



**ENsider Presents:**

# **Digging for Lies**

**Part One**

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



# Introduction

## Wherein Archaeology Answers Modern Mysteries

**T**HE CLIMAX OF THE FIRST ZEITGEIST ADVENTURE occurred in a Danoran observatory, gazing upward at the stars on an island where one could glimpse flashes of other worlds. The second adventure entailed protecting a Risuri prophet who foresaw the future in those stars, and at its conclusion the party discovered a conspiracy hiding within the Bleak Gate, a shadowy plane that parallels the real world.

Now, in the third adventure, the party will find the connection between those seemingly unrelated threads. By investigating why modern inventors and arcanoscientists are interested in prehistoric relics, the party can discover the name of an international conspiracy – the Obscurati – and hints of its ultimate goal. But before

## Adapting the Adventure.

All the lower level ZEITGEIST adventures assume the PCs are agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. If your players are free agents, they were probably let go, disavowed, or what have you after the events of Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, by Chief Inspectress Lady Margaret Saxby, purportedly because keeping them employed would be politically tricky.

For this adventure, the PCs might be hired to work security at the Kaybeau Arms and Technology Exposition, or a Gunsmith, Martial Scientist, or Technologist PC might have a friend with an exhibit there, or have his or her own booth. When the party discovers the relics of Apet, they're approached by Xambria to investigate what happened at her dig in the High Bayou.

If you plan to run this adventure not as part of the ZEITGEIST adventure path, the arms fair can be less technological, and more of a magical bazaar. You can simply spin Apet as a deadly sliver of a far-off alien plane that was sealed off ages ago.

they can track down the conspiracy's head, they first will have to protect their homeland from an otherworldly invasion held at bay for thousands of years.

Before you run this adventure you'll want to be familiar with the Background, the Adventure Overview, and the NPC Roster.

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## Background

Thousands of years ago, long before King Kelland defeated the fey titans and founded Risur, monsters and beings from other planes tried to claim this world as their own. Only the most obscure legends and folktales provide clues of this time, but some truly ancient ruins have been discovered in recent years, first by adventurers and more recently by archaeologists.

The current prevailing theory holds that the continent of Lanjyr was briefly home to a civilization of orcs who enslaved goblinoids and minotaurs. None of the known ruins contain any sort of writing, so scholars use various names: Hill Kings (for the mounds found by most of their ruins), Lithians (for their use of stone tools), or even simply PKPs (for Pre-Kelland People). But most simply call them the Ancients.

All anyone knows about the Ancients is that they built stone and wooden structures, had at least a rudimentary grasp of magic, and possessed no metalworking skills, with the strange exception of goldsmithing. The Ancient ruins found so far have been troves of jewelry, religious totems, and even weapons, all made of gold. Scholars struggle to explain how these primitive people, living in a wilderness supposedly dominated by mighty fey creatures and capable of only simple mining, were able to craft so elaborate (or so many) golden artifacts.

The true nature of the Ancients is unknown to modern scholarship. Its secret is carefully protected by a conspiracy of philosophers known as the Obscurati, because the Ancients once shaped the fate of the world, and now the Obscurati wish to repeat the feat.

In their exploration of the Ancients' history and magic, the Obscurati have funded archaeological expeditions throughout the continent of Lanjyr. Usually these digs, if they uncover anything, are quickly hidden through a mix of murder and recruitment. But now a dig has gone awry.

## Obscurati Archaeology.

The Obscurati have been searching for the original seals in preparation for opening the Axis Seal. To maintain secrecy they first sponsored adventurers, and more recently archaeological expeditions, all of whom have as their liaison a tiefling benefactor, **Caius Bergeron**. Caius reports to Lya Jierre, head of the Golden Cell (see the *Campaign Guide*).

One archaeologist, **Dr. Xambria Meredith** of Slate's Mitchell University, led an expedition that discovered the Apet ziggurat in the High Bayou. In Spring earlier this year she reported to Caius and sent back many minor relics from the dig site. In mid-summer, Caius sent a team of experts to open the seal. That's when disaster struck.

## Pocket Dimensions.

When the Axis Seal took effect, small slivers of the worlds already sealed by the Ancients were trapped between the two magical bans, like bugs caught by a double-pane window. A handful of creatures survived in stasis, and in the Apet seal that included a Gidim wayfarer called Sijhen. While the rest of its kin were left trapped without sustenance on Apet, Sijhen was only dimly aware of the dreamlike passage of time.

## The Ancients and the Axis Seal.

Modern scholars have a flawed view of ancient history. Those long millennia ago, the first mortal races had just begun to develop cultures when the world was discovered by alien entities.

