



ENsider Presents:

Cauldron-Born

Part One

A 5E-Compatible Adventure for 7th- to 8th-Level Characters



Introduction

The Second Bird Alights

A CONSPIRACY HAS WOVEN ITSELF FIRMLY INTO the dark underbelly of the city of Flint. The Royal Homeland Constabulary (RHC) has learned of its existence and knows it has a base beneath the haunted mountain named Cauldron Hill. Now at the king's command it is time to rip this threat from its shadowy womb and thrust it into the light of day.



Two other forces are at work in Flint – a cult of dwarven assassins who want to disrupt a peace summit, and a rogue lord of the Unseen Court who seeks a war between man and fey. Either plot will spell disaster for Flint, but can the party spare the time to stop them before the doom beneath Cauldron Hill is born?

Plot Threads

Similar to the second adventure in the series, in *Cauldron-Born*, the PCs will find themselves racing against the clock to manage the numerous threats in and around Flint. Before you run this adventure you'll want to be familiar with the Timeline, Background, Adventure Overview, and NPC Roster.

Additionally, we've provided a Mission Dossier handout (Appendix C), which you can give to the players at the start of the adventure, and a collection of NPC information (Appendix D, *Dramatis Personae*), from which you can divulge information to the players at your discretion.

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OPEN GAME CONTENT

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The adventure consists of a mix of party-driven investigation and time-based events the PCs must react to. Three plot threads occur simultaneously, and the party has great flexibility to pursue them as they see fit and even fail one or more while still reaching the climax. See DM Quick Reference: Timeline at the end of the adventure to help keep the various plots straight.

Timeline

The adventure begins on the 8th of Spring, in the year 501 AOV (After Our Victory), approximately two months following the end of Adventure Four, *Always on Time*.

- **Spring 8.** A carriage chase assassination attempt by Kell's thugs. The party meets with King Aodhan and are tasked to find Lorcan Kell. The B-Team picks up mediator Brakken. Asrabey, an emissary of the Unseen Court embroils the party in the search for a rogue fey lord. Dwarven radicals attack Pardwight University.
- **Spring 9.** The party and B-Team examine a broken golem for clues. A letter arrives from Vlendam Heid, warning the party about the eschatologists. The party takes command of the task force to capture Kell.
- **Spring 10.** Asrabey asks the party to take him to Gale. In the evening, the B-Team escorts Brakken to the club *Sunset Bench*, one of Kell's fronts. Late at night the dwarven radicals bring a ship full of monsters into the city.
- **Spring 11.** Brakken and the B-Team witness the effects of a fey curse in the Cloudwood. An evening opera gives the party a chance to nab Kell's lawyer.
- **Spring 12.** The dwarven radicals attack a subrail station in the morning. At sunset, paranoia in the Cloudwood leads a mob to murder the mayor. Ekossigan performs his ritual sacrifice in the evening.
- **Spring 13.** If the party hasn't caught him yet, Kell leaves his hide-out at 3:00 AM, giving the party a chance to take him down. That evening Han Jierre and his niece Lya arrive and dine with the party and the king.
- **Spring 14.** At midnight, the king will be able to send the party to the Bleak Gate if they have not already found a way.

Background

Risur and Danor have fought several wars over the past two centuries. King Aodhan of Risur is supposed to be pledging to marry Lya Jierre, niece of the sovereign of Danor, to cement an end to hostilities between the two nations. Lya, her uncle, and a small fleet of Danoran ships are already on their way to a peace summit in Flint, the industrial capital of Risur. They arrive in mere days.

Risur's spies have discovered that Lya is involved in a conspiracy known as the Obscurati. The Ob have been experimenting with strange magic, and they have a stronghold and factory in Flint, but hidden in the dark parallel world known as the Bleak Gate. What they have been building is a mystery, but Lya knows Risur suspects her. King Aodhan and his ministers can't fathom why she's still coming, nor can they tell what the conspiracy's true goals are.

Adapting the Adventure.

This adventure has to serve several purposes. First it's the climax of the first act of ZEITGEIST: *The Gears of Revolution*, and with a few small tweaks it can be the end of the campaign if needed.

Second, we want the adventure to work as its own story, with enough fun events and locations that GMs can use it for inspiration for their own campaigns.

To run this as a stand-alone, you can cut out a lot of the context of the greater conspiracy, and put the focus on trying to protect the peace summit from a "cult." The dwarven radicals might be bundled in with Kell's guild as members of a doomsday cult trying to stop the peace talks, with the fey Ekossigan as a third party complication. The cult's complex might just be well-hidden, or can be in any Plane of Shadow-style location, and instead of crafting a colossus they might be summoning a doomsday demon, waking a dragon, launching a steampunk airship, or resurrecting a villain from your campaign's history.

Finally, this adventure can serve as the starting point of an abridged ZEITGEIST campaign. Start with the party having no knowledge of the conspiracy, so the focus is just on protecting the peace summit. The colossus bursts free at the end of the adventure, kicking off the missions in Adventures Six through Nine (to get control of the golem before the Obscurati can).

Unresolved Issues.

The main factors keeping Risur and Danor from establishing a long-lasting peace are:

- Long-standing animosity in the leadership, who typically spent their youths fighting in the last war and will overreact to any new provocation.
- Ownership disputes of the lush Yerasol Archipelago. Each side will have to forcibly evict some of its citizens who are dug in beyond what are considered "viable borders."
- Fears in Risur that Danor will use peacetime to grow its influence over the other great nations. Negotiations will establish lines each nation is forbidden to cross with regard to establishing factories and footholds in Drakr, Ber, and Crisillyir.
- Fears in Danor that Risur is stealing Danoran technology and, by combining it with magic, will eliminate what advantages Danor has. The two leaders will have to agree to the broad terms of an industrial patent treaty.
- Certain prisoners will need to be traded. The most complicated factors here will be Nathan Jierre and Duchess Ethelyn of Shale (see Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*). It depends on what the party did earlier in the campaign, but generally Danor wants Ethelyn as a prisoner, and wants Nathan returned to them if the party tried to grant him asylum.

They lack two pieces of the puzzle.

First, the Obscurati aren't necessarily hostile to Risur. Their goals – thoroughly detailed in the ZEITGEIST *Campaign Guide* – are far larger than the affairs of two countries.

Second, Aodhan assumes that the Ob are building some sort of weapon to use against Flint, but their creation is actually a titanic golem, which is necessary for their broader goal. Its creators named



the colossus **Borne**; nine months ago, one of those creators betrayed the Obscurati and sabotaged the colossus, removing its mind. Now it is just a giant thoughtless machine, one the Ob are wary of activating. Lya's goal at the peace summit is to divert attention away from the secret factory and buy time for the colossus to be repaired.

Peace Summit.

King Aodhan still holds out hope for peace, though he prepares for catastrophe. He will meet with his Danoran counterpart, **Sovereign Han Jierre**, and they have called upon a neutral mediator, **Brakken of Heffanita**, a minotaur from the nation of Ber.

Many key details of the peace talks have been kept from all but the highest ranked officials in Flint. The King is wary of sabotage or political embarrassment. The people of Flint are of mixed minds, some supporting their king, others protesting against Danor.

Turf War.

A year ago, a foreign crime syndicate known as the Family began to horn in on territory held by local strongman **Lorcan Kell**. The Family, led by the respectable and fashionable **Morgan Cippiano**, is better at subtlety and winning the favor of the citizenry, but Kell's guild of thieves is backed by the Obscurati, for whom they work as muscle. Over the past few months sporadic gang fights have broken out and people allied with either group have been found murdered.

Return of the Unseen Court.

Just as the Bleak Gate is a shadowy reflection of reality, the fey land of the Dreaming is its verdant reflection. What little order and hierarchy exist in the Dreaming are controlled by the Unseen Court. These powerful fey do not take kindly to King Aodhan's peace overtures to Danor, for they find technology abhorrent, but the court cannot unite under a single response.

One member of the Unseen Court, **Ekossigan**, has pushed for war against Risur. Ekossigan performed divinations and sought visions to find proof that would spur his peers to action. But he peered too closely into the darkness of the Bleak Gate, and heard the screams of souls being burned as fuel in the Obscurati's forges.

Driven mad by the ordeal, Ekossigan left a poem hinting at his intentions, then disappeared to Flint, where he is gathering the local lesser fey—pixies, satyrs, gremlins, and such—to his banner. He is convinced he must destroy the Obscurati's factories, but it's nearly impossible for even a being of his power to enter the Bleak Gate. To reach the Ob's complex, Ekossigan must perform a horrendous act: hanging thirty-one children from the branches of a century-old tree.

The Unseen Court has dispatched one of its emissaries, the high elf dreadnought **Asrabey Varal**, to follow Ekossigan to Flint and stop him before he succeeds in provoking the war he wants.

The Disciples of Heid Eschatol.

Radical dwarven followers of the philosophy of Heid Eschatol believe that the upcoming treaty is a step backwards from their prediction of doomsday. Rather than form a tenuous peace that will last for only a few decades, why should they not accept a war that will bring about finality to their conflict?

A Lot Going On?

In writing this adventure we realized we had more plot threads we wanted to resolve than we had originally planned at the start of designing the ZEITGEIST Adventure Path. That's why this adventure now spans two levels instead of just the one that we'd said in the *Campaign Guide*. One of the later adventures will be shortened slightly to balance out the level progression throughout the campaign.

Pacing and Leveling.

The adventure can take many routes, and we discourage precise XP tracking. The party starts this adventure at 7th level. We recommend the characters reach 8th level after dealing with two of the three threads in Act One, then 9th level at the adventure's end.

Led by the zealot **Grundun Zubov**, these devout eschatologists have seeded themselves within Flint over the past months. Unlike the true teachings of Heid Eschatol that speak of "preparing for the end of things," the followers of Zubov have begun a calculated plan to "make things end." Already dwarven assassins have planted bombs in key areas and set up discreet sniper positions. Zubov is prepared to die in the greatest terror attack Risur has ever seen.

As Zubov puts the final pieces of his destructive plot into place, his most recently hired gun is having misgivings. Dwarven sniper **Kvarti Gorbatiy** (whom the PCs likely had the pleasure of meeting in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*), did not realize when Zubov hired him how radical the mission was, and even the coldly professional sniper is troubled by what Zubov is planning.

Obscurati Affairs.

Over the past several years the Obscurati have established a massive construction facility underneath the mountain Cauldron Hill, or rather in its shadowy analogue in the Bleak Gate. They had the aid of many government officials, most of them were misled in the details and purpose of the operation. Some of these the party discovered and took down in earlier adventures.

Currently, the facility is overseen by **Leone Quita**, known by his moniker "the steelshaper" for his innate magical ability to reshape and telekinetically manipulate almost any type of metal. He was one of three architects of the colossus, but of the three he is the only one invested in the Obscurati's mission.

The Ob in Flint made use of Locan Kell's thieves guild to smuggle in the materials it needed for the construction, and for the past six months Kell's men have been slowly slicing up loose ends. But Kell himself is a loose end because his men have been using the Obscurati's secret gates to travel between the real world and the Bleak Gate. After years of disciplined secrecy, the Ob are likely to be undone by the overconfidence of a top-hatted, bloodthirsty crime lord.

I, Grappa.

Nine months ago, one of the colossus's other two creators—**Alexander Grappa**, known as "the mindmaker"—tried to escape the Bleak Gate complex. The third architect, "the gearbuilder" **Tinker Oddcog**, is the main focus of Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*.

The Ob had been trying for years to make a golem mind suitable for their ultimate plan, but none of their attempts were successful. The colossus would need to be intelligent enough to react to unpredictable dangers in an environment too deadly for anyone to stand nearby and give it orders. And it would need to be devoted enough to the conspiracy's beliefs that it would not give up, even though it would suffer incredible damage and might even be destroyed. But any golem mind smart enough showed too much independence, and the Ob feared they would go rampant when placed into the colossus's powerful body.

Grappa, a Risuri veteran of the Third Yerasol War who turned to golem-crafting in hopes of sparing other young men from the horrors of war, attracted the Ob's attention for his novel method of raising golems like children. He implanted some artificial memories into a construct as a baseline, then gave the "newborn" time to learn and mature. Learned experience was embedded with context and emotion, making it more real and effective than any crafted psyche could be.

Five years ago, Grappa was personally recruited by **Kasvarina Varal**, one of the heads of the Obscurati who traveled between the conspiracy's various cells. She helped him raise and train several golem "children," and then chose the one with the most promise, which Grappa had named Borne. Grappa oversaw the careful transfer of Borne's mind from a man-sized golem into the colossus, and spent months making sure Borne would be at ease in his new body.

During this time, however, Grappa grew nervous about the Ob's ultimate goals. After he snooped on something he shouldn't have, Kasvarina and Leone had him locked up. Grappa managed to escape, though, with the aid of a slender bronze golem handservant. He mind-controlled Kasvarina, interrogated her, then wiped her memories. Then he extracted the colossus's mind to prevent his "son" serving the conspiracy's goals. With Kasvarina as a hostage and his handservant at his side, Grappa fled toward Flint's harbor, but Leone the steelshaper caught up with him and killed him.

Before dying, Grappa managed a desperate spell to transfer his mind to his golem handservant, but Leone tore the handservant apart before taking Kasvarina back to the Ob compound to try to restore her memories.

The RHC eventually discovered the scene, and agents took the shattered golem into their possession, intending to repair it. Grappa's mind endures within the bronze golem's head, and shortly after this adventure begins the RHC manages to repair the golem enough for it to move and haltingly speak. Grappa's limited by a *geas* so he cannot reveal all the conspiracy's secrets, but he still wants to bring them down.

The Cauldron Hill Complex.

The engineers and builders inside the compound are growing anxious as Leone keeps them there even after the colossus has been completed. A few unfortunate disappearances of dissenters have tanked morale, and even the guards are starting to grumble.

As if that weren't bad enough, no one from the Ob has been able to restore Kasvarina's memories. For a variety of reasons (explored in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*), many people around the world are interested in finding Kasvarina, and without her magical talents

Adjusting for History.

The party's Prestige (see the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide*) likely has reached 4 with Risur, and could be as high as 5. If the party's Prestige with Risur is only 3, the king is a bit more conservative concerning what resources he'll call upon, but he trusts Delft's opinion of the party. If their Prestige with Risur is 2 or less, the king might not even call upon the party, instead giving them the bodyguard duty while having the "B-Team" handle the investigation. Of course, when the "B-Team" get in over their heads and die horribly, the players' heroes can swoop in to save the day.

If Asrabey died in Adventure One, he's either back from the dead if you allow that in your game (if anyone has the resources for resurrection, it's the Unseen Court), or he's been replaced by a similar powerful high-elf male warrior, perhaps one armed with a bone scimitar and a *wand of scorching ray*.

If somehow the party has already killed Lorcan Kell (and according to the E.N. Publishing messageboards, it nearly happened in at least two campaigns), you could simply slot in his lawyer Quentin Augst as the target, or invent a lieutenant who replaced him.



she is vulnerable. The Cauldron Hill complex is warded against many types of divination, so the Ob keep her there, hoping to find a solution eventually.

As the RHC has gotten closer to uncovering the conspiracy, the Obscurati leadership has put great pressure on Leone to activate the colossus. He lacks the carefully cultivated mind of Borne, though, so he has brought in less skilled enchanter to try implanting the consciousnesses of the other, less optimal golem "children." Each has failed to synchronize, and Leone had their minds extracted and killed to keep the titan from going out of control. The Obscurati are now in possession of a 300-foot tall paperweight.

Adventure Overview

On the way to meet with King Aodhan, the party is attacked by thugs working for crime boss Lorcan Kell, at behest of the Obscurati. Escaping the ambush, the party meets their king, who orders them to root out the conspiracy before the peace summit begins, five days hence.

The weak link in the Ob's secrecy is Kell himself. If the party can capture or kill him, they should be able to figure out how the Ob travel between the two worlds. The party takes command of a task force of fifty police officers and plans the take-down.

Meanwhile, a second group of constables—"the B-Team", whom the players can take control of temporarily as secondary PCs—meet the summit's mediator, the minotaur Brakken of Heffanita when he arrives at Flint's docks. The B-Team serves as a second set of eyes, letting the players witness events that their main characters wouldn't be privy to.



Complications Arise.

