters themed to the appropriate plane, with some clue to the location of another ziggurat in the set, and a central chamber that has the seal over the portal. These portals, if opened with the proper ritual, would be one of the few ways to travel to another plane for more than five minutes.

For your reference, the locations of the Ancient ziggurats are:

- **Ziggurat of Apet.** The portal to the plane of space is guarded by this ruin in Risur's high bayou. Its discovery sets off events in Adventure Three.
- **Ziggurat of Av.** The portal to the plane of dreams lies in the big thicket in eastern Risur.
- **Ziggurat of Avilona.** The plane of air's ziggurat sits atop a floating island in a perpetual storm off the south coast of Ber.
- **Ziggurat of Jiese.** The ziggurat of the plane of fire lies in the desert in eastern Crisillyir.
- **Ziggurat of Mavisha.** The plane of water's ziggurat sank underwater just off of Ber's east coast.
- **Ziggurat of Nem.** The portal to the plane of ruin lies near the abandoned city of Methia in Danor.
- **Ziggurat of Reida.** The plane of time was never actually used as a staging point for an invasion, and thus never had to be sealed or have a ziggurat built for it. That said, almost no one knows this plane exists.
- **Ziggurat of Urim.** This ruin was long ago discovered by mages, who used the power seeping through it to establish the independent city of Nalaam in the Penance Peaks.

Axis Seal. The final ritual site entails a one-hundred foot diameter plate of gold over eight pits filled with petrified white trees that form the metaphysical links to the other planes. Additional trees were placed elsewhere on the island to lock in the connection. Unfortunately the small tree for Avilona was unwittingly placed into a sea cave, and after centuries of erosion it broke, making magical flight nearly impossible.

Player Handouts

Vekeshi Letter

A letter sent to a Vekeshi Mystic PC shortly after The Incident which occurs at the Kaybeau Arms Fair.

By Decree of the Old Stag

You, servant of Grasama, have been chosen to strike a blow for our order.

The swine Rock Rackus has insulted us for the last time. The pig deserves to die, and you have been assigned the privilege of performing the very deed. At our latest secret gathering, the Old Stag said he thinks Rackus well deserves to die, and we gladly carry out his desires as he speaks for the Unseen Court.

Do it however you want, but make sure it makes the news, so we can verify that you did it. Your actions will earn us both favor.

-A fellow hand of the goddess



Strange Letter

Hans Weber received this letter shortly after Xambria disappeared by the seal of Mavisha.

HANS -

HELP ME

IT FOLLOWED ME FROM THE DIG

IT HAS ME

I ONLY HAVE A MOMENT

IT WANTS THE THREE RELICS

WARN THE CONSTABLES.

IT TALKS IN MY MIND

I KNOW THINGS I COULDN'T

ITS NAME IS SIHEN

I HEAR THE WORD GIDIM

GIDIM GIDIM? GIDIM

A PEOPLE? A WORLD?

ANOTHER NAME, A NAME IT'S CURIOUS ABOUT

OBSCURATI

OBSCURATI?

OBSCURATI