



TALES OF ORBEA: THE BURNING WEB

Someone is kidnapping krigs, the spider-humanoid natives of the Orbea. Despite their off-putting appearance, krigs are generally passive, intelligent creatures who've helped bring many of the Weysevain Coat's cities into the modern era of arcotechnology. What would make someone or something attack the krigs? In this spin-off one-shot adventure, a group of adventurers are tasked to learn exactly that.

The Burning Web is a Fifth Edition adventure for 3-5 characters of the 3rd-level. Time is of the essence in this adventure, so there should be an ever-present sense of urgency. Otherwise, the story's antagonist could escape before the characters are even able to confront them. While much of the background and text assumes that the characters are involved in the main plotline of the *Hand of the Eight*, this adventure can easily be run as a one-shot adventure playable in 2-3 hours. On the same token, while this adventure adds to the excitement and story behind *Hand of the Eight*, it is not necessary for the overall plot.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Krigs are the spider-humanoid natives of Orbea. Nearly identical, krigs live throughout the continent of Omeria in various cities. Of the 10,000 believed to be in existence, only 2,000 are rumored to live in the town where they originate, Orbea. Recently, a group of terrorists known as The Burning Web has been kidnapping krigs within their own town. The adventure begins when a group of adventurers traveling through Orbea witness a krig abduction. After stopping the krig's abductors, they discover that the group has been working out of a warehouse in the town's seedy Salt Ward.

There, the adventurers discover that a human sage named Ament Leywood (under the pseudonym Titos Barakis) has been performing experiments on the krigs. Of course, not everything may not be as it seems.

THE BURNING WEB

Fifteen years ago, Ament Leywood, his wife, and two young daughters moved from Murktown to the town of Jando's Arch on the Ghost Holm. Leywood had been invited to work there with a group of Knotsider sages to investigate an archaeological find on the north end of the island. A month earlier, an adventuring group found a series of abandoned tunnels that led deep into the Holm. The tunnels twisted and turned, terminating at random deadends with little-to-no connecting chambers. Von Doral engineers recognized the stonework to be at least a few centuries old, but overall, could not identify the origin of the tunnels' creators. Within the tunnels, they discovered dozens of humanoid corpses, some as old as the tunnels themselves. Sages specializing in medicine observed that the corpses lacked fatal wounds. They theorized the dead humanoids had died of starvation and thirst. Additionally, the sages discovered what appeared to be discarded insect husks, roughly 3-feet in diameter, at a concealed chamber near the center of the labyrinth. Also, the chamber had faint traces of radiant energy.

Before Leywood and the sages could investigate the location further, war broke out between northern and central Omeria. Jando's Arch, a Knotsider colony and military base, and likely a target for central Omerian offensive forces called for the evacuation of all of the island's non-essential personnel. Leywood and his family were escorted to the southern end of the island and put aboard a ship. But as their

ship was leaving the harbor, three Dinzer Condor-class aircraft appeared in the skies. The condors dropped *fireballs* on the village and the arch. But then, one of the *fireballs* strayed from its path and hit the deck of the ship carrying Leywood and his family to safety. Nearly everyone on board died in the explosion, including Leywood's wife and daughters. Somehow Leywood survived the blast, blown clear of the wreckage. Three days later, Leywood—barely clinging to his life—washed up on a beach near a small fishing village.

The injuries Leywood sustained in the blast blinded him in his left eye and impaired the use of his left arm and leg. And the loss of his family and his career fractured his mind. Leywood became obsessed with the idea that what they discovered in the tunnels was somehow connected to the Dinzer assault on Jando's Arch. With the war in full bloom, none of the sages or leadership in northern Omeria would support his claims. Eventually, he left the sage's guild and retreated south to study privately.

In time, Leywood noticed that there was a connection to the mysterious krigs of Orbea and the tunnels his colleagues had discovered. Although the birthing process of krigs is never seen, as large insectoids, it stands to reason they could be hatched from eggs similar in size and shape to the ones discovered on the Ghost Holm. Furthermore, the Orbean Undermaze shares many of the qualities the tunnels had, especially their austere and labyrinthine nature.