While planning ways to capture Kell, Asrabey Varal, an emissary of the Unseen Court, arrives and warns that a fey lord named Ekossigan has come to Flint to provoke a war. Asrabey invokes the right of Kelland's Tribute to ask for aid, because he is magically forbidden from causing any harm to a member of the Court. The king leaves it to the party whether to help him or pass the buck to the B-Team.

The first Danoran dignitaries for the peace summit will arrive the next day, Spring 9, and Aodhan wants results by the 13th, when Sovereign Han Jierre and his niece Lya arrive, so he can know whether they are hostile to Risur. If the party can't manage that, then just after midnight on the 14th, the king and his ministers will be able to send the party to the Bleak Gate.

Messenger Wind.

The party will be active all across Flint, and might want to split up. They should have access to a *messenger wind* (provided by Gale in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, or by the RHC if you're running this adventure as a stand-alone). There are five golden feathers that are linked to a central orb. Anyone with a feather can call upon the wind's power as long as they are within 30 miles of the orb.

When called, the wind flies 10 miles an hour until it reaches the summoner. They can give it a message, and it will fly to any other bearer of one of these feathers to deliver that message. If multiple creatures activate this power, it resolves its first command before starting the second.

The party should likely have three of these, their boss Delft one, and the B-Team the remaining one.

Plan B.

This adventure has a lot of things going on, and while we want to make sure the PCs are aware of the scope of the dangers, we don't want to take away their roleplaying agency by forcing them to be in certain places at certain times. That's what the B-Team is for. They let you present brief vignettes so the players can have a broader perspective of the events in the adventure.

Additionally, they should be a fun break from the main plot, give the players an opportunity to try something new, and potentially provide the main party with extra resources to handle the numerous time-sensitive challenges.

Finally, for an adventure with so much going on, we think it's less believable if none of the good guys die. The B-Team lets you as GM pull out all the stops to demonstrate the threat the villains pose. They're only 4th level, so if they lose horribly to a foe, the main party should stand a chance, and the players might be well-motivated.

It is likely (and to be honest, preferable) if the B-Team suffer casualties or are otherwise defeated, ideally by Lorcan Kell as he escapes and joins up with the Obscurati. Kell serves as the main combat threat in the climax, and the more the party hates him, the better.

Brakken is a telepath, so when he eventually shares his memories of the B-Team, it helps gloss over any metagaming concerns of the players having knowledge their main PCs wouldn't.

Scenes involving the B-Team are marked with an asterisk.

After the party finishes with the king, the B-Team witnesses the first attack by dwarven cultists. They derail a train with one bomb, collapse a building with another, then begin shooting panicked people from rooftops. Either the B-Team or the main party must stop them before hundreds are killed.

Three Threads.

The next four days then are filled with chasing down three targets—the dwarven radicals, the fey lord Ekossigan, and Lorcan Kell.

The radicals try to sneak in a shipment of horrifying monsters to stalk the streets, but the party has a chance to stop them at sea. While the party might manage to strike the dwarves' hide-out, their leader Grundun Zubov has already prepared his final attack. He intends to crash the opening of a new subrail station, take hostages, and then drive a train car loaded with explosives underneath the hotel where all the peace summit dignitaries are staying. If he's not stopped, the detonation will inflame Danor enough to provoke a new war.

At the same time, Ekossigan is gathering local minor fey to his banner in the rural city district called Cloudwood. The fey lord lays a curse on the district, which the B-Team witnesses first hand. If the party can't stop him the people there violently turn on each other.

When they find him, Ekossigan is prepared to sacrifice thirty-one children in a treetop orphanage. Their deaths will open a portal to the Bleak Gate so he can march his army of fey through. The party has a chance to go with him if they let him perform his vile ritual. Otherwise they must fight him as he invokes a destructive ice storm and tries to bring down the whole tree orphanage around them.

If defeated, he disintegrates, but not before revealing that he has had a vision of Kasvarina Varal beneath Cauldron Hill. Though the party might not recognize the name, Asrabey has history with her, and he offers to aid the party on their mission to the Bleak Gate.

The primary goal, though, is capturing Lorcan Kell. With their task force the party knocks over Kell-aligned businesses, disrupts illicit transactions, targets the guild's lieutenants, and eventually assaults his stronghold, the Theater of Scoundrels. Along the way the B-Team can help the party arrest Kell's lawyer, and an opposing crime syndicate called The Family offers to lead the party to Kell himself if the task force's efforts have failed.

Kell always has an escape route planned, though, and if the party isn't careful he'll trick them with a decoy and link up with the Obscurati, who spirit him away to the Bleak Gate, but not before he brutally murders the B-Team in retaliation.

Preparing for Cauldron Hill.

Though not part of the three major threads, the party can get some help for their ultimate mission of attacking Cauldron Hill. The RHC manages to reassemble the handservant golem that houses Alexander Grappa's consciousness, and he offers to guide them into the Cauldron Hill complex.

Later, the party is invited to meet Lieutenant Dale, provisional guardian of haunted Cauldron Hill after its last protector turned out to be part of the Obscurati. He gives the party as much as he

knows about the Bleak Gate version of the mountain, and invites them to practice a bit of meditation to protect them from the evil spirits in that dark world.

Time to Get Dressed Up.

Though the party probably managed to stop the dwarven radicals and the fey lord Ekossigan, it's unlikely the party managed to catch Lorcan Kell and find a way to Cauldron Hill by the time Lya Jierre and her uncle arrive on the 13th. When Lya personally requests their presence at the first banquet of the peace summit, protocol demands they attend.

Given the chance to mingle with key figures of both nations, the party can try to wheedle information out of Lya, but must maintain proper decorum or be tossed out. Just as dessert is about to be served, Asrabey Varal bursts into the room and asks the king's permission to travel to the Bleak Gate. Though placed in an awkward position, Aodhan agrees, and the banquet ends on a sour note. The Danorans, spooked, quickly excuse themselves, but Brakken asks for a moment with the king and the party.

The minotaur reveals that he is a telepath, as well as a real bombshell: one member of the Danoran entourage is rushing for a secret portal that leads to the Bleak Gate, to warn the defenders. If the party acts fast, they can catch him and maintain the element of surprise.

Attacking the Compound.

Aodhan wants the party to try to take out the Obscurati's presence in Flint. Asrabey simply wants them to cover his infiltration as he tries to rescue Kasvarina. And Alexander Grappa in his golem body tags along if the party will let him, or sneaks after them if necessary, having used his magic to ensure he knows when the party attempts their assault. The party might have some Risuri soldiers with them, and perhaps other NPC allies.

The party has to figure out how best to breach the compound and find its heart, and stealth or trickery can make a far easier path than pure firepower. Regardless of whether the party sweeps through with overwhelming might or manages to get themselves outmatched and captured, they ultimately reach the massive central chamber where the colossus stands inert. As a last fight breaks out, somehow the colossus activates (perhaps the party damages it, or Leone tries to activate it as a last-ditch defense, or Grappa awakens it).

Filled with just wild instinct and a desire to break free, the colossus smashes its way to the surface, and the whole complex begins to collapse and shift into the real world. If the party has done well they can stamp out the Ob's forces in Flint, gather vital information and free dozens of engineers who will gladly join Risur. If they screw up, they might barely make it out alive.

Time to Dream

The colossus begins to rampage, threatening to destroy half the city. Seeing their secrecy utterly ruined, Lya and Han Jierre teleport away, and it falls to the party to stop the titan.

King Aodhan has some magical control over who enters and leaves his realm. If the party can manage to drive or lure the

mindless colossus to Flint's harbor, the king places them in charge of a small fleet. Depending on how the party comported itself during the banquet, they even get help from some of the Danoran ships, since most of Danor is not affiliated with this conspiracy and wants to help in Flint's time of need.

The king stands on deck and gathers magical energy, calling upon the loyalty of every citizen of the city. The party must keep the king close while avoiding the colossus's attacks and fending off monsters that hitched a ride on it from the Bleak Gate. If they can protect the king long enough, he banishes the colossus into The Dreaming, where it cannot harm Flint, and where it is beyond the reach of the Obscurati, at least for now.

Adventure Layout

Cauldron-Born's plot has a precise beginning and climax, but the middle of the adventure can take many different paths. We roughly divide events as follows:

- **Prologue: Meet the King:** The PCs' meeting with the king, and the arrival of Brakken and Asrabey.
- **Act One: Three Threads:** Long-term set up for assaults on the Obscurati base. Tracking down Locan Kell. Helping Asrabey stop Ekossigan. The radical eschatologist attacks throughout Flint.
- **Act Two: The Etiquette of Gustatory Interrogation:** The party hobnobs with dignitaries. Varal requests to investigate Cauldron Hill.
- **Act Three: Expedition to the Bleak Gate:** Breaking into the facility. Confronting Lorcan Kell. Borne activates and goes crazy.
- **Act Four: To Battle a Colossus:** Attracting Borne out to the bay. Naval battle against Borne. King Aodhan's ritual.

From a pacing standpoint, "Act One" would involve the party starting their investigation and finishing two of the three threads. In "Act Two" try to keep a fast pace as the party finishes the third thread just in time to attend the banquet (or runs out of time and fails). Then "Act Three" is the Ob complex, with the surprise ending of having to thwart the colossus.

Of course, if the party does really well, don't try to force them to take longer just so the pacing remains the same. If they can get into the Bleak Gate before the 13th, skip the banquet and go straight to act three.

Scene Layout.

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

Scene Type: Action, Exploration, Exposition, Puzzle, Social, or Hybrid.

Duration: Montage (a few hours or days), Real-Time (a few minutes), or Tactical (round-by-round).

NPC Roster

Because of the large number of NPCs the party will meet, we've compiled two handouts to help you keep track of their various statuses, mannerisms, and role in the adventure. A GM handout lists



keywords and traits to help you portray the NPCs, while a player handout details characters whom the PCs would be familiar with at the start of the adventure. Encourage the players to add notes as they meet new people of interest.

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

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Kvarti Gorbatiy, dwarven mercenary	35
Leone Quital, the Steelshaper	35
Lorcan Kell, killer and guild-leader	35
Lya Jierre, Danoran minister of outsiders	35
Roland Stanfield, Flint's city governor	35

Recurring Characters.

Many NPCs in this adventure will have roles in future adventures in the series. Lya Jierre is the primary antagonist in Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, while Alexander Grappa and Leone Quital are key to Adventure Seven, *Schism*, and Asrabey and Kasvarina return in Adventure Eight, *Diaspora*. King Aodhan and Roland Stanfield will be vital to the end of the second arc of the adventure path, in Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*. Finally, Han Jierre rises to prominence in the last third of the campaign. If anyone important dies, though, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

Incidental NPCs.

The following NPCs probably only show up for a single scene, but if the PCs latch on to anyone, refer here to easily remember who is who.

NPC	Page
Officials, Military, Locals	
Hadsworth Hudgins, carriage driver	11
Sergeant Deb Macon, task force liaison	15
Justin Rollins, royal technologist	24
Captain Dale, military defender of Cauldron Hill	25
Rock Rackus, local celebrity	Part Two
Sergeant Langlois, Cloudwood cop	Part Two
Doyle Idylls, Cloudwood mayor	Part Two
Circe, Cloudwood kid delinquent	Part Two
Relle, Cloudwood spinster	Part Two
Kevin Wilson, subrail architect	Part Two
Colonel Aden Tucker, overconfident commander	Part Two
Greg Masterson, Ob recruiter at the Battalion	Part Two

NPC	Page
Kell's Guild	
Rufus Hammerton, Kell-guild lieutenant	11–12
Kate Glenn, Kell bodyguard cleric	Part Two
Nick Reder, Kell bodyguard grappler	Part Two
Dester Rathnine, Family mole in Kell guild	Part Two
Sylyx (a.k.a. Norm), Obscurati liaison to Kell guild	Part Two
Fey and Vekeshi Contacts	
Rear Admiral Morris Dawkins, "the Old Stag"	Part Two
The Alderman, gnome beadle	Part Two
Valentina Yorke, subrail druid	Part Two
Mugwort, pixie spy in RHC	Part Two
The Trash Heap, city dump hag	Part Two
Ellik, creepy fey	Part Two
Radical Eschatologists	
Takbar Rhozenko, bombing leader	20
Captain Tamushin, radical eschatologist, of Cherno Bezna	Part Three
Doug Clapper, teen look-out	Part Three
Peace Summit Dignitaries	
Captain Rosalyn Taylor, Danoran naval representative	Part Two
Eloise Duffet, Danoran minister of war	Part Three
Geoff Massarde, tiefling engineer	Part Two
Kian Doherty, Risuri minister of agriculture	Part Two
Pierre Riquier, Danoran minister of magic	Part Two
Steffan Eberhardt, peace summit observer	Part Three
Off-Screen, Overseas, and General	
Giovanni Algardi, "The Carver"	Part Three
Archmissionary Cornelius Eboracum, grand exorcist	Part Three
Cruusk, Ber ship's bosun	16
Feroz, Brakken's bear	16
Gerax, one-legged Beran orc consular	17
Grandis Komanov, radical eschatologist figurehead	Part Three
Rush and Merton, Lya's bodyguards	Part Three
Tinker Oddcog, the Gearbuilder, gnome madman	Part Three
Bartholomew Pryce, journalist	23

Rewards.

At the end of this adventure, the party's Prestige with Flint and Risur should increase by 1 for their role in the peace talks and defense against a rampaging Borne. If they manage to defeat Ekossigan without the mayor of the Cloudwood being slain, their reputation with the Unseen Court goes up by 1. If the PCs took Morgan Cipiano up on his offer to assist with demolishing the Kell-Guild, their prestige with the Family increases by 1 step. Finally, the PCs prestige with the Obscurati increases by 1 step after they successfully infiltrate the Cauldron Hill complex and Borne is unleashed.

The PCs should have each about 23,500 gp in equipment by the start of this adventure. After the introduction, Stover Delft delivers them a stipend of 9,500 gp each to aid in the various threads that occur at the beginning of the adventure. Just before the banquet, Delft approves a further 13,000 gp stipend per PC.

If the PCs are free agents, instead of RHC constables, you'll need to make sure they receive appropriate treasure. This is made easy by offering a one-time payment of 5,000 gp per player for assisting Brakken and making up the difference with loot the party can keep.



Final Word Before We Start.

This is a detail-rich, multi-layered adventure. Your players will inevitably outwit you and find some way to short-circuit the expected path of the investigation, but that's fine. Just make sure that the key players don't reveal the existence of the colossus until the PCs see it firsthand, and that no one explains the Obscurati's ultimate goal. Anything else is fair game. After all, the PCs are supposed to win. We're just trying to make the chase challenging enough to be fun.

Character Themes.

Each ZEITGEIST adventure includes one or more scenes that bring the PCs' character themes (detailed in the Player's Guide) to the forefront. In addition to the moments below, most of the backgrounds elicit strong interest by one of the attendees at the peace summit banquet.

Dockers can work together with Thames Grimsley to rally the dock workers of Flint to man the fleet that confronts Borne in the climax.

Eschatologists can be heavily involved in the terrorist actions of Grundun Zubov, and may receive advanced warning from Vlendam Heid, founder of their movement.

Gunsmiths will be able to identify many of the weapons used by the eschatologist radicals and the Obscurati, and may even receive special weapon modifications from Kvarti Gorbarity.

Martial Scientists can learn a new special ability from Major Dale that will protect them during their journey into the Bleak Gate.

Skyseers give receive a special vision during

the encounter with the fey Ekossigan.

Spirit Mediums can aide investigations into the terrorist attacks and have the option to question Lorcan Kell and other people of interest even if they die. During the final encounter against Borne, Spirit Mediums will be able to relay the exact status of King Aodhan, giving the PCs an edge in managing the final battle.

Technologists will have the best chance of disarming the bombs used by the dwarven radicals. They'll also be best equipped to sabotage and sneak through the Obscurati complex.

Vekeshi Mystics are likely the best chance the PCs will have of gaining the trust and support of Asrabey Varal early in the adventure, and they'll have a chance to save Kasvarina in the Obscurati complex.

Yerasol Veterans will be able to identify better with many members of the peace talk banquet, giving the PCs an edge when dealing with high ranking Danoran dignitaries.



Prologue: Meet the King

IN THIS ACT, THE PARTY MEETS WITH THEIR KING to plan an assault on the Obscurati, and the B-Team greets and protects Brakken the mediator.

Back on the Job

It's been just over a week since the new year's festival filled the skies over Flint with fireworks, metaphorically driving away the meager cold weather that passes for winter in Risur. Flowers are already blooming across the city, and despite the perpetual cycle of worker protests and police crack-downs, despite the gang violence, and despite the fringe eschatologists on street corners claiming that this is the last spring the world will ever know, the people of Flint are optimistic for the future.