The Golden Legion of Egal the Shimmering marched from Hell to use this world as a staging ground in an eternal war. Agents of so-called gods contacted their chosen people while dragons and titanic beasts staked out their territories. The hordes of strange creatures that found their way into this world were beyond count, and were only growing more numerous by the day.

The meager villages and tribes of mortals could not fight back the intruders through force of arms, but a handful of clever heroes devised a plan to cut off the pathways to this world. At first they simply found portals between planes and closed them, but then they learned how to seal off a whole plane at once, using a golden plate as both a physical barrier and as the focus of the magic. To protect the sealed portals from those who would re-open them, the Ancients constructed elaborate ziggurats full of traps and undying guardians.

In an infinite multiverse, these seals were only temporary solutions. Clever foes would always find a new route to a world with such precious resources. But this was part of the Ancients' plan. The invaders abandoned the dead-end worlds, giving the Ancients a buffer of safety. When they performed the mighty ritual of the Axis Seal, they cut off all planes except for a handful of these dead ends, which they knew were safe.

The planes that are still accessible are detailed in the *Player's Guide*. Apet in particular plays a prominent role in this adventure.

## Fatal Flaw.

The Ancients made one great mistake. The Gidim, a semi-humanoid race from a far-off realm, hid an invasion force on the world of Apet, which the Ancients thought abandoned. Once the Axis Seal was complete and they had no competition from any other planes, the Gidim struck.

The Ancients managed a hurried revision to the Axis Seal ritual, which turned Apet into a prison plane. While the massive world still orbits the sun and shares its mystical energies, it cannot be reached. The strike by the Gidim devastated the burgeoning Ancient culture, however, and with their heroes dead, the mortal races reverted to their previous primitive state for millennia.

## Common Lore of Apet.

According to modern scholarship and skyseer lore, the massive planet of Apet is the farthest visible world in the star system. Skyseers who have had visions of Apet claim that its surface is a blasted wasteland of blinding sand, and that no creatures live there. But others who have gazed at Apet over a long period claim that sometimes foreign, unexpected thoughts poke at their mind from other places or times.

Around Apet orbits a silvery arc called Reida, said to be the arc of time. Interestingly, it's not a solid ring; about a 30-degree segment is empty. Scholars have theorized for centuries what this might indicate about the nature of the past and future, and a lively (and sometimes bitter) debate persists to this day.





## Planar Madness.

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

### Mind Strain.

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

### Distant Madness.

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

### Mind Scar.

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

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

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

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

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

### Insane Insight

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

- Once in the next 10 minutes you gain one of the following benefits:
- Take an additional action on your next turn.
  - Treat an ability check, saving throw, or attack roll as if you had rolled a 19 on the die.
  - Cast one spell without it using a spell slot or being expended.

When Xambria's expedition opened the Ancient's first seal to the plane of Apet, Sijhen was freed. Afraid and surrounded by humans, it was drawn to Xambria, who was carrying the *golden icon of Apet*. Sijhen slithered into Xambria's mind and guided her to escape the onslaught of Gidim war-beasts that slew the rest of her dig crew. Then, once she was safe, it coiled in the recesses of her subconscious to observe and learn.

Sijhen realized countless years had passed, but it saw no history of its own people. It tried to use the same old rituals that millennia ago would have let it travel to and from Gidim, but they failed. Unaware of the power of the Axis Seal, Sijhen was left to try to solve a mystery.

It remained hidden in Xambria's body, wary of discovery. It hopes to return to the dig site to seek clues, but Xambria's too traumatized and still has too much control to be willing to return. So now Sijhen contents itself with wriggling deeper into her mind, and teasing at clues connected to who hired Xambria for the dig in the first place.

## Macbannin's Fallout.

In Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, the PCs took down Reed Macbannin, a district mayor in the city of Flint, and a high-placed member of the Obscurati conspiracy. Macbannin believed himself working on a military research project for Risur's king, but the royalty denied any such plot. Macbannin died in his cell before any more information could be uncovered.

Macbannin had many subordinates working in his laboratory. When they realized they had been working for a traitor, some turned themselves in, but many fled, taking whatever valuables they could get hold of. One of these is **Kaja Stewart**, one of the head researchers developing the soul-burning fuel called witchoil.

Macbannin had also been in league with local crime boss **Lorcan Kell**, who was making a tidy profit helping smuggle raw materials to the Obscurati's construction facility in the Bleak Gate. Macbannin had been the middle man, and without him, Kell had access to a lot of material, but nowhere to sell it. He had his people track down Kaja Stewart, and in the past few months has set her up as head of a custom magic armaments business.