Under the pseudonym Titos Barakis, Leywood moved to Orbea to follow his conspiracy theory. He believed that the Dinzer assault on the Ghost Holm, the death of his family, the krigs, and the tunnels were all somehow connected. Leywood recruited a group of other disenfranchised Omerians who felt there was something amiss with the krigs and their expansive political reach. This group of like-minded individuals named themselves The Burning Web. Under Leywood's leadership, the Web started their research and information gathering out of a dilapidated warehouse in Salt Ward. And now, Leywood is close to getting the answers he craves.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters become involved while they are traveling through the town of Obrea on the Weysevain Coast. Walking down a Salt Ward street in the middle of the evening, they witness an abduction.

SALT WARD

Salt Ward is home to Orbea's cluttered docks and warehouses. Despite its proximity to the Orbean militia's barracks to the north in Shirzosh, the Salt Ward is thick with crime. There is not a week that goes by where a body isn't found floating face down in Keqrab Bay. Most of the warehouses in the Salt Ward are owned by wealthy smugglers and merchant houses from all over Central Omeria. They use Orbea as a place to store illegal wares. As such, the warehouses are heavily guarded by well-paid professionals. So brazen are the landlords, they put their clan and tribe symbols on the doors of the buildings they own as a warning to those who would dare enter: "you steal from here, you steal from me."

THE ORIGINAL SIDEQUEST

This adventure expands upon the side quest "Put the Krig Down" in the fourth chapter of the *Hand of the Eight* adventure path, *The Secret of the Book*. If you choose to run this adventure in place of the side quest, you will replace this side quest with the section "The Abduction." The original hook has been reprinted and expanded upon here for context and convenience.

Two men in white robes are carrying a semi-conscious krig by its arms to a horse-drawn carriage 30-feet away. There is a third man, also in white, at the reins. If questioned, the men explain that the krig is sick and that they are taking him to a temple to receive medical attention. The krig, through its haze, gazes at the characters through its many eyes and weakly asks for help. If the characters intervene, the men in white robes attack. All three men are thugs who work for an organization called the Burning Web. The Burning Web believes that the krigs are all part of a vast, global conspiracy that wishes to take over Omeria by putting krigs in positions of power. They were taking the krig to a warehouse by the docks (Area 6) to perform experiments on it. After they save him, the krig thanks the characters, then leaves. If the characters decide to get involved, they must go down to the docks and find the Burning Web's warehouse.

IMPORTANT LOCATIONS IN SALT WARD

The following locations are tied to the map on page 3.

1 - ORBEA MILITIA BARRACKS

The professional police force of Orbea works out of a building at the south end of the neighboring Shirzosh district. There is a total of 150 full-time militia members operating in Orbea. The majority of the militia members are **guards**, and each squad includes a **veteran** sergeant operating as the squad's leader. The captain of the Orbea Militia is a **krig** who is only referred to as The Captain, identifiable by the tasseled epaulets it wears (and its proclivity for smoking cigars).