The city is abuzz with talk of the peace summit. This morning the king arrived by ship from the capital city of Slate and took residence in Hotel Aurum, the newly-finished tallest building in the city. The party's presence has been requested in the afternoon, once the king and his retinue have settled in.

The Hotel Aurum.

Construction began only a year ago on the extravagant Hotel Aurum. Conceived by a genius halfling, the hotel is actually two separate buildings connected skywalks at the third, seventh, and eleventh floors. The distinction was meant to allow segregation of different classes, with one building being made for the "everyman" while the other side would cater to nobles.

Early in the construction, the hotel was chosen as the site for the peace talks, and the interiors were furnished to the exact specifications of the Danoran and Risuri delegations, with each side taking ownership of a separate side of the two-building hotel. The Risuri delegation resides in the less opulent "west building," while the Danorans have been given occupancy of the "east building." In order to better preserve the nature of the peace talks, the Danoran east building has been designated as a temporary consulate, and counts as Danoran sovereign soil for purposes of the peace talks.

Access and Protection.

Police watch the streets in a one-block perimeter around the building. The nearest subrail stop, Darvill Station, is just outside the perimeter, but the station has a constant security presence as well.

The entrances of both towers of the hotel are guarded by agents of their respective nations, with Danoran musketeers and pikemen guarding the east, while Risuri soldiers stand watch with sword and wand at the west. The Danorans won't allow any non-Danorans admittance to their building during the initial phases of the peace talks, and are sure to report any such attempts to their superiors (particularly Lya Jierre).

Meanwhile in the News...

While the party prepares to crack the conspiracy, what's going on in Flint and the rest of the world?

Doctor. Tales from Ber tell of miraculous healing in the hinterlands. Long averse to the Clergy and their renowned curative magic, the upper class of Ber seem quite abuzz at rumors of a foreign doctor treating the sick using science and surgery, not sorcery. Though Flint has its own medical education programs that produce fine physicians, stories tell of this mystery man repairing severed spines, reattaching lost limbs, and restoring sight to the blind, feats currently beyond the scope of secular medicine.

Hue. Clothiers across Lanjyr are concerned that the upcoming peace summit might endanger the production of a popular dye, Tardisian Blue, which changes color in the presence of magic. The flower that yields the dye is native to a single island in the Yerasol Archipelago, and that island allegedly lies in a "buffer zone" that has been proposed, where neither side could have settlers. Druids in Risur cheer the announcement, saying it will let the islands return to their original historic beauty.

Baker. For months subrail travelers have wondered at the construction outside their windows as they passed beneath the heart of downtown. Wonder no longer. The Sharon M. Baker Station (red line, station 4) will be having its ribbon-cutting ceremony on the 12th of Spring. The city subrail authority apologizes that the Red Line will be shut down until noon that day for track maintenance and platform alignment.

Tenant. The Royal Docks of Upper Flint Bay have a new short-term lodger. *Freux Rouge*, a second-rate frigate of the Danoran navy, arrives on the 9th bearing early dignitaries for this month's peace summit. The Flint garrison promises that Risuri ships will be ready at a moment's notice if the Danorans cut off our offered hand of friendship. Indeed, the R.N.S. *Brawn* – the ship whose berth the *Freux Rouge* is taking, will be on regular patrol. Gawkers are expected, because the *Rouge* is one of Danor's few remaining sailing warships.

Smith. In Drakr, this spring's Forge Festival will see most every dwarf over the age of 10 working to craft something out of metal over the course of a single day. Trekholm's grand shipyard expects to launch a vessel at sunrise the next day, and has invited all non-dwarves in the city to come and watch the unprecedented construction.

Reunion. Centuries after it was destroyed in the Second Victory, the Aquilopolis Bridge which once connected the human world with the elf world has been reconstructed. Now the massive structure links Crisillyir and Elfaivar at the Strait of Sjögren, and the Avery Coast Railroad is already conveying passengers and freight between the two continents. However, security is tight, and the bridge's completion was delayed due to numerous attacks by jungle tigers.



Guards on duty at the Risuri side of the hotel have been given profiles on the PCs, Brakken, and other RHC constables, recognizing them immediately. Mages preparing defenses for the peace summit noticed an oddity: just as a ring of gold blocks teleportation, the hotel's very name seems to have the same function. It is impossible to teleport into or out of the building, or between the two towers, though teleportation within a single building works normally.

In Medias Res

Action. Tactical. Level 7.

Kell's thugs attack the party.

Chief Inspector Stover Delft sent a carriage bearing the royal seal to pick up the party and deliver them to Hotel Aurum so they may meet with their king. During the journey, the carriage is set upon by Kell-guild thugs. Normally they're not much of a threat, but these men carry advanced weapons.

Their plan is to murder the horses pulling the carriage and then gun down the party, but these are the king's horses, and they do not die easily. (The driver wasn't so lucky.) What was meant as a brutal ambush likely turns into a high-speed chase through the streets.

Royal Carriage.

Reserved for guests of the king, this luxurious, beautiful carriage is big enough to hold six people. Latched shutters are normally closed when the carriage travels, but can be opened for a view, or to speak with the driver, a war vet named **Hadsworth Hudgins**. The walls, doors, and shutters of the carriage are practically bullet-proof and can be deadbolted from within. Two royal horses pull the carriage.

The carriage picks up the party from the RHC headquarters and goes south along a broad thoroughfare. As it nears a railroad crossing, Hadsworth taps the side of the carriage, leans over, and says, "I think I see trouble."

Then he's shot in the chest with a pair of muskets. His body slumps and falls off the side of the carriage, and the horses bolt.

High Speed Assassination Attempt.

The ambush consists of two carriages of Kell-guild attackers, one approaching from the front, the other from the rear. Each carriage has two musketeers on the front driver's seat it, and inside the carriage are two musketeers and one Kell-guild technologist, with special gadgets provided by the Obscurati. The rear carriage also has **Rufus Hammerton**, one of Kell's lieutenants, and athletic and arrogant warrior whom the party might have met in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*.

The front carriage pulls sideways to try to block the road, and then its side door opens. The two musketeers in the driver's seat shoot and kill Hadsworth. Then two shooters in the carriage fire muskets at the horses, but fail to kill them.

Finally, the technologist hefts a bulky, musket like device with steam piping all across it, and he shoots at the carriage. The PCs hear a thump, and then the high-pitched whine of a drill as the tranq drill-dart gun tries to burrow through the wall of the carriage and dose the party with poison gas.



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.



this, though, he trains regularly to keep his stamina and swordplay robust, and the rites of rulership grant him daunting magical powers.

Chief Inspector Stover Delft.

A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft handles the logistical and political drudgery so the party can perform their heroics without too much backlash. Though normally rather easy-going, he gets squinty and condescending when people obstruct important affairs because of politics. Delft chews tobacco, and

King Aodhan.

Now in his 70s, the king of Risur looks rather unassuming. He prefers to resolve disputes by being cool-headed and rationally persuading those who will listen to his side. For those who won't, he's shrewd enough to give them a sliver of what they want and then distract them with harmless endeavors while those worth dealing with get the job done. Despite all

Front Carriage Crew

4 Kell-guild veteran musketeers
1 Kell-guild technologist
2 horses

Royal Carriage

2 royal horses (42 hp left each)

Rear Carriage Crew

Rufus Hammerton
4 Kell-guild veteran musketeers
1 Kell-guild technologist
2 carriage horses

Kell-Guild Veteran Musketeer

Medium human, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)

Hit Points 22 (4d8+4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws STR +4, CON +3

Skills Acrobatics +4, Intimidation +3

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

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

Hit: 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Musket (20 bullets). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 60/150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d12+2) piercing damage.



Kell-Guild Technologist

Medium human, neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 18 (4d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws DEX +5, INT +4

Skills Acrobatics +5, Animal Handling +3, Arcana +4, Perception +5, Stealth +7; thieves' tools +2

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Evasion. When the Kell-Guild Technologist is subjected to an effect that allows them to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, they instead take no damage if they succeed on the saving throw, and only half damage if they fail.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). The Kell-Guild Technologist deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when they hit a target with a weapon attack and have advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of theirs that isn't incapacitated and the Kell-Guild Technologist doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

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

Musket (20 bullets). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12+3) piercing damage.

Time Bomb Launcher (2 bombs). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, one object or surface within 40 feet. *Hit:* A fist-sized projectile with four prongs digs into the target and attaches, its clock arms ticking loudly once per second. After one round it begins ticking twice as fast, and after two rounds it ticks four times per second. At the end of the third round the bomb explodes in a 20-foot radius. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Before it explodes, the explosive can be detached with a DC 14 Strength check, and the countdown can be stopped with a DC 16 Intelligence (thieves' tools) check.

The maximum effective range it can be shot is 40 feet. If it hits flesh the time bomb bounces off and does not arm. The timer can be manually set as an action, and can be set to anywhere from 3 rounds to 10 rounds.

Tranq Drill-Dart Gun (2 darts). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 40/160 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage and if the target is an object, it is embedded with an arrow-like device. When it hits an object like a door, a spool inside the device activates a drill that bores a narrow hole through surfaces up to 3 inches deep. One round later, the device sprays gas through the hole.

The drill-dart releases enough gas to fill up to a 10-foot cube with tranquilizing gas. Each round a creature is in the gas it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion. When a creature has 3 levels of exhaustion from this gas it falls asleep for 1d4 hours and is immune to its effects until the creature wakes. Once they are able to breathe normally again, awake creatures exhausted by this gas lose 1 level of exhaustion each round. The gas can be cleared out by opening a window, but that of course is the goal of the gadget: to force targets to remove their cover.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker the Kell-Guild Technologist can see hits them with an attack, the Kell-Guild Technologist can use their reaction to halve the attack's damage against them.

Rufus Hammerton

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (studded leather, shield)

Hit Points 33 (6d8+6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws STR +5, DEX +6

Skills Acrobatics +9, Animal Handling +2, Athletics +5, Deception +4, Intimidation +4, Perception +2, Stealth +9

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Grappler. Rufus has advantage on attack rolls against a creature he is grappling and he can use an action to try to pin a creature he's grappled. To do so, Rufus makes another grapple check. If he succeeds, Rufus and the creature are both restrained until the grapple ends.

Leaper. Rufus is always considered to have a running start when jumping and can make a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to reduce falling damage by 7 (2d6).

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Rufus deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of his that isn't incapacitated and Rufus doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Rufus attacks with his shortsword.

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

Alchemist's Fire. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target takes 2 (1d4) fire damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature can end this damage by using its action to make a DC 10 Dexterity check to extinguish the flames.

Tanglefoot Bag. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target becomes covered in hardening sap and must succeed a DC 10 Strength check or gain the grappled condition. At the start of each of its turns, the target receives another check to remove the grappled condition. The sap can also be destroyed (AC 13, 6 hp).

**Carriage Horse**

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12**Hit Points** 37 (5d10+10)**Speed** 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Saves CON +4**Skills** Perception +3**Senses** passive Perception 13**Languages** —**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

Trampling Charge. If the horse moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a hooves attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the horse can make another attack with its hooves against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) bludgeoning damage.

Royal Horse

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 51 (6d10+18)**Speed** 50 ft.

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

Saves DEX +5, CON +5**Skills** Perception +6**Senses** passive Perception 16**Languages** —**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

Hard to Put Down (1/day). When the horse is reduced to 0 hit points it stabilizes. The horse may choose to take its move instead of going unconscious. Alternatively, the horse may choose to take an action or bonus action, after which it goes unconscious and needs to make death saves in order to stabilize.

Trampling Charge. If the horse moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a hooves attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the horse can make another attack with its hooves against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) bludgeoning damage.

Tactics.

Try to keep things moving in this encounter. The royal horses pull the carriage past the ambushers trying to block the road, and the two other carriages give chase. People in the streets scream and dive out of the way, and the out-of-control carriage occasionally clips obstacles, like news stands and food carts, slowing it enough for the assassins to gradually close in.

Have the party roll initiative, but make it clear that the carriage is not stopping on its own, so normal melee combat is unlikely. Indeed, the horses start sprinting, pulling the carriage at over twenty miles per hour, making it dangerous to try to jump out. Any character who falls out of the carriage at that speed takes damage as if he'd fallen 20 feet, and can try to soften the damage with a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (reducing the damage taken by 1d6 per 5 points of the result).

At the start of the encounter the front pursuing carriage is 70 feet behind the royal carriage while the other is 100 feet back and slightly off to the side so those on board can have clear shots. Every round thereafter the Kell-Guild carriages get 30 feet closer. On each carriage, one musketeer is always busy driving. One shoots from the driver's seat and two lean out the sides. The technologist doesn't get involved until the carriages are within 40 feet; before then he's out of range of his gadgets.

Rufus Hammerton doesn't have any ranged weapons, and he yells at the driver of his carriage to pull in close so he can try to board the PCs' carriage. He's trained for brutal close-in knife-fighting.

At the end of the first round, the tranq drill-dart starts pumping out poison gas, giving the PCs an incentive to open the doors and possibly climb out to take control of the carriage. Moving from the carriage door to the driver's seat requires a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. Calming the injured horses requires a Handle Animal check (DC 15). Characters who lean out of the carriage to shoot weapons have cover against counterattacks if two carriages are roughly side by side, or superior cover if they're attacking down the length of the street.

Aftermath.

If the party rides out the danger for three minutes, traffic gets thicker and the assassins give up. If the assassins are stopped (killing their horses, destroying the carriages' wheels, tricking them into a collision), the party can interrogate them and learn they were sent by Kell. "The other guys," which is what the Kell guild calls the Ob, want the party dead, and provided this time and place to ambush them.

If things look bad, like if the front carriage is taken out and none of the party are down, or if his own carriage crashes, Rufus Hammerton tries to run, and he's athletic enough to outpace his fellow thugs. If taken alive, the party earns three Task Force Tokens (a gameplay element that appears in the second part of this adventure).

Eventually police can show up and provide a second, reinforced escort for the rest of the trip to Hotel Aurum. If the party is really hurting, you can hand-wave some police druids who can provide a few *cure wounds* per PC.



Meeting with the King

Exposition. Real-Time.

The party plans with Aodhan.

Chief Inspector Stover Delft meets the party at the Risuri entrance to Hotel Aurum, and is shocked to hear they were attacked. Once he's sure they're alright he guides them to a novel (but primitive by modern standards) lift, which ascends to the eleventh floor, complete with an operator in a dapper uniform. Along the way Delft reminds them to be on their best behavior, then grins and says they're going to make a damned fine impression.

King Aodhan has established a temporary court, and dozens of advisors and minor nobles are busy setting up the eleventh floor's various offices and suites when the party arrives, likely bloodied and bruised from battle. An aide meets them at the lift and takes them to a conference room off the main court chamber, which has been furnished with a large meeting table, several chairs, and a map of the city on an easel. Officiates attend to King Aodhan, but when he sees the party, he dismisses everyone except the party, Delft, and his principle minister Harkover Lee. The king's exact reactions to the PCs will vary based on his previous encounters, and you should give the party a chance to be complimented and exchange some formalities with the king before starting the mission briefing.

The king comes up and shakes each of your hands. "It's good to see you again, constables. I heard about your trouble on the way over, and what happened to Hadsworth, your driver." He shakes his head. "I wish I could give this more time, but I've got a hundred other things to do before tomorrow, so let us get on to business.

"I'm not trying to make you feel important by saying this, but I'm about to give you probably the most important mission I've had to send anyone on in my whole reign. The woman I'm supposed to be marrying might be trying to destroy my kingdom, and apparently there are people who want to make sure we don't find out what she's up to. We have five days until she gets here.

"Harkover?"

Principal Minister Harkover Lee gestures at Stover Delft. Delft hands the party a small folder of documents. You can print out Appendix A: Briefing Dossier as a prop for your players, or visit our website to get a template you can modify to match your group's experiences.

Principal Minister Harkover Lee.

Perhaps the most powerful mage in Risur, Lee acts as King Aodhan's bodyguard and chief of staff. Straight-backed and virile despite being in his 60s, Lee speaks crisply and passionately in a slight Ber-tinged accent, and was said to be quite the ladykiller in his youth. He always dresses in reds and golds and carries a solid gold orb tucked into his robes. He never eats or drinks in public.