Finally, Macbannin managed to keep his illicit activities secret for such a long because he had several law enforcement heads in his pocket. This included **Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby**, the director of the Flint branch of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. She got nervous when the PCs took down Macbannin, so she moved quickly to get hold of any suspicious evidence from Macbannin's manor, including several obscure texts and ancient relics, which she keeps locked in a trapped safe under her office desk.

Next, she made a point to take the PCs off the case. While there were plenty of leads to follow, she claimed it would look bad for the PCs, who had already been involved with the defeat of Duchess Ethelyn of Shale (see Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*) to be tied to the disgrace of another popular politician. Lady Saxby has a reputation for being politically savvy, so word around the RHC office is that she's just worried the PCs will get more popular than her.

In the intervening few months, Lady Saxby has put the party on unrelated assignments, and has let a different squad follow up on

the Macbannin case. These other constables are more interested in covering their asses than solving any crimes, and Saxby has encouraged their slow pace.

None of Macbannin's former associates—Lorcan, Kaja, or Lady Saxby—knows of the Obscurati plot, but by piecing together clues that each has, the PCs will be able to outwit the conspiracy going into Adventure Four, *Always on Time*.

## Adventure Overview

The PCs' immediate boss **Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft** summons them to his office and explains that their next assignment is to provide extra security for the Kaybeau Arms and Technology Exposition. The PCs are therefore coincidentally present when strange monsters unknown to modern scholarship appear and attack fair attendees. After killing the monsters, the PCs learn that the creatures were summoned by an ancient magic staff made of solid gold, which a fair-goer had purchased on the black market.

Only a day into their investigation, the party learns that **Lord Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill**, national director of the RHC, is coming to Flint to oversee an audit of the local branch. PCs who have been cutting corners, breaking the law, or “declining” to hand over evidence so they could keep it for themselves will have to scramble to avoid punishment.

Through a string of contacts, the party tracks the sale of the staff to Kaja Stewart, who stole the relic and several others from Macbannin's manor. If arrested, she gets transferred by Saxby to the RHC office in the capital city Slate, and goes missing soon thereafter, secretly recruited by Risur's military to develop weapons. Crime boss Lorcan Kell pursues the PCs for harassing his business partner, and various minor threats from the expo keep them busy, but eventually the party connects the relics to Pardwight University.

**Hans Weber**, the curator of Pardwight's natural history museum, is planning a gala of artifacts of the Ancients, and he can put the PCs in contact with Dr. Xambria Meredith.

Xambria recalls finding the staff at the site of her last expedition, but she claims she was away when disaster struck and all of her cohorts were killed. She suggests the party find Caius Bergeron, who sponsored her dig, then vanished after the disaster. When Caius claims to be a harmless philanthropist, the PCs have few options left other than to head to the dig site and scour it for clues.

At the ancient ziggurat, the party must avoid dangerous traps and battle strange creatures from another world. They find the bodies of Xambria's expedition, as well as a group of specialists who had been sent by Caius Bergeron. The golden seal is missing, and a map in the ziggurat points to another possible dig site.

Their presence draws the interest of a long-slumbering fey titan, the serpentine **Voice of Rot**, who believes the lands around the ziggurat are his domain. He tells the party that an interloper from another world escaped the ziggurat, and that he will punish the mortals in his realm if they do not deal with the intruder for him. The party can use magic to track the foreign planar energy trail left by the creature, which leads them back to Flint.

The trail of planar energy crisscrosses itself and leads to several red herrings, but also goes to Xambria's home, where there

**Dr. Xambria Meredith.** Xambria was a rising star in the academic world of archaeology, and at 28 she's the youngest professor at Mitchell University in Slate. She has always had a particular interest in Ancient relics, since the golden treasures were so wondrous to behold.

Xambria preferred a hands-on approach to unearthing the secrets of history, and frequently put her life in danger, either on digs in hostile lands, or because the excavations themselves were filled with traps. She enjoyed nothing more than exploring ancient ruin, using a canny mix of caution and daring to avoid curses and traps, or survives the ones she didn't see in advance.

But a month ago something went terribly wrong at one of her digs. For months she had been excavating and exploring a ziggurat of the Ancients, a truly legendary find. She had taken all the proper precautions—careful probing for traps, magical auguries, prayers and supplications to appease the spirits of the land being disturbed. To her dismay, there is a hole in her mind, and she does not know what went wrong.