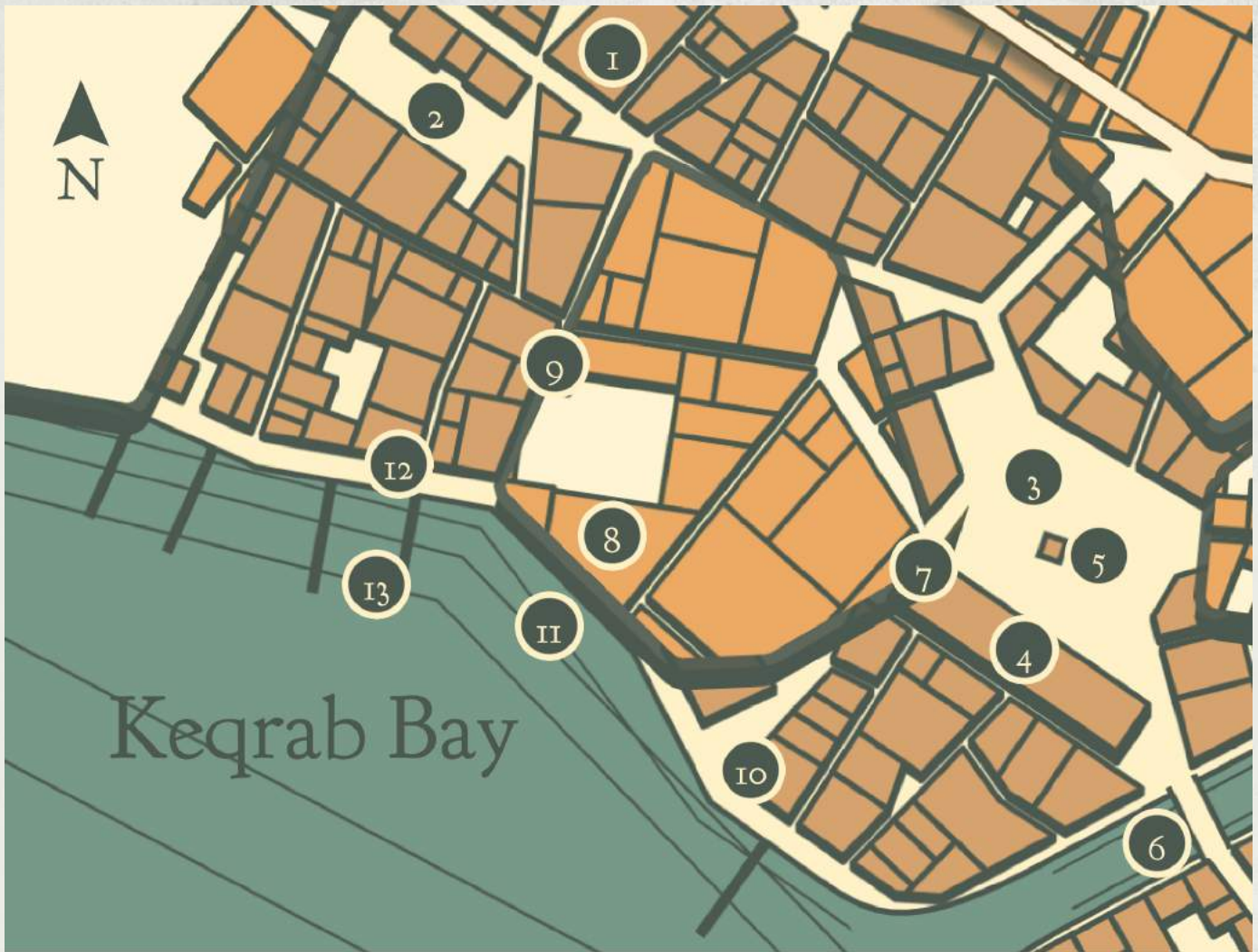
Although the Orbean militia is often viewed to be somewhat ineffectual within the fast-growing town, they can call upon the Arruquettan Cords if things get too heinous. Plus, there is a reserve of volunteer militia members from neighboring villages and towns.

2 - LUAGRU FISH MARKET

Fresh fish caught in Keqrab Bay and the Ocean beyond is sold here at the Luagru fish market. Because of the way the wind travels through the canyons that make up the Maze of Orbea, the smell can be somewhat daunting for those traveling south through the ward.

3 - ZIK'THATH MARKET

From run-of-the-mill weapons, armor, and equipment to curiosities from afar, anything and everything can be



Salt Ward



purchased at Zik'thath Market. The characters can expect to find any magic item of common or uncommon value here, as well as the occasional rare magic item, too. Plus, most of the vendors are willing to haggle. On the same token, street vendors can be incredibly pushy. And with all the commotion, theft is common. Like much of Orbea, the presence of law enforcement in the market is low. If any is here, they only work if it looks like they can collect a "reward" from those they save (aka a shakedown).