Standalone Introduction.

If running this adventure as a stand-alone, the Obscurati are part of the same cult as Grundun Zubov's dwarves. The king admits they don't know who attacked the party, but he assumes they want to stop the peace summit. He was going to ask the party to provide security, but now they have a greater mission: find the people behind the attack and stop them. Keep the B-Team material the same and bring in Asrabey as normal. Just simplify the plot so there's only one group—the eschatological radicals, who are allied with Kell and are secretly building something deadly at their Cauldron Hill base—plus the side complication of Ekossigan.

Wayfarer's Lantern.

In Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, the party might have acquired the *wayfarer's lantern*. If they burn special oil infused with essence of a given plane, the lantern can create effects tied to that plane, lasting for 5 minutes in a 50-foot radius. If given oil infused with essence of the Bleak Gate, the lantern could create an area that is coterminous between the two planes. Such oil is expensive, but if the party wants they could acquire enough for three uses.

This could let them briefly interact with the Bleak Gate, but they wouldn't have time to complete the necessary mission. If when the oil ran out they were inside the Cauldron Hill complex (which is underground), they would be shunted through hundreds of feet of stone and likely slain from the shock.

If the party manages to get the amulets from Kell (page @@), they can use those with the lantern to transition fully to the Bleak Gate. Any amulets the party might have recovered from Macbannin's manor in Adventure Two have long since lost their enchantment.

Harkover Lee says, "Despite a variety of encounters with the Obscurati, we only have a sense of their actions, not their goal, nor the organization or extent of the group. We don't know who they are, but we do know where they are.

"The Ob maintain some manner of industrial complex in the Bleak Gate, in a location analogous to Cauldron Hill in this world. They have the ability to pass between the two worlds with relative ease. We do not have the same ease.

"When you have time, review the material in these folders. Please ignore Inspector Delft's "wit" of giving official delegate titles to the last two entries. Their inclusion will make sense in a moment."

Lee spends the next few minutes having the party walk through the investigation so far, and reminds them of the occasional minor detail they might have forgotten. The highlights you'll want to hit are:

- The Ob are operating secretly and have caused harm to Risur, so we have to assume they're hostile.
- Lorcan Kell's guild worked with them to attack the RHC headquarters.
- The Ob have shown the ability to slip into the Bleak Gate via rusted ring gates.
- At least one powerful individual working with the Ob is unaccounted for: the steelshaper who confronted the party outside of the Nettles church (in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*).



After a few minutes of discussion, or if the PCs ask what the mission is, Lee defers to his king.

The king says, "There are certain aspects of my office that don't get shared too readily. Being king means that you're connected, just a little, to every man and woman in this country. They approve of your rule, and that approval is power. I wish I could lend some of this to you for your mission, but there are rules, old old rules, that are there to prevent folks like me from abusing the power the people grant them.

"Being king also means you're connected to the land. I can feel whenever someone enters or leaves the country. If I focus hard enough, I can even forbid someone's entrance or cast them out.

"This conspiracy, they're in the Bleak Gate. If they were in the Dreaming, this would be easy. I could march an army with me at the head into the Dreaming at the drop of a hat. It wouldn't make the Unseen Court happy, but I could do it. But the Bleak Gate is harder. I've never been in my entire life, and they say kings have no power there, because no one rules the dead.

"So here's what I need of you. This group has a way into the Bleak Gate, and I want you to find it, and use it, and drag those bastards into the light of day. And I need you to do it before my fiancée gets here."

The Dragnet.

Delft takes over and explains that they think their best lead is Lorcan Kell. His thugs used a ring gate to attack the RHC headquarters, and as the party just saw, they're using odd, high-tech equipment and taking orders from the Ob. The first step to get into the Bleak Gate, then, is to capture and interrogate Lorcan Kell.

Lya Jierre arrives on the 13th, which realistically gives the party just four days for this mission. Kell has a huge organization, but the party has help. It took a while to press through all the bureaucracy to get this arranged, but Delft is proud to announce that they have formed a task force to take down Kell's guild. The party will have 50 police officers at their disposal. Getting any more will require calling in favors (see Prestige in the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide*).

Delft has one **Sergeant Deb Macon** waiting in a nearby office. She'll be helping the party coordinate their forces and deploy them over the next few days. The king is pretty busy, so Delft figures they'll spend some time kicking around a plan just down the hall, then come back to brief the king once they've got the details figured out. The task force can start in the morning. With luck, they'll find Kell before he knows what hit him.

Fallback Options.

Harkover Lee briefly outlines some other contingencies before the party goes off to brainstorm. Taking Kell alive is optimal. If the party has no choice but to kill him, Harkover Lee can arrange for a powerful cleric from Crisillyir to be teleported in who can make contact with the dead thug's soul and question it.

If Kell doesn't work, a less likely option is to contact **Hana "Gale" Soliogn**. The woman is officially a terrorist, but she claimed to have been guided to the Bleak Gate by a fey named **Ellik**. She claimed the trip required unique circumstances, but it's possible Gale or Ellik could help out.



Hana "Gale" Soliogn. A high elf woman just over 100 years old, Hana can fly at will, control winds, and speak with birds, but has no directly offensive magic. Bitter for her treatment by her Danoran "foster family," she uses her powers to sabotage Danor-owned industry. Some accuse her of more violent crimes, calling her a "fey terrorist." She seeks an audience with the Unseen Court, but has not yet been granted one.



Alexander Grappa, the Mindmaker. Alexander fought for Risur in the Third Yerasol War four decades ago as a mere foot soldier. After losing too many friends he devoted himself to learning magic of golem-crafting. Originally he hoped that his homeland could field an army of automata instead of shedding the blood of its young men and women, but his interest slowly drifted from golem construction to the crafting of minds for these artificial warriors, as well as enchantment magic and other ways to end a

conflict without anyone dying.

When the Ob were ready to begin construction on the colossus, Kasvarina Varal personally recruited Grappa, promising him he could help create peace. Nine months ago, though, he overheard the leaders of the conspiracy discussing their full plans, and was imprisoned and *geased* so he could not tell anyone. He managed to escape, but was killed, and only managed to preserve his consciousness by transferring it to his bronze golem handservant.

Delft also recalls something about a wrecked automaton some agents found that seemed suspicious. The king tells Harkover Lee to get some expert technologists to help the RHC look into the machine. This small tidbit lays the groundwork for bringing the mindmaker, **Alexander Grappa**, into the plot, so make sure not to accidentally forget it.

Finally, the king can open a brief portal to the Bleak Gate, but only at midnight during a new moon. The next new moon is on the 14th, a few hours after he's set to start talking with the Jierres. But if the party can't find another way in, Aodhan still wants the party to go after the Ob, so he'll send them through.

Switching Gears.

Aodhan asks them to clear the room so he can deal with some more menial elements of the peace summit. Before they go, he reiterates that they have his full backing on this mission.

As the party meets Sergeant Macon and starts to plan the task force missions, Delft excuses himself, saying he has to check on another set of constables who should be meeting the Ambassador from Ber, who will be the peace summit's mediator.

At this point, change the perspective to the B-Team.



Brakken of Heffanita.

A minotaur from the nation of Ber, Brakken's ambassadorship in Orithea helped end that nation's civil war and bring on unprecedented prosperity. Recently Brakken became ambassador to Risur, and was tapped by the rulers of Risur and Danor to mediate their peace talks. He's said to be very canny, and that his mere presence tamps down on people's pretensions. He once even got a raging bear to back down with a single disapproving glare.

Brakken secretly is a telepath, and has had such success in negotiations because he can hear the surface thoughts and, if necessary, nudge people toward compromise. He seldom pushes the actual leaders of each side, but he finds it helps immensely if he can calm the emotions of their advisors. He's genuinely driven by a desire to help people live in harmony, though raising his own prestige is certainly a bonus.

He dresses in simple tribal clothing from Ber and refuses to travel without his most trusted friend, a dire bear named Feroz.



The ship's bosun, a brute of a lizardman named **Cruusk**, is first off the boat and asks with a hiss who's meeting the ambassador. He demands identification, though he only gives a cursory glance (not really knowing what an RHC badge should look like). Once the PCs have identified themselves, the lizardman sends word back to Brakken, but tells the constables that they will need to wait while the mediator finishes preparing his cargo for offloading. Cruusk gets to work with the rest of the crew. If the party tries to come aboard, the captain barks at them (he's a gnoll) to get off unless they have a search warrant.

A few of the crew come down the gangplank to the docks, and the local dockers warily prep a crane. A goblin and a docker get into a brief argument—neither speaking the other's language—and eventually the docker throws up his hands and lets the goblin take the controls of the crane. The ship's crew guide it in and start to pull a huge crate up from the galleon's hold.

I Feel Like I'm Being Watched.

The constables are being watched by two Kell-guild thugs, lurking at the door of a dockside bar 100 feet away – a DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check gets a hunch someone's watching and a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check actually spots the men. If they're noticed, the thugs head into the bar and slip out through back doors, planning to get reinforcements. If the constables want to follow, they don't get far before a mishap with the crane distracts their attention.

Snap!

The crane is hoisting a massive steel cage off the *Fuego*, but the weight is too much, and the cable snaps, dropping the cage on the stone worked dock. It breaks on impact, and the creature within the case claws its way out: a massive **dire bear**.

The bear belongs to Brakken, and is his prized fighting animal. Named **Feroz**, this beast is more startled than anything about his tumble. The Risuri dockers nearby panic (the ship's crew, who know the beast is tame, watch with amusement). The sudden flurry of movement spooks the bear, and it rears up defensively.

As long as no one attacks it, the dire bear soon settles down and ponderously approaches one of the constables (Carlao, most likely), then stops to stare into his face. The crew of the *Fuego* look on in stunned disbelief, Cruusk in particular dropping the crate he was holding onto. The goblin operating the crane quickly exits and begins swimming away, fearful of the consequences.

Booming footsteps signal the arrival of Brakken of Heffanita, the minotaur mediator walking down the gangplank towards the dock. Brakken is amused by the sight, and calls out to Feroz. The large beast turns and plods back to Brakken's side.

If the constables attack Feroz, the bear immediately retreats back up to the ship, where Brakken is able to calm it with his psychic abilities. Brakken scolds the constables, and for the remainder of the adventure, Feroz will growl and stare at the constables whenever they're near.

If the constables held their ground, Brakken congratulates them. He introduces himself as "Brakken of Heffanita, Ambassador to Risur from the Progressive Monarchy of Ber, and chosen mediator for the historic peace talks between Danor and Risur." He understands

Enter the B-Team.

When you switch to B-Team scenes, hand the players the pre-generated character sheets from Appendix: Allies and Back-up Constables. Please make it clear that these aren't full PCs. When they're "off-screen," as it were, and the GM have fiat over what happens to them, like any other NPC. This lets the GM drop the party into scenes and dictate the set-up of scenarios.

The B-Team consists of:

- **Carlao**, human Yerasol veteran knight.
- **Serena**, human technologist rogue.
- **Kaea**, high elf skyseer evoker.
- **Dima**, dwarf eschatologist cleric.
- **Josiah**, human gunslinger ranger.
- **Gaethan**, half-elf spirit medium ranger.

Subtle Nudges.

Brakken's abilities provide GMs a unique opportunity to "nudge the plot" by having Brakken learn about secrets via his abilities that the PCs may not have caught onto. He might share some info he "overheard" or that one of his "contacts told him," and suggest the B-Team constables pass it along to the PC. Be sure to use this sparingly, as the PCs are the stars of the adventure, not a psychic minotaur. But if absolutely necessary, Brakken can be used to keep things moving.

A Bear in Bosum Strand*

Social/Action. Real-Time. Level 6.

The other constables greet Brakken and ensure his safe arrival.

The B-Team is waiting at the appointed dock when *Fuego Duradero* arrives from Ber at noon. The impressive galleon is crewed by a mishmash of orcs and half-orcs, with a handful of gnolls, lizardfolk, and other monstrous humanoids.



that there are those who might wish him harm, so he appreciates the protection, but he warns them that his job will require him moving around a lot. For instance, he wants to make sure Feroz is stabled at the Beran consulate, and then he'd like to get a late lunch before going to meet the king. He already has a place picked out.

Brakken puts a pack on his bear's back, full of gifts meant for the dignitaries, and then he's ready to head out.

Escorting the Ambassador.

The Beran consulate is located in the southern district of eastern Stray River. The fastest way is to take a ferry, but Brakken asks to walk, which takes a couple hours. He wants to gently scan the minds of those around him to gain a sense of the city's mood, and he enjoys the reactions of "civilized people" to a giant bear ambling down the street.

Brakken makes small talk, shares stories about his homeland, and asks a few questions about Flint. As ambassador to Risur he's spent his time in Slate, not Flint, and this city is much more psychologically complex than any he's been to before.

The route passes a few landmarks, like Dawn Square (where Nevard's Rally took place; here Brakken looks troubled), the Royal Shipyard (where the king's ships are docked; Brakken smiles), and Hotel Aurum (Brakken begins frowning a block before the party comes within site of the blockaded street and the protesters gathered). Brakken isn't set to meet the king until later tonight, so he continues to Stray River, where his mood perks up.

The constables may simply shrug off Brakken's odd moods as him reacting to a new land, but they might notice with a DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check that he seems to adopt the mood of whatever neighborhood he's about to enter.

Mi Casa, Su Casa.

The Beran consulate is far less impressive than the Danoran consulate that the party visited in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer* but it spreads across more land. Rustic and relaxed, the building is rarely visited and sees only a handful of official guests every month. The grounds are patrolled by a half-dozen guards with fierce and loyal mastiffs.

Two-stories tall and constructed of simple brickwork, the main consulate building is dwarfed by the stables. The stables are home to various normally ferocious animals including several wolves and the consular's pet worg, Blademaw. Once every three months the consulate lets in children from various schools on a tour with the main sight-seeing attraction being the animals in the stables.

The consular, a one-legged orc named **Gerax**, greets Brakken and the constables like they're old friends. In truth Brakken has never met the orc but subtle use of his abilities makes the meeting an impressive scene. Gerax greets the constables with great respect despite their relatively low standing.

For the remainder of the adventure Brakken spends his nights in the Beran consulate. Feroz remains within the stables. Gerax asks everyone to join him for drinks but Brakken declines saying he has a lunch date. He asks the constables to take him to Pardwight University where he'll be meeting one **Steffan Eberhardt**, Drakr's representative to the peace summit. The meal's on him.

Enter Varal

Social. Real-Time.

Cut back to the main party, a few minutes after they leave the king to continue planning. The party hears a commotion outside as an unannounced visitor shows up: Asrabey Varal. The PCs likely encountered Varal during Adventure One, *The Island at the Axis of the World*, and depending on how their encounter with the high elf played out he may react to their presence. If the PCs were able to defeat him then Varal grudgingly gives them a nod, but if he was able to escape or subdue the party he ignores them.

Asrabey has his sword sheathed and his lion shield strapped across his back. If they try to stop him, he explains he is on official business for the Unseen Court, and will brook no delays. Yes, he will foolishly fight his way through if the party is stubborn; Asrabey is also exceedingly stubborn.

Before the King.

The high elf presents himself, kneeling before King Aodhan.

"Gracious King Aodhan, ruler of the mortal nation of Risur as recognized by the true lords of this land, I come on an urgent mission for the Unseen Court. The Court would have it known that one of their ilk has taken an interest in this city and is acting on his own. I am here to tell you that the Court does not approve.

"His name is Ekossigan, herald of the four seasons, he who defends stags from arrows, widdershins prophet. liege of changelings. Upon leaving the Court he penned this poem:

'When spring returns to winter, / The cauldron births a spark.

'The steel betrays the vintner, / The silver spurns the arc.

'The fire-bride's dissension: / Dismissed by green-adorned.

'The wheel-woven dead man / Shall wake the cauldron-born.'

"I ask your leave to search this city for this rebel whom I name. Moreover, I invoke the Rite of Kelland's Tribute. We offer one war unfought in exchange for one season slain. The fey shall not retaliate if you kill that which the Unseen Court's greatest warrior cannot harm."

A DC 13 Intelligence (History) check recalls that Asrabey, as an agent of the Unseen Court, is forbidden from harming Ekossigan himself, so he is effectively requesting someone to help him murder the rogue fey. The king looks to the party. He has to fulfill the tribute but he will let the adventurers decide whether they'll help Asrabey or have the B-Team handle it. Aodhan eventually agrees but demands that the high elf obey their laws while inside the city. Asrabey agrees, then immediately turns to leave.