She remembers leaving for supplies, then returning and finding dead bodies, mangled and mutated. After that, her memory is a blur. She took a train to Flint, sought shelter with peers at Pardwight University, and struggled to cope with the horrors she'd seen.

Despite her trained athleticism, Xambria dresses conservatively, more

comfortable displaying the workings of her mind than the shape of her body. Now more than ever, she covers up as much as possible, and sometimes when she thinks about what she saw at the dig she can almost feel something trying to wriggle out of her skin.

Though traumatized, Xambria has devoted her life to uncovering mysteries. She wants to find out what killed her dig crew, but somehow she knows if she goes back to her dig, it will not end well for her.



are signs of a struggle, but no sign of the woman. The trail also points to Caius's inn, where the PCs find that he has been murdered, and his brain has been devoured. While searching his room for evidence, they learn that Caius sent an expedition to the dig site marked on the map in the ziggurat, off the coast of Ber, several hundred miles away.

Chasing the second expedition, the PCs reach Ber and find three ships in a stand-off. One is owned by Caius, and it tries to protect a group working to open the seal, which is underwater. The second is a Beran archaeology vessel, while the third is a boat Xambria chartered. She claims she was attacked back in Flint, and that she headed for this site, hoping to stop Caius's team before they unleashed more monsters.

The energy trail points to Xambria, though she can explain this away because she has been wearing the *golden icon of Apet*, which she recovered at the first dig site. She plays the frightened innocent, but in truth she has fallen under control of Sijhen. After the party defeats Caius's team, Sijhen bides its time, then distracts the party by summoning monsters. During the disturbance, Sijhen devours the brains of any prisoners, steals the ritual book they used to open the seal, and flees via teleportation.



When the PCs get back to Flint, Pardwight curator Hans Weber asks them to protect the Ancients gala. Xambria attacks the event with a host of monsters, and she tries to steal relics from the ziggurat of Apet. Even if she obtains them, however, she lets the PCs defeat her and quickly surrenders.

This is part of Sijhen's gambit. To get home, it hopes to open a portal to Gidim. But to properly aim that portal, it needs an Ancient star map. Lady Saxby just happened to confiscate one after the downfall of Macbannin, and she keeps it locked up in her office in RHC headquarters.

## Obscurati Note.

Why did Macbannin have items from the dig site? Macbannin was part of Colossus cell, and normally had no contact with Golden Cell, which handles the digs. But since Macbannin was an expert in defense against dark arts, Caius got special permission to have the mayor examine a few relics to ensure they weren't dangerous. Macbannin was defeated before Caius could recover them.

## Timeline.

Xambria discovered the ziggurat in Spring, and the seal around the 15th of Summer. The seal was opened around the 45th of Summer, and Xambria made it back to Flint on the 51st. On the 75th, Caius Bergeron sent more Obscurati experts to the dig to bring back the golden seal. They return on the 85th. The team leaves for the sunken ziggurat of Mavisha on Summer 91 (the last day of summer).

The adventure begins on the 1st day of Autumn. The PCs will likely spend a few days investigating leads from the arms fair, then take about a week exploring Xambria's dig site and returning. Xambria kills Caius Bergeron on Autumn 7, breaks into Saxby's home on the 8th, and leaves for Ber on the 9th. She arrives at the sunken ziggurat on the 15th.

The PCs likely get back to Flint on the 12th, and probably spend a day or two following leads before they set out for the sunken ziggurat. Sailing to the ziggurat in Ber requires at least three days, most likely a week, but Xambria and the Obscurati experts will both still be there.

The Ancients Gala opens on the 31st of autumn, though curator Hans Weber waits to put the three Ancient relics (amulet, blade, and staff) on display until the PCs are available to provide protection. Xambria, likewise, waits to strike until the PCs are present, because she wants her arrest to be convincing.

Feel free to adjust the timeline to give the adventure a tense pace. In particular, if your PCs would refuse to let the case sit fallow for the long term, you might move the adventure's start to a just a week or two after the end of *The Dying Skyseer*.

## Weather.

Autumn is the start of the rainy season in Risur. The first week usually just has rainy afternoons, but by the end of the month it's almost always at least drizzling. The weather is worse in the High Bayou, location of the Ziggurat of Apet, where flooding will be imminent by the time the PCs arrive. Temperatures there hover between 70 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Xambria stages her own capture so she'll be brought to RHC headquarters, knowing Saxby will be present. Before being captured, Xambria sends word to the Obscurati that Saxby is planning to turn on them, and so the Ob sends assassins to silence the Chief Inspectress.