4 - THE TEMPLE OF COMMERCE

What originally started as a jest has now become something of a tradition. The 400-foot-wide, two-story range of vendor stalls that makes up the south end of Zik'thath Market is referred to the Temple of Commerce. Built by a Naqqadi trader named Ramin Atlasi in the early days of Orbea's expansion, gold-painted statues of Atlasi line the columns of the building's north-facing veranda. Each morning, superstitious merchants operating in Zik'rath leave flowers and fruit offerings at the feet of the late Atlasi's idols in hopes to bring a day of fortune and high sales.

5 - AMAZING CLOCK REPLICA

At the center of Zik'rath stands a 30-foot tall obelisk. The obelisk is topped by a replica of the Amazing Clock and is attuned to the original in Castlegrasp. Like the one in Castlegrasp, this smaller version of the eight-armed clock tells time, forecasts weather, and predicts the coming of global catastrophes.

6 - THE AUTUMN BRIDGE

Near the mouth of the river, 50-feet above Zheree Falls, the Autumn Bridge connects the wealthy Eight Gems Ward to the thriving Zik'thath Market. The Autumn Bridge is carved to look like one hundred Ditimayan slaves holding themselves above the Zheree. Supposedly the design comes from a legend of ancient Ditimayan nomads who used each other's limbs to create a chain so they could ford the angry river. The view of the sun setting over the Omerian from the bridge is particularly enticing. It's on this bridge that many travelers passing through Orbea fall in love with the town.

7 - THE UNNAMED RAMP

A steep ramp curves down the side of Sevari Tower into Zik'thath Market. Outside of a few choice expletives, no one has ever given the "ramp" (more of a cliffside, really) that ascends to the plateau at a 70-degree angle a proper name. It's climbable, certainly, thanks to steel railings placed at regular intervals up the 500-foot high path. But beyond a few ropes-and-pulley systems put in place to bring heavy objects up, it's nearly useless for delivering goods to the top of Sevari. Of course, the business owners atop Sevari prefer it like that.

8 - THE LONG SHADOW CASINO

The most famous casino at the top of Sevari Tower is the Long Shadow, a four-story building that hangs over the tower's western edge. The minimum deposit at the Long Shadow is 1,000 gold pieces. Plus, most games have a minimum buy-in of 100 gold pieces. Like most of Orbea's casinos, the Long Shadow's most popular game is Banzo. Its current Banzo champion is a Knotsider gnome named Felgim Trumda. The casino's owner, a devilkin named Prayer in the Morning is loved and celebrated (and feared) by all who enter the casino's pitch black doors. She also offers a house specialty which she extends to anyone short on luck. "1,000 gp loan. Due in one hour with ten points on top. Or? You get the drop!" In other words, Prayer loans the sap 1,000 gold pieces. The loan is to be repaid with a 10% interest on the principle in one hour. If the borrower can't pay up, Prayer's pit bosses open up a hole in the showroom floor and drop the borrower over 500-feet into the Bay below. If the borrower survives, they're debt-free. So far, no one has survived.

Occasionally, people walking by on the Strand (Area 11) witness one of these drops occur up close and personal. It's considered unlucky to be hit by one of the Drop's "dead splashes."

9 - THE KILLER

If the Unnamed Ramp wasn't horrible enough, its equally devious "twin" clings to the western wall of the Sevari Tower, a railing-free 500-foot climb of narrow stairs called The Killer. Why the Killer? On average, three to four citizens slip and fall to their death every year while trying to climb or descend the staircase.

10 - ZAXIER ALLEY

Zaxier Alley runs east-to-west between a collection of warehouses right by the water on the southern end of Salt Ward. The krig abduction detailed in this adventure happens here.