Varal will not reveal where he's staying while in Flint; if the PCs agree to help, he tells them to meet him at the RHC office at dawn two days hence. If pressed about his activities during the intervening time, Asrabey will admit that the Unseen Court has sympathizers in Flint, and meeting them will be easier without the party being present. The dreadnought refuses to be followed; between his stealth, climbing ability, and teleportation he should stymie any attempt to keep tabs on him.

More information on Varal's quest to stop Ekossigan appears in the second part of this adventure.



High Level Equipment.

Below are the listed rules for all equipment wielded by the Dreadnought Asrabey Varal. Take note that the equipment presented here is meant for GM reference only, and PCs are not expected to be able to acquire this gear for their own use during this adventure. In fact, in the event Asrabey is somehow killed, the Unseen Court will not only demand but also make certain that his gear is returned to them.

Cloak of Smoke.

An ornate garment from the lands of the Unseen Court, this cloak fills your square with a constant roil of smoke that grants half cover (+2 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws). You can see through the smoke without trouble, and you can dismiss or invoke the smoke at the beginning of your turn without any actions required.

Lion Shield.

This specially crafted +3 *shield* can also be loosed to attack on its own. You can use a bonus action to toss this magic shield into the air and speak the command word. When you do so, the shield begins to hover and attacks one creature of your choice within 5 feet of you. The shield deals 2d6 magical piercing damage plus the target is grappled (escape

DC 11 + your proficiency bonus), and it uses your attack roll and ability score modifier to damage rolls. While it is attacking, you gain no bonus to Armor Class from the shield.

While the shield hovers, it shares your space and travels wherever you move, and it continues attacking the same target as long as it remains within 5 feet of you. You can use a bonus action to command the shield to attack a new target within 5 feet of you. The shield does not provoke opportunity attacks from movement.

After the hovering shield attacks for the fourth time, it tries to return to your hand. If you have no hand free, it falls to the ground at your feet. The shield ceases to hover if you grasp it or are moved more than 10 feet away from it.

Vekeshi Blade.

Normally a +3 *longsword* that deals an extra 1d6 fire damage, the Vekeshi Blade wielded by Asrabey Varal is a potent artifact of the Unseen Court. When wielding the Vekeshi Blade, you can transform the weapon into a whip-like form that has 15-foot reach but still deals damage as a longsword. On your turn, you can shift and revert the blade with no actions required.

**Asrabey Varal**

Medium humanoid (elf), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 26 (*glamered +3 platemail, lion shield*)**Hit Points** 150 (20d8+60)**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	8 (–1)

Saving Throws STR +10, CON +8**Skills** Acrobatics +9, Athletics +10, Insight +6, Intimidation +4,

Nature +6, Perception +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16**Languages** Common, Elven**Challenge** 15 (13,000 XP)

Cloak of Smoke. At the beginning of his turn, Asrabey can dismiss or invoke a constant roil of smoke that fills his square, granting him half cover (+2 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws). He can see through the smoke without trouble.

Indomitable (2/long rest). Asrabey can reroll a saving throw that he fails. He must use the new roll.

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

Lion Shield. Asrabey can use a bonus action to toss this magic shield into the air and speak the command word. The shield begins to hover and attacks one creature of his choice within 5 feet of him. While the shield hovers, it shares Asrabey's space and travels wherever he moves, and it continues attacking the same target as long as it remains within 5 feet of him. Asrabey can use a bonus action to command the shield to attack a new target within 5 feet of him. The shield does not provoke opportunity attacks from movement. After the hovering shield attacks for the fourth time, it tries to return to Asrabey's hand. If you has no hands free, it falls to the ground at Asrabey's feet. The shield ceases to hover if he grasps it or is moved more than 10 feet away from it.

Power Attack. When Asrabey makes his first melee weapon attack in a turn, he can take a –5 penalty to his melee weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to melee weapon damage. In addition, Asrabey can use a bonus action to make one melee weapon attack after he uses a melee weapon to reduce a creature to 0 hit points or scores a critical hit with it. Asrabey can only use this feature on his turn.

Quick. Asrabey has advantage on initiative rolls.

Slippers of Spider Climbing. Asrabey can move up, down, and across vertical surfaces and upside down along ceilings, while leaving his hands free.

Vekeshi Blade. On his turn, Asrabey can transform his longsword into a whip-like form that has 15 foot reach or back. While in whip-form the weapon still deals damage as a longsword.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Asrabey attacks four times.

Vekeshi Blade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft. or 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d8+8) magical slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage if wielded in one hand or 13 (1d10+8) magical slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage if wielded in two hands.

Lion Shield. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) magical piercing damage plus the target is grappled (escape DC 16).



Asrabey Varal. A centuries-old high elf warrior, became one of the many husbands of Kasvarina Varal, a powerful matriarch who had survived the Great Malice. Kasvarina encouraged Asrabey's resentment of the humans who had sentenced their people to death. For years he trained, and undertook many daring raids until he became famous as one of the greatest high elf warriors in the world.

Eventually Asrabey left Elfaivar

and offered his services to the Unseen Court, though he has kept a much lower profile for the past two hundred years. Asrabey has not seen Kasvarina for fifty years, and he has not the slightest inkling of her affiliation with the Obscurati. He might respect a few humans from Risur, but he hopes that someday Kasvarina will come to him and ask him to lead a final war of retribution against the Clergy that ruined their race, and the nation of Danor, whose tiefling leaders bear the mark of their crime.

Bombs Away!*

Action. Real-Time. Level 7.

Grundun Zubov's bombs start going off. Panic. Running. AHHHH!

One last scene before the adventure goes free-form.

At 2:15 in the afternoon, the B-Team and Brakken reach Pardwight District, where the city's main university lies. Brakken asks around a bit and eventually is pointed to a Yerasol restaurant that serves fruit, goat, fish, and fried plantains located in the Onça Student Hall (Area 11 on the map). There they are greeted by Steffan Eberhardt, and Brakken introduces him to the party as "Drakr's eyes at the peace summit."

Steffan – an old thin dwarf with sickly white skin, who supports himself on a skull-tipped ebony cane – shrugs in a "what are you gonna do" way and says, "We Drakrans thought we knew how the world was going to end – these two countries fighting until everyone is dead. Now we have to change all our predictions."

Brakken leans in to the constables as if Steffan can't hear him, "Drakr's just worried they'll have fewer customers for their guns and warships." The two laugh and Brakken looks for a seat big enough to support him.

Pardwight District.

One of the few parts of Central District that has managed to keep itself surrounded by a buffer of nature, Pardwight is host to the city's university. Classes fill spare rooms in the buildings of the district, with only a handful of facilities exclusive to the school.

The orange line of the subrail is actually above ground in the Pardwight District, and it has opened up the area to middle class socialites who are charmed by the eclectic clothiers, restaurants, and other shops in the area. Sailors and dock workers trying out the trains for the first time often jump off here to explore. Students tend to stay in the dorms, but the rail offers them easy access to the city's culture.



When the constables arrive, have each make a DC 12 Wisdom check to notice that the clock tower (Area 13) is 7 minutes slow.

Unless otherwise noted, buildings are 30 feet high. Streets are 30 or 40 feet wide.

1. **Pemberton Industries Office Building.** This squat complex once served as a testing ground for the discredited Pemberton Industries' experiments with personal arcanoscientific devices. Now it is locked and lightly guarded until Benedict Pemberton or his debtors can clear out the labs. The university briefly had a department of arcanoscience based here, but now the students have been forced to find other accommodations, most of them much less safe in the event of accidents.
2. **Flint Tribune.** This five story building holds the offices of the city's foremost daily paper, as well as business printing presses. It also services the *Risuri Record* and *Pryce of Progress*, more fringe papers.
3. **Mixed use.** Various shops, often with classrooms or apartments on different floors.
4. **Pardwight Medical Library.** Five stories tall, the library houses not just books but curative scrolls, galleries of famous healers, and an entire floor of preserved specimens both human and monstrous.
5. **Mixed use.** Another set of shops, galleries, and such, surrounding a pleasant garden.
6. **Strandholt Teaching Hospital.** The façade has three stories, while the two wings – for critical patients and chronic patients, have an extra floor. A basement extension houses the insane.
7. **Mixed use.** If you're going to have a mixed-use property, you want it here, because this one is really the prettiest. Look at that fountain.
8. **Hodgeman Hall.** The only part of the district that exclusively is owned by the university, these two buildings have several lecture halls and cozy classrooms for the teaching of classics, languages, and non-mechanical sciences.
9. **Pardwight Druidic Temple.** The university formally recognizes all druidic sects, and tolerates clericists and other religions, but its founders adhered to the way of the puma spirit, looking forward to prey or progress, not skyward like the skyseers.
10. **Quillis Upperclassman Dorm.** Fronted by a fresh air market, the dorm is actually run by a collection of former graduates who demand their lodgers work at least 4 hours a week in the market.
11. **Onça Student Hall.** A major gathering place for students, Onça Hall also houses most of the university's administrative offices, plus its commissary. The Yerasol restaurant Brakken wants to try is on the ground floor of the building.
12. **Pardwight District Court.** This somber building is known as the Stone Dome by the law students who study here. A small police lies across the ravine to the southeast.
13. **Anderson Clocktower.** The 60-foot high clocktower predates Flint's industrial boom, and it has never stopped working for more than five minutes.

14. **Foyle Ravine.** Signs warn people not to enter the wooded ravine. Because of an old teleportation prank gone awry, anyone who tries to leave the gorge teleports back to the base unless they're wearing a gold ring. The local police keep gold rings on hand to rescue stranded pedestrians. The phenomenon is why the subrail has to go on the surface here.
15. **Pardwight Station (Orange Line, station 4).** This station has some of the most stark and modern architecture of the whole subrail system.
16. **Cesanne Sword Studio.** This physical education facility was originally founded to teach duelists. Today it mostly hosts dodgeball.

Terror Attack.

While Brakken, Steffan, and the constables partake of spicy fried fish, goat, and plantains, the agents of radical eschatologist Grund-un Zubov prepare the opening salvo in their message to Risur. Snipers set up atop the medical library (Area 4) and the Anderson Clocktower (Area 13), and a bomb waits in the skywalk of Hodgeman Hall (Area 8).

First Bomb.

At 2:25, right as the constables are receiving their food and right as a train is passing beneath the skywalk, the bomb detonates. The explosion tears apart the skywalk, shatters the windows in the restaurant the constables are at, and is loud enough to be heard anywhere in the city. The train derails, and a great black smoke cloud billows into the sky. A dozen fatalities result from the explosion, along with twenty-six wounded among those onboard the rail and those nearby hit by shrapnel.

It takes about 2 minutes for doctors to stream out of the hospital (Area 6), and 5 minutes for the first police to mobilize from the southeast. The constables have 15 minutes until the second bomb goes off.

Total Casualties: 26 wounded, 12 dead.

After the First Attack.

Depending on how fast the constables react, they might learn some of these facts after the whole incident plays out, or they might figure out where the terrorists are and stop them before the second bomb.

Brakken and Steffan are shaken by the bombing but have the presence of mind to do whatever the constables suggest. Steffan is a cleric and stabilizes those who are pulled from the wreck. If the constables insist, he might even accompany them, in which case he can provide castings of *cure wounds* (three spell slots at 1st level and two spell slots at 2nd level).

Bet He Wasn't Prepared for *That*.

An elderly dwarf – one **Takbar Rhozenko** – waited for the train reading a newspaper. Just before the train arrives he closed the paper, checked a pocket watch, and turned away. The bomb explodes, the train derails, but the dwarf is unfazed. While everyone else on the street is running to see what happened, he walks away casually, right past the now-shattered windows of the restaurant the constables are eating at.



The dwarf is distinctive, beardless with white hair and dark patches around his nose and finger tips from frostbite. He has a newspaper tucked in his armpit, and is fiddling with a pocket watch. If that's not enough to get the constable's attention, this will.

Recent earthquakes have jostled Flint, and when the explosion goes off it causes just enough damage to knock loose a puma-faced gargoyle from atop Onça Student Hall. The gargoyle plummets and strikes Takbar as he walks past the building, just feet away from the party.

Takbar is left dying but conscious, and he growls in pain. If the gargoyle is heaved away and he is magically healed, he can survive, but otherwise he passes on after a minute. Any PC can make a DC 21 Intelligence (Religion) check to realize that Takbar is a member of an obscure radical sect from Drakr. If no PC realizes this, Steffan points it out, shocked that someone from such a rare group would happen to be here.

If the party tries to interrogate Takbar, he resists until he realizes his meager lies aren't convincing them. Then he clamps down on his suicide pill, and mocks them with a promise that Zubov will destroy the world they know. The poison transmutes the dwarf's blood to ice, and his skin rapidly turns blue. He dies within three rounds unless the poison's magic can be healed with magic (either *dispel magic* or *protection from poison*).

The First Lead.

Astute characters might search Takbar and find the newspaper and the pocket watch.

The paper is a small-run circulation, the *Risuri Record*, which is owned by Risuri citizens who are sympathetic to Drakr and the Heid Eschatol philosophy. The tabloid is renowned for dealing with trash scandals—with their current run discussing an entirely baseless affair between Danoran Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre and her brother Luc Jierre.

The paper releases every week but this one is dated for tomorrow. Clever characters can figure out that the dwarf got it from the printer today, and that the printer is just down the street at the Flint Tribune.

As for the pocket watch, it's set for 2:40, just 15 minutes after the first attack. It radiates an aura of minor transmutation magic. The gargoyle cracked it and damaged its components beyond the scope of any immediate repair.

If they search him more thoroughly, they can find the forged work order for repairs last night at the skybridge, which has the address of *Soknik Repairs*, the contractor who apparently was providing the workers. *Soknik Repairs* is the hideout of Zubov's cell.

Second Bomb.

The second attack takes place 15 minutes after the first, giving the constables a narrow window to avert it.

Zubov's men scouted the Flint Tribune building while visiting the *Risuri Record*, which has a small office on the second floor. Last night they bribed the cleaning crew to go home, then hid explosives in the crawlspace between floors, near every support column. These explosives have a magical trigger, one activated by the pocket watch of Takbar Rhozenko, who has headed to the roof of the Pardwight

Medical Library.

After witnessing the bombing of the rail line, Takbar wound the watch to a fifteen minute timer, then pressed a button to start the countdown. This sent a message to linked devices in the Flint Tribune building, and so even though the gargoyle broke the watch, at 2:40 those bombs will go off unless the detonators (three each on two floors) are disabled with DC 18 Intelligence (thieves' tools) checks.

If the party somehow kept Takbar from being crushed, they can figure out that the watch sent a magical signal by fiddling with the device via a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check, and *detect magic* can let them trace the signal to the bombs. Takbar's watch cannot deactivate the bombs, but the spotter in the sniper squad atop the medical library also has a watch which can similarly be used to stop the countdown.

If the bombs detonate, the first two floors of the Flint Tribune (Area 2) burst in a cascade of explosions that annihilate structural support for the half of the building facing the rail line. In a thunderous crash of stone and steel, the building topples into the street. A gas line ruptures and a geyser of flame shoots into the air above the rubble. The building just barely misses the druidic temple, but a hundred people working at the newspaper are crushed, and most die within minutes without help.

What was initially shock and curiosity in the public turns to panic. People in the district believe that their offices may also be potential bombing sites, and many try to run.

Any creature in the building when it collapses takes 17 (5d6) bludgeoning damage (a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw reduces this damage by half). If a creature survives that damage, assume it will eventually be rescued when pulled from the rubble. A creature caught directly in the blast takes an additional 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage (a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw reduces this damage by half).

Total Casualties: 26 wounded, 100 trapped and soon to die, 12 dead.

Snipers!

Three dwarves are positioned atop the Pardwight Medical Library (Area 4), and another three on the Anderson Clocktower (Area 15). Each group has two snipers with scoped rifles, and one spotter with a long spyglass to report targets to the snipers, plus a small ice elemental that guards the entrance to the roof. The ice elemental is a native to northern Drakr (not extraplanar) and resembles a crystalline serpent.

Having panicked the crowd with the second bomb, the snipers wait for people to flee down the bridge to the southeast or the street to the north. Then they start firing, killing 10 people in the first minute. Panic turns to outright terror as people realize there's no way out.

The snipers continue to fire indiscriminately at the frightened crowd and at people in windows in nearby buildings. They make a point of killing anyone who tries to flee, or who tries to help those trapped in the rubble, as well as anyone in a police uniform.