Sijhen, on the other hand, wants to consume Saxby's brain, as well as those of the assassins, since it plans to return to this world eventually, and wants more knowledge about the Obscurati. It isn't afraid of the mere mortals who stand in its way, but it doesn't realize that the Axis Seal will utterly thwart its attempts to go home.

Shortly after the PCs lock up Xambria in an RHC jail cell, Sijhen springs its trap. Using a makeshift portal, monsters and reality-warping energies from Apet pour into the building, letting Sijhen escape. It heads for Saxby's office as assassins make their move, all while the other staff of the headquarters are driven mad and turn on each other.

The party must rush to avert several catastrophes, and when they confront Sijhen at its portal, a mishap unleashes a massive war beast, long ago bred by the Gidim and trapped at Apet. The PCs must kill it or drive it back so they can seal the portal, before the energy of Apet destroys the RHC and drives them all mad.

## Adventure Layout.

*Digging for Lies* is more episodic and less web-like than Adventure Two: *The Dying Skyseer*. At the end of the adventure we will include a GM Conspiracy Guide, with a checklist of information you need to make sure your party has by the time they finish Act Three. Without it, the party won't have the right clues to start Adventure Four, *Always on Time*.

## 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.

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

NPC Entry	Found In
Dr. Xambria Meredith	Introduction
Sijhen	Introduction
Benedict Pemberton	Act 1
Kvarti Gorbatiy	Act 1
Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft	Act 1
Kaja Stewart	Act 1
Caius Bergeron	Act 1
Rock Rackus	Act 2
Captain Rutger Smith	Act 2
Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby	Act 3
Lord Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill	Appendices
Lauren Cyneburg	Appendices

### Reoccurring Characters,

Stover Delft, Nigel Price-Hill, Kvarti Gorbatiy, Morgan Cippiano, Rock Rackus, Lorcan Kell, and Captain Rutger Smith are all scheduled to appear in future adventures. The Gidim survivor, Sijhen, likely will return even if the PCs defeat it, because its alien biology makes it hard to permanently kill.

### Incidental NPCs.

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

NPC	Found In
Sergeant Sara Lockheart, expo police	Act 1
Benedict Pemberton, industrialist	Act 1
Timothy Lammers, gun range owner	Act 1
Alfonse Irongut, ammunition seller	Act 1
Alforb Irongut, good-for-nothing son	Act 1
Nock, goliath gun maker	Act 1
Fildi and Dilfi, gnome badger fans	Act 1
Alloquicious, halfling engineer	Act 1
Simon Langfield	Act 1
Colonel Sebastian Harlock	Act 1
Isaac Randal	Act 1
Gunter Inskeip	Act 1
Hans Weber	Act 1
Diego Dolorosa, captain of <i>La Inspiración</i>	Act 2
Paco de Los Loros, goblin archaeologist	Act 2
Jack Glassmaker, captain of the <i>Dagger</i>	Act 2
Bernardo Molinelli, captain of <i>Il Draçon de Mer</i>	Act 2
Finona Duvall, tiefling summoner	Act 2
Krano, half-orc sea druid	Act 2
Carlao, RHC knight	Act 3
Dima, RHC cleric	Act 3
Serena, RHC assassin	Act 3

### Other Constables.

The *Player's Guide* presents a group of six constables you can use as coworkers of the PCs, to establish friendships or rivalries. With the PCs off the Macbannin case, three of these constables were given the task.

- Carlao, human **knight**.
- Dima, dwarf **priest**.
- Serena, human **spy**.

Carlao is the obedient leader of the group, always willing to do what Lady Inspectress Saxby asks. Serena is the brains and face, while Dima has a bizarre joy for filing paperwork.

These three constables will be in the RHC headquarters at the end of Act Three, and depending on the PCs' relationships with them and how persuasive they can be, the group might act as allies or enemies.

### Key Locations.

Use this list to keep track of locations the PCs might visit.

Flint Locations	Found In
Kaybeau Fairgrounds	Act 1
Lanternwood Subrail Station	Act 1
Pardwight University	Act 1
Silver Swan	Act 2
Bole	Act 2
Agate	Act 2
Ziggurat of Apet	Act 2
Seobriga	Act 2
Pezarillo	Act 2
Ziggurat of Mavisha	Act 2
RHC Headquarters	Act 3

**RHC Headquarters:** The headquarters of the PCs' employer, the Royal Homeland Constabulary. The PCs visit this often to receive mission briefings, report their findings, hold prisoners, and turn over evidence. The party will be called to report for an audit during Act Two, and monsters from beyond will invade the headquarters during Act Three.