11 - SALT WARD STRAND

Fifteen feet above the water directly in front of Sevari Tower, a narrow, 300-foot-long passage connects the southeastern and northwestern sections of the Salt Ward. Although the passage has relatively low ceilings thanks to the tower's natural rock face, it's wide enough for a carriage to pass through. Continual flame lanterns are hung the entire expanse, chiefly as a deterrent for criminals who might hide within the hollowed out pockets below the tower.

12 - THE BURNING WEB WAREHOUSE

This location is detailed in the Burning Web Warehouse section below.

13 - VERACITY

Ament Leywood keeps his small sailing ship, Veracity, tethered in the harbor. It is detailed later in this adventure.

THE ABDUCTION

The adventure begins as the characters are passing through the southeastern section of the Salt Ward. They may have just arrived in Orbea via the Keqrab Bay or could be investigating leads connected to another adventure. As they walk past an alley (see Area 10), read the following:

Just then, you catch something out of the corner of your eye in the alley to the west of you. Turning your head, you see two men dressed in white outfits lifting the limp body of what looks like a krig, one of the spider-humanoid natives of the town. About 20 feet in front of them, at the far end of the alley, a third man in white waits by a horse-drawn cart. "Hurry! We've only got 15 minutes to get back! Get the damn thing on the cart and let's go," yells the driver.

From the southeastern end of the alley, where the characters are, to the northwestern side is roughly 50-feet. The abductors—all three **thugs**—attacked the **krig** in the alley. Now, they hope to load it onto the cart and take it across the Strand (see Area 11).

If the characters call out or rush to stop them, they first try to run. If blocked, they fight. Because of the sensitivity surrounding krig in Orbea—and the Weysevain Coast in general—getting caught attacking a krig often leads to severe punishment.

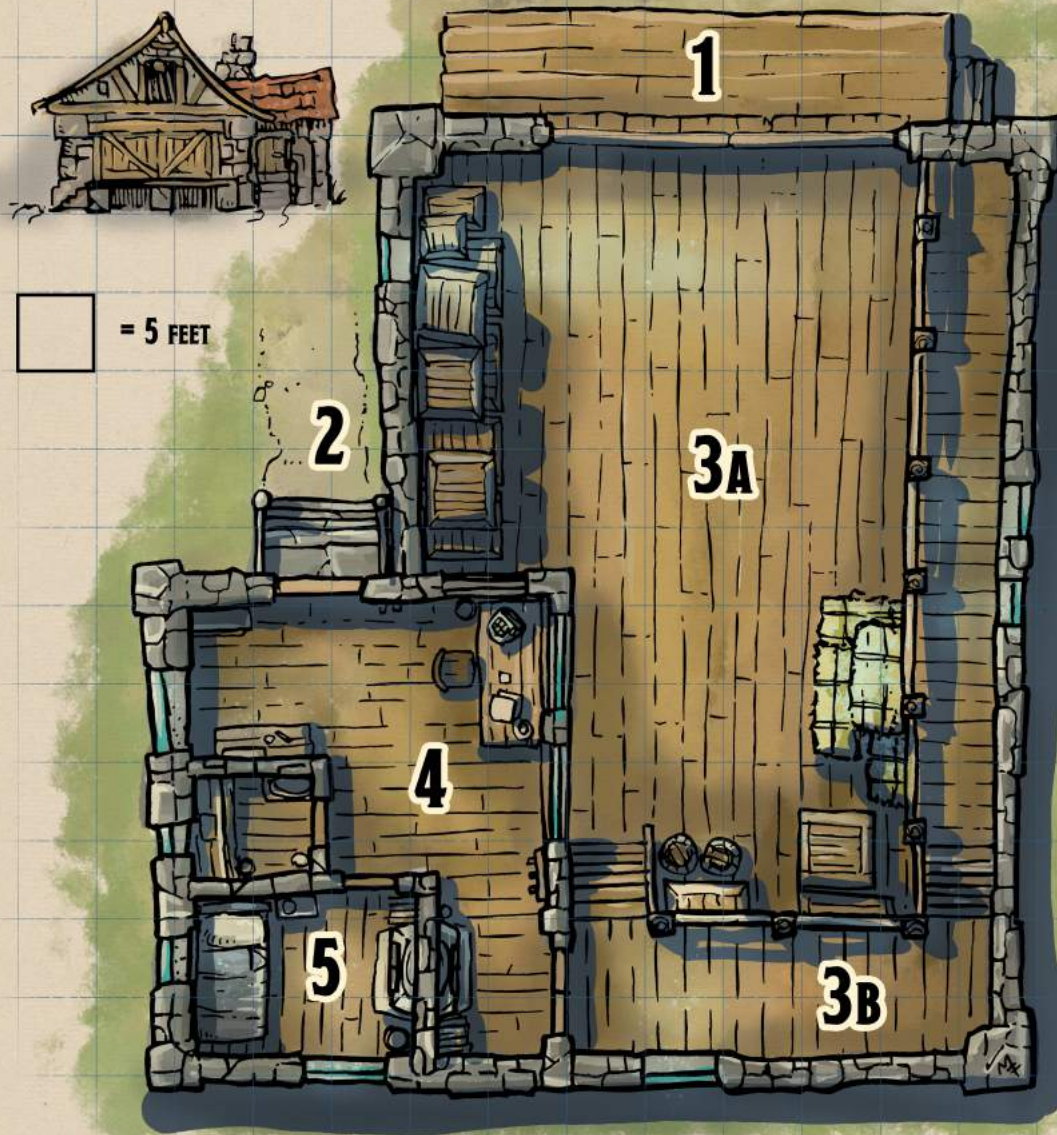
If the characters stop the thugs, the krig thanks them and wanders off. It does not seem talkative but is not rude either. If the krig is asked why it was attacked by the thugs, it doesn't know. All it knows is that it was accosted by the two men in white while it was walking by the alley and then they turned their maces on it for no reason.