Once the shooting starts a character can search for the snipers by spending a standard action, picking a building, and making a



DC 21 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot sunlight reflecting off the scopes or spyglass. For the sake of fairness, don't have the snipers target the constables unless one of them intentionally makes himself a target.

Total Casualties: 26 wounded, 100 trapped and soon to die, 22 dead, plus another 5 wounded or dead per minute.

Sniper Crossfire.

If the constables don't intervene, the local police manage to find the snipers and take them out, which takes half an hour. By that point a hundred people are wounded from explosions and non-fatal shots from the snipers, and nearly two hundred are dead. Eight more police die attacking the snipers, who kill themselves up rather than be taken alive.

The constables might choose to help earlier than that. If they move before the second bomb goes off they can at best round up four Allied Officers to come with them. After the second bomb, the party can get a dozen officers, though that will make them targets. Let the players control the officers, especially if the party decides to split up to tackle the two sniper nests simultaneously.

If the constables go up to one nest, they'll take fire from the other, but after one nest is cleared out you can safely assume the police are able to stop those other snipers within a few minutes.

Alternately, the constables might call for help from the main PCs, using the *messenger wind*. From Hotel Aurum he party can probably reach the bombing site in 5 minutes.

Allied Police Officer

Medium human, lawful neutral

Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 11 (2d8+2)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +2, Con +3

Skills Athletics +2, Insight +1

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8+1) slashing damage, or 6 (1d10+1) slashing damage if wielded with two hands.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8+1) piercing damage.

Sniper Nests.

From 50 feet up, the snipers are easily within close range for most of their targets. The two nests are about 200 feet apart, so the snipers have a –2 penalty to hit the constables if they're attacking the other nest. Low walls on the roof grant superior cover against attacks from below, and cover from attacks made from the same elevation.

The medical library roof is 50 feet across, accessible by a central door. The team here is a silent crew, the only words being uttered



are those of the spotter, indicating targets of opportunity. These dwarves are methodical in their attacks, and tend to aim at potential runners or anyone who looks like they might be trying to rally the crowd together.

The clock tower sniper nest is on one of the tower's "shoulders," and is accessed from the middle section near the clock face. It's much narrower, just 15 feet by 25 feet. This second group is far more blasé, and the pair of snipers carry on a casual philosophical debate about the state of the world while murdering people. This team fires at mostly random targets, with the snipers justifying each of their shots aloud with comments like, "Oh, that overweight man clearly should have known he would not live long; he should have been prepared for an early death!"

Team 1 (Medical Library)

2 eschatologist snipers

1 eschatologist radical

1 small ice elemental

Team 2 (Clock Tower)

2 eschatologist snipers

1 eschatologist radical

1 small ice elemental

Eschatologist Sniper

Medium humanoid (dwarf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 37 (5d8+15)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	6 (–2)

Saving Throws STR +2, CON +4

Skills Religion +2, Perception +3

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Dwarven Resilience. The Eschatologist Sniper has advantage on saving throws against poison.

Marksmanship. The Eschatologist Sniper doubles their proficiency bonus when making ranged attack rolls with a scoped rifle.

ACTIONS

Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage.

Scoped Rifle (200 rounds). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 200/1,000 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10+1) piercing damage.

**Eschatologist Radical**

Medium humanoid (dwarf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (chain shirt)**Hit Points** 22 (3d8+9)**Speed** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws DEX +3, INT +2**Skills** Athletics +2, Deception +0, Insight +3, Religion +2, Perception +5, Stealth +3**Damage Resistances** poison**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15**Languages** Common, Dwarvish, Primordial**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)**Dwarven Resilience.** The eschatologist radical has advantage on saving throws against poison.**Sneak Attack (1/turn).** The eschatologist radical deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when they hit a target with a weapon attack and have advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of theirs that isn't incapacitated and the eschatologist radical doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.**ACTIONS****Warhammer.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage.**Shotgun (20 cartridges).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d8+1) piercing damage.**Small Ice Elemental**

Small elemental, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 18 (4d6+4)**Speed** 20 ft., swim 60 ft.

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

Saving Throws DEX +1, CON +3**Skills** Athletics +3, Perception +2, Stealth +1**Damage Resistances** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks**Damage Immunities** poison**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, unconscious**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12**Languages** —**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)**Power Attack.** When the elemental makes its first melee weapon attack on its turn, it can take a -5 penalty to its melee weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to melee weapon damage. In addition, on its turn the elemental can use a bonus action to make one melee weapon attack after a melee weapon attack it makes reduces a creature to 0 hit points or scores a critical hit.**ACTIONS****Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) cold damage and the target makes a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target can use either an action or a bonus action on its next turn, not both.**Aftermath.**

The dwarves realize that they will be stopped by law enforcement eventually, have special poison pills in their mouths (see Takbar Rhozenko, page @@). If a dwarf thinks he's about to be taken alive he'll chomp down on the pill as a move action.

Any of the snipers who are taken alive are fanatical and hard to break, but if the party applies the right pressure the dwarves can give up the location of *Soknik Repairs*. In any case they will gladly boast that their leader Grundun Zubov has already thought of a counter to anything the police could do to stop them.

For Later Investigation.

Zubov's terrorist cell planted specially crafted firedust casks in the skywalk supports, concealing them as additions to the normal stone pillars. The dwarves worked overnight on the 8th, and the local police were fooled by some simple disguises of them as workers and a moderately well-forged work order.

The trigger for the explosion was a wire on the tracks. When the train crossed over it sent a jolt down the line that set off the firedust. The wire was deactivated through most of the day, but a member of the cell passed by 5 minutes before the detonation and casually attached two connectors while adjusting the cuff on his pants.

Gunsmith PCs or those knowledgeable in the creation of firedust can identify the material as a variety of more explosive firedust typically only available to the military. An hour at a lab determines that the firedust originated in Drakr.

Examination of the stone used to conceal the explosives determines that it's aggregate rubble concrete. A bit of work can track down a producer who sold an appropriately-sized quantity earlier this week. The buyer was Zubov, but he picked up the material in his own wagon and paid in coin, so tracing him that way is unlikely.

The dwarves in the sniper nests, as well as Takbar, all had white powder on their shoes. A chemical examination reveals it as sodium borate, along with several other compounds used as an insecticide.

Pryce Is Right.

Later, while the party is at the RHC headquarters, Bartholomew Pryce meets them. A firebrand sometimes critical of the monarchy and the RHC, Pryce was the editor of *Pryce of Progress*, a newspaper with heavy Docker sympathies. He's in his early thirties, reasonably good-looking if you can overlook the filthy smoking habit, and hangs out in different drinking or gambling dens in the Bosun Strand.

Pryce has the eye of a canny journalist, and can provide any information you think your party needs that they missed, since he saw the dwarves working in the Flint Tribune building but was too busy trying to meet a deadline to worry about them at the time.

Perhaps more importantly, now that the offices of the Flint Tribune are gone, he sees an opportunity to take its place. He's already acquired seed money for a new office and printing press, but he'd like to run his first issue with information about the Terror in Flint. He'd like an interview with the party, and if possible he wants to follow them and report on how they're helping protect the city.

Pryce plays no plot-relevant role in the adventure, but can give the party a sense that they're famous, and that people are watching to see how they lead.

Act One: Setup

THIS SECTION CONTAINS TWO EVENTS THAT don't fit cleanly into the main plot threads, but which set up the party's eventual assault on the Obscurati base in the Bleak Gate.

A Bunch of Bolts

Puzzle. Real-Time.

The party and the B-Team meet and examine the partially reassembled bronze golem.

The morning of the 9th of Spring, before the party meets with their task force, a royal technologist comes to the RHC headquarters to help repair the mangled bronze golem that the RHC found a few months ago. The party is present to see what information it might yield. The B-Team is present because they found the golem originally, and one of their number, Serena, has been trying to repair it in her spare time.

The royal technologist, **Justin Rollins**, is a big light-hearted black man who has a "pet contraption" the size of a small dog that walks on four legs and carries his tools – plus a box of chocolates that Justin idly munches as he works.

Golem Condition.

When the B-Team found it, the golem was in hundreds of pieces. Serena has spent considerable effort to bend bits back into shape and reassemble the body. Right now she has one and a half arms assembled, one leg, and the bulk of the torso, minus a few external casing pieces.

The head's back area is mostly intact, but the face and eyes are obliterated, and Serena hasn't tried attaching it to the body yet, unsure what would happen. She explains that it radiates magic still, and she thinks it could still control the body if reattached. Her hunch is that it could be given orders, perhaps even something like "take us back to your base."

Justin asks those assembled to securely restrain the body to a table with straps. He intends to put the head on, and he doesn't want the machine flailing around. After a few minutes of work with silver dust and wires engraved with arcane sigils, he magically fuses a thick cable between the back of the skull and the neck. The head still lies limply.

It's Alive!

The body twitches a bit, and then the fingers on its functional right hand begin tapping the table. Any Yerasol Veteran recognizes it as the equivalent of Morse code (there's definitely someone in the building who can translate if the party can't.)

It translates to, "Would you kindly give me a pen?"

Alexander Grappa has been conscious inside his golem's severed head, able to hear what's going on but not communicate until now. A strong will has kept him from going crazy, though his memory has some gaps, and there are things he still cannot talk about because of a *geas*.

Either with a pen (writing roughly and blindly) or with additional tapping, Alexander communicates the following message:

I am Alexander Grappa, the mindmaker. A magical compulsion prevents me from explaining everything, but I believe we have mutual enemies.

Don't bother repairing the mouth. I did not design this golem for vocal communication. I would very much appreciate functional eyes, however. And if I'm to guide you to our mutual enemies I'll need legs. I have a feeling that my neck isn't in excellent shape either.

Back in summer I was in my own body, imprisoned after I learned a secret that I unfortunately cannot share. Again, pardon certain vagaries that are necessary due to my *geas*. I fled the Bleak Gate with a woman and this golem at my side. A rival caught up and slew me, but I managed to transfer my consciousness into this machine. My rival destroyed this golem body, but did not realize he had failed to actually kill me.

I would rather like to thwart his plans and help the aforementioned woman. If sufficiently reassembled I can guide you through the...the most I can say is to call it a facility. I cannot get to the Bleak Gate myself, but I know my way from there.

In exchange for this, perhaps you could arrange me access to my old golem-crafting workshop. Ask around for Alexander Grappa, and I hope people will have heard of me. It would be very nice to design a better body for myself.

Justin explains it will take him about a day to get the golem functional. Out of Grappa's earshot, he suggests they keep the golem locked up—maybe toss him a few books to read or something—until they can be sure they can trust him.

By the afternoon of the 10th, the golem's body is intact enough to walk and climb, and Justin has enchanted a handheld tap-to-voice device so it can speak about a word every 2 seconds.

Further Questions.

The party understandably might have a lot of questions for Grappa, but all his *geas* allows him to say is that he was in a facility in the Bleak Gate, which has hundreds of workers and dozens of guards. He can neither name nor describe anyone he worked with, but he can say whether he knows people if the party describes them. For instance, if they mention meeting a steelshaper, or if later on they mention Kasvarina's name, Grappa can acknowledge that they were his "rival" and "the woman."

He cannot say the name Obscurati, nor that the facility is building something, let alone that it's building a giant colossus. Grappa



also knows that the Obscurati plan to use the colossus to perform some sort of ritual—he overheard Kasvarina talking about training the colossus about the planes, in case it had to make a split decision during the ritual—but he doesn't know what the goal of that ritual is. In any case, he can't tell the party about it. His best bet is to lead the party so they can find out the details themselves.

The party might try to have Principle Minister Harkover Lee remove the *geas*, but when he tries to *remove curse* it fails. This shocks the man, since it means whoever cast the spell is significantly more powerful than him, not to mention that it has lasted far longer than a normal *geas* should (in game terms Kasvarina is a 17th-level spell-caster, and Harkover is only 13th level.)

Guardian of the Hill

Social. Real-Time.

The party is invited up to Cauldron Hill by Lieutenant Dale.

After Mayor Reed Macbannin was revealed to be performing horrible experiments atop Cauldron Hill (in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*), a replacement was assigned to keep track of the cursed mountain. Lieutenant Dale, an erudite and cool-headed military officer, used to be on call to respond in case of supernatural incursion.

Now **Captain Dale** maintains a garrison of eighty soldiers atop Cauldron Hill, and at the king's direction he sends an invite to the party because he hopes to be working with them. The invite arrives just as the party is finishing up with Alexander Grappa.

Martial Scientist PCs might know Dale from the Battalion academy and his infamous thesis on *Meditation, Coffee, and Cherry Pie: Unorthodox Salves Against the Supernatural*.

If the party goes up to Cauldron Hill, they find work crews at the mansion still repairing seismic damage from previous tremors, and another crew excavating the strange laboratory beneath Macbannin's garden shed. If the party can't make it, Dale understands that the party is on a tight schedule, and can meet the party down in the city, though he recommends a bar called the Bookhouse, which serves the best damned papaya pastries in the country.

Dale can provide the party each with a specially attuned amulet. The *bleak amulet* (see sidebar) has no magical properties in the real world, but in the Bleak Gate it offers impressive magical defenses.

In addition, the captain offers to spend some time training with any Martial Scientists in the group, teaching them specialized technique to use against supernatural creatures. After a few hours, a Martial Scientist can learn the Dale Assault special ability (see sidebar).

Soldiers Ready.

Depending on which method of entry the party uses to reach the Bleak Gate, they might be traveling with most of Dale's soldiers. The night of the 13th, sixty soldiers will wait near Hotel Aurum, ready to go through the portal the king will open, though only thirty-one people will be able to pass through, so the party had better go first. The expedition to the Bleak Gate takes place during Act Three. The rest of Act One will appear in Part Two of *Cauldron-Born*. 🗺️



New Acquisitions.

Bleak Amulet

Wondrous item, uncommon

This rusted amulet bears no special inscription or embellishment, only a pressed circle of brass, and it has no effect while worn on any plane but the Bleak Gate. When worn in the Bleak Gate, your armor class increases by +1, you gain a +2 bonus on all saving throws, and a +1 bonus on all attack and damage rolls.

The amulet can only hold back the power of the shadowy plane for a limited time. After 24 hours the amulet crumbles to dust. Alternately, the amulet can be used once to re-roll any single dice roll while the wearer is in the Bleak Gate, after which the amulet immediately crumbles to dust.

Dale Assault

Martial Scientist technique

Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who spend time training with Major Dale can learn this ability. Alternatively, researching his infamous thesis, *Meditation, Coffee and Cherry Pie: Unorthodox Salves Against the Supernatural*, can learn this technique.

If you have enjoyed a filling and pleasant meal since your last long rest, you can spend a bonus action to gain a calm reflection as if you were meditating. While so relaxed, when you would be affected by any fear effect, delay its onset by one round.

You can end this trance to feint on your turn against one target in range (no actions required by you), making a Charisma (Deception) check opposed by the target's Wisdom (Insight) check. If the target is an aberration, celestial, dragon, elemental, fey, fiend, monstrosity, or undead, you have advantage.

Appendix A: GM Quick Reference

Timeline

Between scripted the scenes the party will likely be working to find Kell, Ekossigan, or the eschatologists. B-Team scenes are marked with an asterisk.

Spring 8.

- **Afternoon.** The party meets with King Aodhan. Asrabey embroils the party in the search for Ekossigan.
- * **Afternoon.** The B-Team picks up Brakken, and eschatologist snipers strike.

Spring 9.

- **Morning.** The party and B-Team examine the broken golem. A letter from Vlendam Heid arrives, as does an invitation from Captain Dale. The party takes command of the task force to capture Kell.

Spring 10.

- **Morning.** Asrabey asks the party to take him to Gale.
- * **Evening.** The B-Team escorts Brakken to the club *Sunset Bench*, one of Kell's fronts.
- **Late Night.** An Eschatologist ship full of monsters arrives.

Spring 11.

- * **Morning.** Brakken and the B-Team witness a paranoid mob in the Cloudwood.
- **Evening.** An opera gives the party a chance to nab Kell's lawyer.

Spring 12.

- **Morning.** Zubov leads the eschatologist attack on the subrail station.
- **Evening.** At sunset paranoia in the Cloudwood leads a mob to murder the mayor.
- **Late Night.** Ekossigan performs his ritual sacrifice just before midnight.

Spring 13.