**Sijhen.** A semi-humanoid being of the Gidim race, Sijhen was poised thousands of years ago to invade this world from a vanguard in Apet. Though only a novice at controlling the minds of beasts and mortals, Sijhen was one of his race's experts in planar travel. It was studying the Apet side of a golden seal when the greater Axis Seal took effect, and so was trapped in a timeless space between worlds.

The Gidim can possess corporeal creatures, but in their natural forms they can waver between wholly physical and existing only as barely-visible thoughtforms. Normally they assume the appearance of gray-skinned bipeds with tentacled heads. They subsist on thoughts, not physical food, and their own sentience is dependent on consuming enough complex ideas as sustenance. Their homeworld is itself a thinking being, but the Gidim could only expand by keeping mortal races as slaves.

Barely conscious in stasis, Sijhen dreamed of finding its way home. Then, when the Seal of Apet opened, Sijhen and a small horde of Gidim warbeasts were expelled into this world. Panicking, Sijhen hid in the mind of the first being it sensed, Xambria.

Sijhen's and Xambria's minds effectively occupy the same body. While Xambria retains control of her body most of the time, Sijhen is capable of taking control for short periods of time, and he is also able to "edit" what Xambria remembers or says. Sijhen is careful not to make his host seem crazy, and luckily the two minds have a shared purpose of discovering what happened at the dig site.





**Kaybeau Fairgrounds:** The Kaybeau Arms and Technology Exposition takes place in a large public park in the Central District, two miles from the RHC headquarters. The fair lasts until the end of the month, so after the PCs' initial investigations, they might revisit it later purchase equipment or talk to NPCs.

**Lanternwood Subrail Station:** Located a stone's throw from the fairgrounds, this construction site will one day be part of Flint's subrail network. Now it's mostly just a pit in the ground surrounded by a high fence, filled with stacks of iron and brick pallets.

**Pardwight University:** The university "campus" weaves through many streets and occasionally shares buildings with other offices in Central District. Despite being less impressive than Mitchell University in Slate, Pardwight has prospered from generous donors enriched by Flint's booming economy.

The Pardwight Museum of Natural History is a recently completed new building in the North Shore district. Dr. Xambria Meredith has been staying in one of the nearby apartment buildings, only a few blocks from the beach.

## 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. *Digging for Lies* includes the following opportunities:

- **Dockers** have a chance to influence their sub-culture's fate. Rising star Rock Rackus can turn the dockers into either a powerful popular movement or a short-term flashy trend, all based on how a PC steers the buffoonish performer when they visit him in jail in Act Two.
- **Eschatologists** meet a kindred spirit in the assassin Kvarti Gorbatiy, who has a weapon crafted from an old Drakran relic with clues to the end of the world. Kvarti himself has links to a group of radical eschatologists who'll threaten the city in Adventure Five.
- **Gunsmiths** have plenty of toys to play with at the arms expo, and can also talk shop with Kvarti Gorbatiy there.
- **Martial Scientists** will be called upon by their old teachers or colleagues to acquire a specimen of the warbeasts of Apet for study, and will be pointed toward an obscure martial thesis that will come in handy.
- **Skyseers** receive visions of the future at the two ziggurats in Act Two.
- **Spirit Mediums** most easily can deal with thoughtform creatures, have the best chance of saving Xambria in Act Three, and can always recover clues from the many dead bodies the PCs will come across.
- **Technologists**, like gunsmiths, have a lot of hooks at the arms expo, and in the final act they might make use of confiscated inventions in the defense of the RHC Headquarters.
- **Vekeshi Mystics** have the flip side of the docker dilemma, where a rogue element in the cult might cause public outrage by ordering the death of Rock Rackus.
- **Yerasol Veterans** will be singled out for possible promotion by Lord Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill, and will be at an advantage in naval combat at the sunken seal.

**Silver Swan:** The Silver Swan, the most elegant inn in Flint, fronts the beach in the North Shore district. Wealthy visitors come here for unmatched comfort and anonymity, including philanthropist and Obscurati operative Caius Bergeron.

**Bole:** The nearest large city to the High Bayou. The PCs likely pass through on the way to Agate. Mostly famous for lumber, Bole is an old, relaxed city compared to Flint, with a more active fey presence.

**Agate:** A small town located on the eastern edge of the High Bayou, at the end of the rail line that leads to the Anthras Mountains. It mostly services miners, but it is the closest piece of civilization to the Ziggurat of Apet.

**Ziggurat of Apet:** A ziggurat constructed by the Ancients to seal and guard a portal to the distant plane, Apet. Xambria explored these ruins, and a group of Obscurati opened the seal of Apet, unleashing Sijhen and a host of other aberrations.