Any thugs that survive the encounter can be convinced to talk. Although they are dedicated to their cause, they are easily intimidated. They explain that they were taking the krig back to a warehouse on the northwestern side of Salt Ward and even offer the address. When asked why they were interested in the krig, they explain that their leader, a man named Titos Barakis, is performing experiments on them. However they aren't completely sure why. The thugs warn that their colleagues are prepared for such events and have preparations in place to destroy any evidence and flee without getting caught. Finally, they explain that they must all check-in each hour on the hour. There is only 10 minutes left in the hour (the thugs were already in a hurry when they were stopped). If the group doesn't return, Barakis and the other members of the Burning Web immediately make plans to evacuate (see Plan X).

CROSSING TOWN

The Burning Web's warehouse is roughly 500 feet from the scene of the abduction. If the characters hurry, they can cross the Strand and reach the warehouse in 1 minute. You may want to put obstacles in their way to slow them down and

BURNING WEB WAREHOUSE



build a sense of urgency and excitement. Examples of obstacles are included in the section on Chases in Chapter 8 of the *DMG*.

THE BURNING WEB WAREHOUSE

If the characters ran across the Strand and out into the open without being stealthy about it, chances are the two **thug** lookouts working the front of the warehouse noticed them appear. A third **thug** stands guard at the warehouse's side door. While they don't jump to conclusions that the characters stopped their friends, it's likely they sense something is up.

You see the ramshackle warehouse at the corner of the main street and the boardwalk. Two men wearing plain clothing stand on the loading dock. Their attention is turned towards the Strand. A narrow alley runs alongside the building on its east side. Twenty-five feet down, a side door leads inside. That door is protected by another guard. All three look very anxious.

If the Burning Web members get the impression that the characters are planning to assault the warehouse, instead of fighting, they retreat inside to inform Leywood/Barakis. Once alerted, Barakis immediately calls for execution of Plan X (see below).