- **Pre-Dawn.** Kell leaves his hide-out, giving the party a chance to take him down.
- **Afternoon.** Han Jierre and his niece Lya arrive.
- **Evening.** Opening dinner of the peace summit.
- **Midnight.** The king will be able to send the party to the Bleak Gate if they have not already found a way.





NPC Quick Reference

- **ALEXANDER GRAPPA.** Mind mage. Addled memories, geas to keep Obscurati secrets. Golem body has no mouth. Possesses great aplomb. Desires Ob downfall. Apologetic he can't help more.
- **AODHAN.** Aged king, still full of vitality. Cool-headed, favors rational persuasion to combat. Gladly spares a few moments to talk about personal issues with those he meets. Physically feels the emotions of nearby fey.
- **ASRABEY.** High elf warrior of unmatched prowess. Flaming sword. Animated lion shield. Cloak of smoke. Despises Danorans. Honorable, duty-focused. Doesn't talk about self, but is fanatically loyal to Kasvarina. He is one of her many husbands.
- **BRAKKEN.** Minotaur mediator. Telepath, with obedient pet dire bear. Uses psychic powers to help high-stakes peace negotiations. Enjoys making strangers become friends. Likes to sight-see.
- **EKOSSIGAN.** Fey lord of the seasons. Arrows redirect nearby him. Invisible body. Wears a wooden mask. Devoted to maintaining proper order and rhythm in nature and culture. Gets flustered if interrupted while talking.
- **GRUNDUN ZUBOV.** Beardless, white-haired dwarf with a pipe made of ice. Wants to see this corrupt world end. Willing to die to help that happen. Only talks to give orders, except when someone who really understands his philosophy challenges it. Then he gets angry.
- **HAN JIERRE.** Joyless leader of Danor, who orders horrible acts that he might create a better world for others. Easily separates his sympathetic personal beliefs from his political persona, which is erudite, polite, and often cutting.
- **HANA "GALE" SOLIOGN.** High elf with wind magic, favored by Ekossigan to gain storm magic. Was owned by a Danoran family. Has chip on shoulder against technology and industry. Unwilling to help Ekossigan murder people. Refined, but cautious.
- **HARKOVER LEE.** King's magical advisor/body-guard. Straight-backed. Never eats. Beran accent.
- **KASVARINA VARAL.** High elf matriarch, suffering from near-total amnesia, unaware of her own power.
- **KVARTI GORBATIY.** Dwarf sniper. Has made his peace, but still is boisterous and talkative. Pays people compliments easily. Has rifle made of a giant's bone, carved with infernal letters.
- **LEONE QUITAL.** Flamboyant steelshaper. Acts cultured, appreciates fine food, wine, and music, but has a vicious short temper. Eager to please Obscurati so he'll be brought into the fold.
- **LORCAN KELL.** Leader of thieves' guild. Ugly face. Fancy clothes and top hat. Lots of hidden knives. Not too clever. Is brutally intimidating figurehead, while his minions run his guild.
- **LYA JIERRE.** Tiefling martial scientist. Ambitious. Haughty but friendly. Progressive. Wants peace. Arcano-technological vorpal rapier.
- **MORGAN CIPPIANO.** Leads Flint branch of Family. Bald. Gravelly voice. Talks fashion. Wants Kell out; will "trade favors." Gathers info for the Clergy, but won't talk about his role.
- **QUENTIN AUGST.** Physically unimposing, monocle. Convinced money can solve anything, and is more important than anything. Doesn't really like his kids. Exasperated that things are going wrong.
- **ROLAND STANFIELD.** Aasimar. Constant expression of contented optimism. Perfect politician's smile. Old war wound in his lower back.
- **STOVER DELFT.** Party's boss. Chews tobacco. Cane. Spits. Good-natured.



Appendix B: The B-Team

Kaea

Medium humanoid (elf), chaotic neutral wizard (evoker) 4

Armor Class 15 (*mage armor*)

Hit Points 26 (4d6+8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws INT +5, WIS +3

Skills Arcana +5, History +5, Insight +3, Perception +1, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elvish, Goblin, Orc

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Arcane Recovery. Once per day when Kaea finishes a short rest, she can choose expended spell slots to recover. The spell slots can have a combined level that is equal to or less than 2nd-level.

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

Sculpt Spells. When Kaea casts an evocation spell that affects other creatures that she can see, she can choose a number of them equal to 1 + the spell's level. The chosen creatures automatically succeed on their saving throws against the spell, and they take no damage if they would normally take half damage on a successful save.

Spellcasting. Kaea is a 4th-level spellcaster that uses Intelligence as her spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13; +5 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following spells prepared from the wizard spell list:

Cantrips: *acid splash*, *light*, *ray of frost*, *shocking grasp*

1st-level (4 slots): *burning hands*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd-level (3 slots): *blur*, *scorching ray*, *shatter*

ACTIONS

Enchanted Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) magical bludgeoning damage or 7 (1d8+3) magical bludgeoning damage if wielded in two hands.

Equipment. Kaea carries a *potion of healing*, *scroll of aid*, and *scroll of identify*.

Josiah

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral gunfighter (bushwacker) 4

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 30 (4d10+8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	8 (–1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws DEX +5, CHA +3

Skills Acrobatics +5, Athletics +2, Deception +3, Intimidation +3, Perception +4, Stealth +7; gun kit +2

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Blindsight Attack (1/turn). Josiah deals an extra 9 (2d8) damage to one creature he hits with a ranged weapon attack if he has advantage on the attack roll.

Fighting Style: Point Blank Shooter. Josiah does not have disadvantage on attack rolls when he is within 5 feet of a hostile creature who can see him and who isn't incapacitated.

Flushing Shot. Josiah's ranged weapon attacks ignore half and three-quarters cover.

Quick. Josiah has advantage on initiative rolls.

ACTIONS

Enchanted Musket. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d12+4) magical piercing damage.

Equipment. Josiah carries a *potion of blur*, *potion of invisibility*, and *potion of heroism*.

Gaethan

Medium humanoid (half-elf), lawful good fighter (champion) 4

Armor Class 16 (+1 studded leather)**Hit Points** 30 (4d10+8)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)

Saving Throws STR +5, CON +4**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Animal Handling +1, Insight +2, Perception +2, Stealth +5, Survival +2**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12**Languages** Common, Elvish**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)**Action Surge (1/short rest).** On his turn, Gaethan can take an additional action on top of his regular action and a possible bonus action.**Fey Ancestry.** Gaethan has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.**Improved Critical.** Gaethan's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.**Second Wind (1/short rest).** On his turn, Gaethan can use a bonus action to regain 1d10+4 hit points.**ACTIONS****Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.**Enchanted Longbow (40 arrows).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) magical piercing damage.**Equipment.** Gaethan carries a *potion of improved healing* and *potion of fly*.**Carlao**

Medium humanoid (human), lawful good fighter (champion) 4

Armor Class 19 (half plate, shield)**Hit Points** 34 (4d10+12)**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, CON +5**Skills** Animal Handling +3, Athletics +4, Insight +3, Perception +3, Persuasion +2, Stealth +4**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12**Languages** Common**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)**Action Surge (1/short rest).** On his turn, Carlao can take an additional action on top of his regular action and a possible bonus action.**Improved Critical.** Carlao's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.**Power Attack.** When Carlao makes his first melee weapon attack in a turn, he can choose to take a –5 penalty to his melee weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to melee weapon damage. In addition, Carlao can use a bonus action to make one melee weapon attack after he uses a melee weapon to reduce a creature to 0 hit points or scores a critical hit with it. Carlao can only use this feature on his turn.**Second Wind (1/short rest).** On his turn, Carlao can use a bonus action to regain 1d10+4 hit points.**ACTIONS****Enchanted Longsword.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) magical slashing damage or 8 (1d10+3) magical slashing damage if wielded in two hands.**Equipment.** Carlao carries a *potion of improved healing*.

**Dima**

Medium humanoid (dwarf), lawful good cleric (life domain) 4

Armor Class 18 (chainmail, shield)**Hit Points** 30 (4d8+12)**Speed** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws WIS +5, CHA +4**Skills** History +3, Insight +5, Nature +3, Perception +5, Persuasion +3, Religion +3**Damage Resistances** poison**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15**Languages** Celestial, Common, Dwarvish**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

Channel Divinity (1/short rest). Dima can channel divine energy directly from his deity, using that energy to fuel one of two magical effects.

Preserve Life. As an action, Dima presents his holy symbol and evokes healing energy that can restore 20 hit points. Dima 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.

Turn Undead. As an action, Dima presents his holy symbol and speaks a prayer censuring the undead. Each undead within 30 feet that can see or hear him must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. If the creature fails its saving throw, it is turned for 1 minute or until it takes any damage. A turned creature must spend its turns trying to move as far away from Dima as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of him. It also can't take reactions. For its action, it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature can use the Dodge action.

Disciple of Life. Whenever Dima uses a spell of 1st-level or higher to restore hit points to a creature, the creature regains additional hit points equal to 2 + the spell's level.

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). He has the following spells prepared from the cleric's spell list:

Cantrips: *guidance, resistance, sacred flame, spare the dying***1st-level (4 slots):** *bless, cure wounds, detect magic, guiding bolt, healing word, sanctuary***2nd-level (3 slots):** *hold person, spiritual weapon, zone of truth***ACTIONS**

Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) bludgeoning damage or 7 (1d10+2) bludgeoning damage if wielded in two hands.

Equipment. Dima carries a *scroll of cure wounds* (3rd level) and *wand of cure wounds* (10 charges).

Serena

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral rogue (thief) 4

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)**Hit Points** 22 (4d8+4)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws DEX +5, INT +2**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Athletics +4, Deception +3, Intimidation +3, Perception +1, Stealth +7**Senses** passive Perception 13**Languages** Common, Thieves' Cant**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

Cunning Action. Serena can take a bonus action on each of her turns in combat. This action can be used only to take the Dash, Disengage, Hide, Use Object action, Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, or to use thieves' tools to disarm a trap or open a lock.

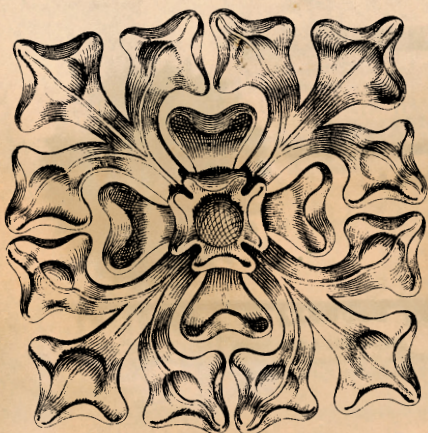
Second-Story Work. Climbing does not cost Serena extra movement. When she makes a running jump, the distance she covers increases by 3 feet.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Serena 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 hers that isn't incapacitated and Serena doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

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

Appendix C: Briefing Dossier



This dossier is official correspondence of His Majesty King Aodhan's Royal Homeland Constabulary. By the powers of his office, the king has sealed this document, and any unauthorized individuals opening it shall come to the attention of the RHC.

N.B. Unapproved opening of this document is an offense against the crown. Let those who transgress be struck down, as established in the Rites of Rulership.

PEACE SUMMIT OF 501 AOV

Spring 8. Mediator Brakken of Heffanita arrives from Ber. Drakran observer Steffan Eberhardt is already in town.

Spring 9. Danoran vessel *Freux Rouge* arrives, carrying Captain Rosalyn Taylor and Minister of Magic Pierre Riquier. For the Risur delegation, Geoff Massarde and Kian Doherty arrive from Slate.

Spring 13. At 6pm, Danoran vessel *Lux Profectusque* arrives, carrying Sovereign Han Jierre, Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre, and Minister of War Eloise Duffet. That evening a banquet involving all dignitaries and begins the Peace Summit.

Spring 14. King Aodhan and Sovereign Han Jierre hold private talks.

Spring 20. The talks are scheduled to end with a formal declaration of betrothal between the King and Lya Jierre.

Spring 22. The Sovereign and most of the delegation will depart, while Lya Jierre will begin a nationwide political tour. Life in Flint can return to normal.

In the Risur delegation.

- ♦ King Aodhan.
- ♦ Principal Minister Harkover Lee.
- ♦ Royal Engineer Geoff Massarde.
- ♦ Minister of Agriculture Kian Doherty.
- ♦ City Governor Roland Stanfield.

And for the Danorans.

- ♦ Sovereign Han Jierre.
- ♦ Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.
- ♦ Minister of War Eloise Duffet.
- ♦ Minister of Magic Pierre Riquier.
- ♦ Naval Representative Rosalyn Taylor.

And finally.

- ♦ Mediator Brakken of Heffanita.
- ♦ Drakran Observer Steffan Eberhardt.





PERSONS OF NOTE

Hereafter labeled as PN#.

- ♦ **PN1. DANORAN MINISTER OF OUTSIDERS LYA JIERRE.** Niece of Sovereign Han Jierre. Witnessed at gathering of Obscurati in Vendricce. Involvement unknown.
- ♦ **PN2. NATHAN JIERRE.** Cousin of Lya. Researcher at Axis Island, accomplice of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale. Involved in extraplanar observation.
- ♦ **PN3. LUC JIERRE.** Brother of Lya. Arcanoscientist, inventor of artifact identified as "Wayfarer Lantern." Delivered lantern to Lya Jierre and PN5 in Vendricce.
- ♦ **PN4. SOVEREIGN HAN JIERRE.** Ruler of Danor. Involvement unknown.
- ♦ **PN5. "NICODEMUS."** Unnamed individual smoking cigarettes (leaf of Nicodemus) at gathering in Vendricce. Appeared to have a leadership role.
- ♦ **PN6. DUCHESS ETHELYN OF SHALE.** Sister of King Aodhan. Claimed skyseer vision warned of threat to Risur. Attempted assassination of king. Attacked Axis Island. See attachment PN6a.
- ♦ **PN7. REED MACBANNIN.** (deceased) Mayor of Flint district of The Nettles. Operated facility on Cauldron Hill refining substance identified as "Witchoil." Committed suicide in prison cell.
- ♦ **PN8. CILLIAN CREED.** (deceased) Butler of Macbannin. Infused with Bleak Gate magic, granting shadowy physical form. Performed murder, organized smuggling operation, attempted cover-up, and likely other criminal activities on behalf of Macbannin.
- ♦ **PN9. HER MAJESTY PRINCESS FAIRY DUST, HANA "GALE" SOLOGN.** High elf refugee from Danor. Hostile to Danoran industrial activity in Flint. Unconfirmed role in murder and arson of industrialists. Sent PN10 Nilasa on spy mission in Danoran consulate in Flint.
- ♦ **PN10. NILASA HUME.** (deceased) Stole financial documents from consulate, linking Macbannin to various criminal enterprises. Murdered by PN8 Cillian Creed.
- ♦ **PN11. HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF SLAUGHTER, LORCAN KELL.** Crime lord in Flint district Parity Lake, with base of operations in location identified as "Theater of Scoundrels." Renowned for violence and cruelty.

Examination of stolen financial documents reveal many factories in Parity Lake changed ownership—we suspect by intimidation—and were registered in the names of known members of Kell's guild. Strong certainty that Kell aided Macbannin in smuggling various industrial goods to destination unknown.

After Macbannin's arrest, Kell's guild apparently accompanied agents of the Obscurati during the attack on the RHC headquarters.

- ♦ **PN12. "STEELSHAPER."** Unnamed individual who aided PN8 Creed to recover documents at an abandoned church in The Nettles. Demonstrated ability to move and shape metal without obvious spellcasting. Had a Crisillyiri accent.
- ♦ **PN13. LADY INSPECTRESS MARGARET SAXBY.** Former head of the RHC in Flint. Apparently worked to help Macbannin maintain secrecy, believing it was part of an official Risuri military project. Appears to have no direct affiliation with the Obscurati.
- ♦ **PN14. KAJA STEWART.** (deceased) Arcanoscientist in Macbannin's laboratory who stole items identified as "Ancient Artifacts" after Macbannin was captured. Worked with PN11 Kell to fence these items. Dead through possibly faked suicide in cell at RHC headquarters.
- ♦ **PN15. CAIUS BERGERON.** Alleged patron of archaeology. According to PN14 Kaja, Bergeron brought Ancient Artifacts to Macbannin for examination, to determine their powers and risk. Funded multiple expeditions to Ancient ruins. Killed via exneuralation by Sijhen. Arranged bodyguards for PN3 Luc on Avery Coast Railroad, apparently with intent to accompany to Vendricce.
- ♦ **PN16. SIJHEN.** Mysterious being, identified as a "Gidim." See attachment PN16a for details of Gidim. Entity sought to return to its own plane. Believed dead or banished when its portal collapsed. No apparent affiliation with conspiracy.
- ♦ **PN17. XAMBRIA MEREDITH.** Archaeologist who excavated location identified as "Ancient High Bayou Ziggurat." Recovered Ancient Artifacts, which were delivered to PN15 Bergeron. Possessed by PN16 Sijhen, and shared memories. Provided the name "Obscurati" to identify hostile conspiracy; we suspect the name was gleaned from consumed brain of PN15.