**Seobriga.** The capital of Ber, which the PCs might teleport to on the way to the sunken Ziggurat of Mavisha. Seobriga plays a larger role in Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, but basic details of Beran society can be found in the *Player's Guide*.

**Pezarillo:** A small fishing village on the coast of Ber, near the sunken Ziggurat of Mavisha. The PCs may have to stop here to repair their ship.

**Ziggurat of Mavisha:** This ziggurat was destroyed centuries ago in a massive earthquake that cast it into the sea. A team of specialists sent by Caius Bergeron attempts to examine the seal to Mavisha, the plane of water, but only if something goes awry will anything dangerous come through.

## Rewards.

At the start of this adventure, the PCs should be 5th level, and should reach 6th level after its climax.

At the end of this adventure, the party's Prestige with Risur should increase by 1 rank if they save the RHC headquarters, though that might be mitigated if the party is found guilty in the audit. Unless the party makes fools of themselves, their Prestige with the Obscurati will increase by 1 rank.

Their Prestige with Flint, the Clergy, or the Unseen Court will not necessarily increase, since the core events of the adventure are not important enough to those groups. Certain side-plots might yield a Prestige increase of 1 rank, however.

At the start of the adventure, the PCs each receive 2,500 gp. After the first act they receive another 2,500 gp, and then 3,000 gp after the second act. This represents a mixture of salary and stipend for their investigation. However, The Audit (see Appendix A) may adjust what the party gets so that they end up with the appropriate resources for their level.

If the PCs are free agents instead of members of the RHC, you'll need to make sure they receive the appropriate treasure parcels. One possible mix would be:

**Start of Adventure.** Four magic items possessed by NPCs, and 500 gp apiece payment for providing security at the arms expo.

**After Act 2.** Three magic items possessed by NPCs, and 1,000 gp apiece in golden jewelry and artifacts from the ziggurats.

**End of Adventure.** Three magic items possessed by NPCs, and 1,300 gp apiece as reward for saving the RHC headquarters.



# Act One: From Fair to Foul

**I**N THIS ACT, THE PARTY STAKES OUT A FAIR, CAPTURES a fence, and learns that their enemies have an interest in archaeology.



## Meanwhile, in the News.

The adventure already has a lot going on, but if you want to give a little extra life to the city and the world beyond, you can occasionally drop mentions of the following current events. People murmur about these in cafes, gossip on the streets, or read about them in papers. Only a few have even a tangential connection to this adventure's plot. You might spin some of these into side quests, but be careful that your players don't latch onto the wrong ones and run off chasing red herrings.

- **War and Peace.** The Kaybeau Armament and Technology Exposition dominates the main festival grounds of Flint this month, but the city is already preparing for the peace summit between Risur and Danor. Scheduled for early next Spring, the summit will see the rulers of the two nations meet and discuss a long-lasting peace. The famed minotaur arbiter from Ber, Brakken of Heffanita, will moderate the negotiations. Security is expected to be high.
- **Weird Illness.** Goodson's Estuarial Reformatory has become home to a growing population of demented people, now numbering nearly thirty. All of them suffer from a condition doctors are calling Distant Madness. Suspected to be a magical affliction, perhaps fallout from the events on Cauldron Hill in the summer, the condition causes victims to feel physically displaced and unable to tell how far away things are. The mad men and women hail mostly from Parity Lake. A few cases were reported in North Shore, but the wealthier victims have the resources to afford magical alleviation.
- **What Horror!** Police are investigating a new bizarre serial killer in Central District, who first struck in the middle of summer. The authorities are unsure of a connection between the five victims,

## The Fair Comes to Town

If you want to give your players a brief overview of the situation, read or paraphrase the following.

After the climactic defeat of Macbannin and his mysterious suicide in custody, smart investigators might rightfully conclude that the case isn't closed. That was certainly the opinion of your supervisor, Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft, who wanted you turning over every stone to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Unfortunately, *his* boss, Lady Inspectress Margaret Saxby, is head of the Royal Homeland Constabulary in Flint, and she has ordered you off the case. She claimed she had missions "more suited to your talents," but all she's done is assign you banal investigations and busy work.

Delft grumbled and fought for you, but everyone knows what motivates the Lady Inspectress. She has her eye on politics, and she's ended the careers of more than a few constables who got too much positive press too fast. Lady Saxby's in charge here, and you're just supposed to take orders. When reporters show up, you're to politely suggest they talk with the Lady Inspectress.

save that all of them had their brains removed through the palates of their mouths.