Even if the characters try to question the thugs, have all of the characters make Charisma (Deception) checks contested by the thugs' Wisdom (Insight) check. If the thugs win their Insight check against any of the characters, they immediately assume that they've been caught. At a minimum, one will try to run into the warehouse to warn the others.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Burning Web warehouse on page 5.

1 - LOADING DOCK

As noted above, two **thug** guards stand watch here. The wooden platform in front of the doors is 3-feet off the ground, just the right level to unload a horse cart. The sliding doors are not locked. They are heavy, however, requiring a character to use his/her action to open them (no Strength check needed).

2 - SIDE DOOR

A **thug** guard stands watch here. The thug uses a knocking system (three knocks, then two knocks, then three knocks) to let the others inside know to let him in. Otherwise, the door is locked. A character can use his/her action to break the door down with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, or the lock can be picked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools.

3A - WAREHOUSE FLOOR

Two **thug** guards stand on the inside of the door unless Barakis has given them the signal to evacuate (see Plan X).

Depending on the status of Plan X when the characters enter the warehouse, Barakis and the other members of the burning hands may still be performing experiments.

At the center of the room, a levitating platform holds an unconscious **krig** 3 and 1/2 feet above the floor. A second levitating platform hovers parallel to the krig's, likely where the second victim would have been placed. The top of the krig's skull has been removed and placed in an ivory surgical bowl off to the side. Inside its head is a mess of green and purple sinew, its unusual brain.

Barakis (see the sidebar) is—or was—in the room using a *ring of mage hand* to assist in the procedure, along with two Burning Web medical assistance (**commoners** with Intelligence and Wisdom scores of 12 and proficiency in Medicine). One of the assistants regularly applies drops of red liquid from a vial (a *potion of healing*) to the krig's exposed brain to keep it alive.

The two medical assistants are non-combatants and automatically drop to the floor with their hands behind their heads, afraid for their lives. If Barakis is still in the room, he immediately flees up the stairs to Area 4 in order to initiate Plan X.

3B - MEZZANINE

Two more **thugs** stand on the mezzanine surrounding the warehouse floor. If Plan X is underway, they use their heavy crossbows to cover Barakis and his assistants as they flee.

4 - BACKROOM

Barakis' office/backroom overlooks the warehouse floor. The walls and desks are covered in notes and schematics detailing krig physiology. The hourglass that the Burning

AMENT LEYWOOD

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic good

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 7 (2d8 - 2)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	9 (-1)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Int +4, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +4, History +4, Medicine +6, Nature +4

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Dwarvven, Krig

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Partially Blinded. Ament has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 - 1) piercing damage

Web uses to time the abductors sits on top of a small bookshelf loaded with medical texts. There is a **thug** by the rear door whose job is to open the door if the correct knock sequence is given (see Area 2) and keep an eye on the hourglass.

The storage closet to the side contains cleaning supplies and a chamber pot.

5 - BEDROOM

Although Barakis doesn't sleep much, when he does, he sleeps in this room. In addition to the small bed and armoire, there is a safe hidden in the floor. Noticing the difference in the floor panels requires a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. The panel over it is easy enough to lift off the safe. However, the safe is locked and trapped. Any force applied to open its door incinerates the contents within. The combination to open the safe is 22-13-60. Otherwise, a character can spend 1-minute listening and testing the tumblers. At the end of the minute, the character must make a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a successful check, they determine the combination and open the safe.

So long as Barakis didn't remove the contents of the safe during Plan X, the characters find his journal (see Leywood's Journal), a *wand of magic missile*, a pouch containing 100 gp, and a dull, green gem wrapped in a piece of leather. The gem has no value.

The south window opens into an alley behind the warehouse. During Plan X, this is how Barakis escapes.