ATTACHMENT PN6A: ETHELYN'S PROPHECY

Duchess Ethelyn of Shale allegedly received this prophecy. It, along with numerous other factors, motivated her treason against the crown.

A globe spins on its axis, and a steel ship sets off to war on a sail of shadows.
The world passes into night, and blackness grips all of Risur as the stars fall from the sky. The king's eyes turn a soulless white, and he moves as a puppet, his strings pulled by a man who has already died a thousand times.

Though we are wary of putting excessive stock in prophecy—if for no other reason than the desire to avoid hubristically bringing its predictions to pass in the course of trying to prevent them—we can see some obvious parallels to current situations.

The "axis" likely motivated Ethelyn to target Axis Island. Likewise the "steel ship" suggests the *R.N.S. Coaltongue*, a prominent Risuri steel warship. The "sail of shadows" could simply be the smoke from its engine, or might be related to the Obscurati's penchant for hiding, particularly in the shadowy Bleak Gate. However, the ship has not set off to war, and indeed the current peace plans will hopefully avoid any imminent war.

We see no obvious correlations in the rest of the prophecy. If it is true, that suggests the events have not yet occurred. Stars falling from the sky could relate to any number of meteor showers, or perhaps the incursion from Gidim, a previously unknown world (see Attachment PN16a), but this is only speculation.

— Royal Skyseer Cliff Swarland



OBSCURATI INTELLIGENCE

Herein an overview of knowledge about the organization identified as "Obscurati" by PN17 (Xambria Meredith).

Section the First: Obscurati Organization

The Ob (for short) appear to have a very strong focus on secrecy and compartmentalization. It is possible they have other cells of their organization that we are unaware of simply because the operatives we've interrogated were not privy to the full scope. Indeed, given the conspiracy's assets and international span, it seems likely they are up to more than just operations in Flint.

It is imperative that we trace the chain of command to its top and then work our way down to lower tiers of other cells.

Section the Second: Operations in Flint

In Flint, we suspect PN12 Steelshaper convinced PN7 Macbannin to work on a fake Risuri military project. Macbannin operated in our world and helped smuggle materials, we suspect into the Bleak Gate, which are likely being used to

construct something that requires a great industrial base. Macbannin also refined witchoil, which likely would be used as fuel for whatever is being created. The Ob want it to remain secret, and have gone to elaborate lengths to keep it so.

The Ob appear to have a base, and likely factory or assembly facilities in the Bleak Gate, and possess means to travel between that world and ours with relative ease.

Section the Third: Wider Operations

The Ob are interested in reaching or manipulating other planes. It is possible PN15 Bergeron's funding of Ancient expeditions is merely tangential to their main activities, but PN3 Luc's invention, the Wayfarer Lantern, has the potential to influence planar magic. Additionally, Axis Island had unusual planar fluctuations, and PN2 Nathan was studying other stars.

Section the Fourth: Goals

Unfortunately, we lack enough information to present anything but baseless speculation.

ATTACHMENT PN16A: GIDIM

Creatures identified as "Gidim Warbeasts" appeared several times, apparently summoned from the planet Apet, also known as The Distant Plane. Apet is source of teleportation and divination magic, and the incomplete silver ring that surrounds it is source of foresight magic. Travel to plane was believed impossible, and no creatures could be summoned from there.

At Ancient High Bayou Ziggurat, a golden plate sealed a portal to a small pocket dimension, which appeared to have originally been part of Apet before being sliced away. Several creatures escaped, including PN16 Sijhen. Based on explanation from PN14 Xambria, the entity was not native to Apet, but rather from the planet/plane/star called Gidim. Alternately, the creature's race might just be called Gidim. We are operating with dubious nomenclature.

Sijhen, like the Gidim Warbeasts, existed primarily as manifested thought, with ability to become solid. Our best guess is that they feed on thought or emotion, either indirectly—like plants requiring intangible sunlight—or physically. After PN16's arrival in Flint, numerous victims were reported having their brains removed through the palates of their mouths. Apparently Sijhen acquired the knowledge of the minds it ate. The warbeasts appear to have been lacking higher intelligence. Sijhen's possession of PN17 might have been dependent on circumstances, or could be trait of entire species.

Entity attempted to open a portal to its homeworld, though no place called Gidim is known to our skyseers or astronomers, and such travel would normally be impossible. It acquired an ancient artifact known as "Ancient Star Map" which it appeared to use to direct its portal. The possibility of an extraterrestrial race possessed of these powers is greatly concerning, but is beyond the scope of this current investigation. Henceforth, by order of the king, all information about the Gidim is to remain secret, and any previous statements are to be disavowed as a deception perpetrated by unknown fey entities. Until further information is acquired, any additional incursions by the Gidim should be kept hidden from the general public to avoid a mass panic.

Ranyard Muldrate
RHC Slate branch
S.C.P. Division
On behalf of Lord Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill

Appendix D: Dramatis Personae

Alexander Grappa, the Mindmaker. Alexander fought for Risur in the Third Yerasol War four decades ago as a mere foot soldier. After losing too many friends he devoted himself to learning magic of golem-crafting. Originally he hoped that his homeland could field an army of automata instead of shedding the blood of its young men and women, but his interest slowly drifted from golem construction to the crafting of minds for these artificial warriors, as well as enchantment magic and other ways to end a conflict without anyone dying. When the Ob were ready to begin construction on the colossus, Kasvarina Varal personally recruited Grappa, promising him he could help create peace. Nine months ago, though, he overheard the leaders of the conspiracy discussing their full plans, and was imprisoned and geased so he could not tell anyone. He managed to escape, but was killed, and only managed to preserve his consciousness by transferring it to his bronze golem handservant.

King Aodhan. Now in his 70s, the king of Risur looks rather unassuming. He prefers to resolve disputes by being cool-headed and rationally persuading those who will listen to his side. For those who won't, he's shrewd enough to give them a sliver of what they want and then distract them with harmless endeavors while those worth dealing with get the job done. Despite all this, though, he trains regularly to keep his stamina and swordplay robust, and the rites of rulership grant him daunting magical powers.

Asrabey Varal. A centuries-old high elf warrior, became one of the many husbands of Kasvarina Varal, a powerful matriarch who had survived the Great Malice. Kasvarina encouraged Asrabey's resentment of the humans who had sentenced their people to death. For years he trained, and undertook many daring raids until he became famous as one of the greatest high elf warriors in the world.

Eventually Asrabey left Elfaivar and offered his services to the Unseen Court, though he has kept a much lower profile for the past two hundred years. Asrabey has not seen Kasvarina for fifty years, and he has not the slightest inkling of her affiliation with the Obscurati. He might respect a few humans from Risur, but he hopes that someday Kasvarina will come to him and ask him to lead a final war of retribution against the Clergy that ruined their race, and the nation of Danor, whose tiefling leaders bear the mark of their crime.

Brakken of Heffanita. A minotaur from the nation of Ber, Brakken's ambassadorship in Orithea helped end that nation's civil war and bring on unprecedented prosperity. Recently Brakken became ambassador to Risur, and was tapped by the rulers of Risur and Danor to mediate their peace talks. He's said to be very canny, and that his mere presence tamps down on people's pretensions. He once even got a raging bear to back down with a single disapproving glare.

Brakken secretly is a telepath, and has had such success in negotiations because he can hear the surface thoughts and, if necessary, nudge people toward compromise. He seldom pushes the actual leaders of each side, but he finds it helps immensely if he can calm the emotions of their advisors. He's genuinely driven by a desire to help people live in harmony, though raising his own prestige is certainly a bonus.

He dresses in simple tribal clothing from Ber and refuses to travel without his most trusted friend, a dire bear named Feroz.

Ekossigan. A fey lord of the Unseen Court, Ekossigan appears as a slender male, draped in robes adorned with leaves, his face concealed by a wooden mask with empty eye sockets. Ekossigan's magic and demeanor are tied to the seasons, alternately chill and bleak in winter, spirited and hopeful in spring, and so on. When he is swayed by strong emotion, though, his nature may change, and his mood can manifest in the world around him.

As an ever-changing entity, Ekossigan has no set followers, but his very presence can turn lesser fey to his side. Of all in the Unseen Court, Ekossigan sees technology as the greatest threat because it will change the perpetual cycle of seasons into a march for progress. He foresees a future where there is no nature, and it has driven him to desperation.

Grundun Zubov. Leader of a radical sect of eschatologists, Zubov is a man of few words. While his underlings chatter and philosophize, Zubov simply smokes his pipe, carved from glacial ice that will never melt. He knows his purpose, and talking won't change anything.

Zubov's clan back in Drakr has been long trampled upon by the rich and powerful, and after nearly dying in a pointless war against an equally pointless border state, Zubov felt nothing but hatred for his country. In the teachings of Heid Eschatol he saw a reason for his suffering: to prepare him for an uncelebrated death, but one necessary to bring about the end of the world. Though many like him and his family will die, the fall of the high and mighty will be oh so much greater.

Sovereign Han Jierre. Han's father made sure he traveled and experienced the grand diversity of life, both good and bad, so that he would not be complacent with the sheltered prosperity his family enjoyed. He returned from his travels still devoted to the supremacy of science and reason, and his father brought him into the Obscurati, grooming him to become one of the conspiracy's three leaders.

Today Han is sympathetic to the needs and perspectives of others, but has ordered so many foul acts to promote the Ob agenda that he finds little joy in his own life. He still keeps in touch with the families of those he lived with during his youthful travels, to remind himself why he's pledged himself to this course.

Hana "Gale" Soliogn. A high elf woman just over 100 years old, Hana can fly at will, control winds, and speak with birds, but has no directly offensive magic. Bitter for her treatment by her Danoran "foster family," she uses her powers to sabotage Danor-owned industry. Some accuse her of more violent crimes, calling her a "fey terrorist." She seeks an audience with the Unseen Court, but has not yet been granted one.

Principal Minister Harkover Lee. Perhaps the most powerful mage in Risur, Lee acts as King Aodhan's bodyguard and chief of staff. Straight-backed and virile despite being in his 60s, Lee speaks crisply and passionately in a slight Ber-tinged accent, and was said to be quite the ladykiller in his youth. He always dresses in reds and golds and carries a solid gold orb tucked into his robes. He never eats or drinks in public.

Kasvarina Varal, A centuries-old high elf who allied with William Miller during the Second Victory and later helped Nicodemus the Gnostic found the Obscurati. Her key responsibility has been to undermine the Clergy's military and monetary might, primarily by forming vengeance cults among her fellow surviving high elves.



In the past few years she helped oversee the various cells of the conspiracy as they neared the opening of the Axis Seal, but nine months ago she was tricked by Alexander Grappa and her memories erased. Now she only barely recollects the first decade of her life, and has trouble understanding where she is. Her memories are slowly returning, and though Leone assures her she was an ally of his, she doesn't trust him and wants to escape.

Kvarti Gorbatiy. A dwarven locksmith-turned-mercenary, Kvarti found a book of Heid Eschatol philosophy in the hands of a man he had assassinated. Though he presents a weary face to maintain his reputation, he goes through life content. All his affairs are in order, and while he hopes to find a cause worth dying for, he would not be angry if his life was cut short. His overly grim reputation got him his job as one of Zubov's snipers, but he does not agree with the man's philosophy.

Leone Quital, the Steelshaper. An aristocrat from Crisillyir, Leone was recruited into the Ob for his unusual, innate ability to manipulate and shape metal without having to actually learn or cast spells. Contacts groomed him and encouraged him to acquire skills that the conspiracy would need, but he only gained the leadership's trust after he helped rescue Kasvarina Varal eight years ago during a Risuri raid on Cherage. A cannon bombardment collapsed a factory she was touring, and Leone nearly killed himself with exertion to tear apart the crumpled steel and pull her to safety.

A few years later he was placed in charge of the secretive construction of the colossus, reporting directly to Roland Stanfield. Though he doesn't believe the cover story that the colossus is meant as a weapon to help Risur fight the fey titans, he works loyally, hoping to earn the right to know the group's real goal.

Though he prefers to appear refined, romantic, and honorable, Leone is flamboyant and short-tempered. He sometimes imagines himself a conductor, waving his hands to imagined music as he telekinetically manipulates metal. He has a fondness for fine bromago cheese, and often enjoys the wine from his family's vineyard.

Lorcan Kell. The grizzled Kell grew up an enforcer for local gangs and eventually murdered his way into a position of leadership. Now he feigns gentility, dressing in elegant clothing that conceals no less than eight blades at any time.

Kell is unpredictable and hot-headed, confident he can kill anyone who's a threat. He possesses a great knack for instilling loyalty in intelligent minions who can run operations for him. His guild's recent work with the Obscurati earned him a nice variety of magical toys, and as the turf war with the Family heats up, the Ob have promised him more aid to keep him loyal.

Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre. An ambitious tiefling in her late-20s, Lya's uncle is Han Jierre, the Sovereign of Danor. She graduated top of her class from the prestigious academy of war, the Jierre Sciens d'Arms, and many students of other war colleges have read her thesis, *Field Study of Melee Effectiveness and Foe Debilitation through Focused Limb Severance Techniques Contrasted with Mainstream Opportunistic Techniques*, which she wrote near the end of the last Yerasol War.

Despite her youth, she was awarded the position of Minister of Outsiders, giving her great leeway to travel and make alliances. For the past

three years she has worked with King Aodhan to keep the peace between their two nations, and as they began making plans for a formal alliance, she accepted the king's offer of marriage as a symbolic union.

She is also the leader of the Obscurati's Golden Cell, tasked with recruiting archaeologists and miners around Lanjyr to seek out ancient seals like the one on Axis Island. She was told it was simply part of a plan to strengthen Danor by finding more magical powers, but she has suspicions of something greater. At the start of the adventure she does not know about Colossus Cell.

Morgan Cippiano. Morgan Cippiano heads the local branch of the Family crime syndicate, based out of Crisillyir. Though gruff-voiced and cocky, Morgan has an unusual fascination with fashion. He rejects trends, but has a good eye for classical styles that people of any culture can appreciate. He hopes some day to be seen as a father figure to his community, but for now he's willing to smash a few heads and order a few throats slit in order to clear out the competition.

Quentin Augst. Lorcan Kell's lawyer, and the guy who handles the guild's affairs. Augst started off just representing Kell's toughs in court, but eventually grew frustrated with the guild's inefficiency and promised Kell he could make both of them a lot richer if he could handle logistics.

Augst home in North Shore is maintained by his half-elf handmaiden, who has looked after his children ever since Augst's wife died several years ago in a tragic fire—a fire Augst set when his wife realized his criminal connections.

A fan of opera, Augst usually sticks to Central District, where his friends know him as a bookish teetotaler who has to be dragged out to play polo occasionally. Though the guild members think he's weak, he makes sure everyone gets paid well, which engenders more respect than stabbing a back-talker ever could.

Roland Stanfield. Stanfield witnessed the fall of the eladrin goddess Srasama five hundred years ago and died soon thereafter in the chaos of Elfaivar's fall. But he reincarnated, restored to life by a sliver of the divine power he absorbed when Srasama was slain. His memories vague and jumbled, he found his way back to his homeland of Risur and eventually settled in Flint, then just a modest coastal port. In the centuries since, he has died at irregular intervals, and with each rebirth he has returned to the city he calls home. For most of that time he has served as Flint's governor, having constantly striven to improve himself with each life, from a simple warrior, to a humble leader, to an educated Renaissance man nimbly handling the complex challenges of the fastest-growing city in the world. Stanfield wears a near-constant expression of contented optimism, but still occasionally complains of a war wound he took to his back in his first life.

Chief Inspector Stover Delft. A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft handles the logistical and political drudgery so the party can perform their heroics without too much backlash. Though normally rather easy-going, he gets squinty and condescending when people obstruct important affairs because of politics. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.