PLAN X

The moment that the Burning Web suspects that the militia, Cords, or even adventurers have caught on to their activities, Barakis initiates Plan X. This is the protocol for Plan X:

- All schematics, notes, journals, and evidence, including the bodies of test subjects, are destroyed. Barakis and the thug in Area 4 each carry of a *fireball* bead (as a *necklace of fireballs*) for such an event. If Barakis has time, he will take his journal and other contents from the safe in Area 5 with him.
- All members of the Burning Web are to make a tactical retreat to the rear of the warehouse and escape either through the side door (Area 2) or via the window in the back office.
- All members of the Burning Web that aren't caught are to retreat to Barakis' sailing boat, Veracity, tethered to the dock directly south of the warehouse.

All members of the Burning Web have drilled on Plan X and are ready to execute at a moment's notice.

FIRE

Being made of mostly wood, the warehouse is extremely flammable. If Barakis and the thug from Area 4 use their *fireball* beads to create a fire, the entire building immediately catches fire.

If a creature is in the burning building at the start of their turn, they must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the flames. On a failed saving throw, the creature takes 3 (1d6) fire damage and catches fire. Until someone takes an action to douse the fire, the creature takes 3 (1d6) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

And if a creature is in the burning building at the end of its turn, it must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw to avoid smoke inhalation. A creature can hold its breath to avoid making this saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a creature takes 2 (1d4) fire damage and is poisoned. The creature must repeat its saving throw at the end of its next turn. If the creature is still in the burning building, it makes this saving throw with disadvantage. On a success, the poison effect ends. On a failure, the creature falls unconscious.

Because of the poor condition of the building, the building collapses after 1 minute on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties). Any creature still inside when the building collapses must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a creature takes 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage and is restrained by the rubble. While the creature is restrained by the rubble, it takes 1d6 fire damage plus 1d6 bludgeoning damage at the start of each of its turns. On a successful saving throw, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't restrained.

ESCAPE ON VERACITY

Barakis' small sailing ship, Veracity, is supplied and ready to leave into the bay within 5 rounds of evacuating. Using oars, the ship moves at a speed of 20 ft. per round on the water. Once its sails can pick up wind, its movement increases to 45 ft. per round.

LEYWOOD'S JOURNAL

If the characters find Leywood's Journal in the safe in Area 5, the journal contains all of the details from The Burning Web section in the introduction. In addition, Leywood's Journal has the following information within, detailed below. Only Barakis/Leywood knows the information in his journal. The other members of the Burning Web don't even know

his true name.

- "I've now interviewed four survivors who have gone into the Undermaze in Orbea and returned. Each one has given me the same description of the tunnels. These descriptions match the tunnels in Ghost Holm perfectly. Unfortunately, no one has witnessed the so-called Matriarch's Lair, if even such a thing exists."
- "Today, I spoke with Meros Scarletfoot at the Temple of Usteus. He shared something with me no one else has. The last time an Undermaze survivor was brought into his temple, the survivor had burn marks on his body. But not from fire—radiant energy."
- "I theorize that the krigs not only look alike, but they are all exactly the same. While they may develop their own traits and habits at later stages of their lives—nurture versus nature—upon birth they are perfect clones. I hope to capture a pair and compare their physiologies."
- "We are two weeks away from the plan. I've secured a warehouse in Salt Ward as well as a cart. There are two krigs who follow the same routine and walk the same path in Salt Ward every day. We will seize these two and bring them back to test my theory. If I'm right, this could open up a whole new world of understanding."
- "Tonight's the night. One last thought before I prepare: if the krigs are all clones of each other, who created these clones? What is their purpose? I'm both excited and afraid to learn the answer. As always, I do this for you Heather, Ailse, and Cassie."

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

The end of this adventure could go multiple ways. If Leywood/Barakis escapes on Veracity, he might turn up in later adventures as an important NPC. His knowledge of krigs and their unusual nature could play an important role in solving some of the mysteries of the *Hand of the Eight* adventure path.

If Barakis is stopped, he will share his story and purpose with the characters, in hopes that they will assist him on his mission. Barakis/Leywood's ultimate goal is to enter the Undermaze and discover what secrets are held below Orbea. With the help of a brave group of adventurers, he just might be able to do that. Ω