- **Wicket Gates Coming.** Enthusiasm in the city is mixed concerning the burgeoning subrail tunnel system. While the well-to-do are willing to put up with the hassles of large construction projects, poorer Flinters worry that they won't be able to afford this new travel system. Proposed fees at the toll booths—called wicket gates—will just be 3 copper per juncture.
- **Worsening Corruption?** In the wake of Reed Macbannin's downfall, more people are claiming politicians, nobles, and even police officers are part of a culture of corruption. Flint City Governor Roland Stanfield commented to say, "Corruption is a constant in any large city. What has changed is the growing voice of the people who support our great modern nation. We must listen to those voices, because opportunities to truly improve society are rare."
- **Wunderbahn.** A bill in Parliament is being considered to levy a salary tax on the entire nation to fund construction of a wider railroad network. The city governor of Shale, Catherine Romana, has proposed a counter bill that would fund what she calls the Dream Road, "a roadway more in keeping with Risur's wonderful traditions." Rather than paved roads or rails, Romana's road would require the creation of hundreds of magical portals connecting every village, town, and city. The governor cites existing portal outside Flint, Bole, Shale, and Slate. However, the magical reagents required to activate the portal cost over 100 gold shields to transport just a handful of people. Romana's opponents in Parliament call the idea preposterous.



Don't worry. Delft assures you that it will all blow over in a month or two.

No use arguing, anyway. Another squad is on the Macbannin case. Your job, for the next month, is to be a gang of glorified security guards.

The Kaybeau Armament and Technology Exposition has come to Flint. The outdoor festival showcases amateur inventors and giants of the new industrial revolution as they display their creations with great pomp and spectacle. Everywhere you turn there's another pavilion boasting of the latest miracle of technology, from precision ballistics, to steam-powered armor, to clockwork pianos that play themselves. Vendors and fair-goers of all nations and races cram the aisles to see wonders once limited to the workshops of wizards and the vaults of kings.

It is hot, crowded, and littered with experimental weapons. What could possibly go wrong?

The police are charged with mundane concerns, like pickpockets and rowdy drunks, but it's up to you constables to look for greater threats, such as arms smuggling, espionage, and foreign spies, all of whom may use the fair as cover for their activities.

You're to coordinate your efforts with Sergeant Sara Lockheart, lead officer on site from the Flint Police. Each day, from the crack of dawn until the afternoon rains disperse the crowds, your job is to make sure everything is orderly. The Chief Inspectress never explicitly gave the order, but Delft recommends you try your damndest to keep out of the papers.

## Marching Orders

### Social. Real-Time.

*The PCs get acquainted with the expo.*

Sergeant Sara Lockheart meets with the party the morning the expo opens and gets them acquainted with its general layout and make-up, detailed below. She's generally professional, and properly (though not overly) deferential to characters of higher rank. Tidy and proper, she acts somewhat cold if the PCs have a Risur prestige of only 1 and dismissive if their prestige has fallen to 0.

The sergeant has no concrete leads to offer, but she does suggest that the PCs spend the whole first day at the fair looking for trouble. The subrail station and the center of the expo are more heavily watched, so while her squad can handle the rabble and any sort of petty theft or vandalism there, she suspects anything more major would go on in the peripheral tents and booths.

### Kaybeau Arms and Technology Exposition.

Two miles southwest of the RHC Headquarters, in the largest public park in Flint, the expo resembles a small tent city. Dozens of small booths, a score of modest tents, and a trio of huge pavilions house the various vendors.

As the party works here, whoever has the best Perception spots a woman tailing them. This is Lauryn Cyneburg, RHC Director of Infiltrations, and if the party tries to confront her she vanishes into the crowd and teleports away.

### Pavilions.

In the center of the park, these semi-permanent structures are near the recently completed, lavishly appointed Kaybeau Subrail Station.

### Military Tent.

Here the Risuri military demonstrates its technological grandeur. Officers guide guests through small models of famous battles, each with progressing levels of technology. A small museum showcases weapons and armor, trying to win propaganda points by presenting firearms as if they're a natural development, while offering only brief mentions of magic in combat.

One massive installation displays the cross-section of a scaled-down *R.N.S. Coaltongue*. For a gold piece, a visitor can fire a cannon into the outer hull. A small field is littered with flattened cannonballs.

### Rail Tent.

The conglomerate of businesses who coordinate with the Royal Rail Ministry give visitors here only one path through their exhibit. First, models show the mechanics behind steam engines. Then a somewhat ominous hallway has a relief map of the Avery Coast, with a model train constantly running the length (powered by magic). Flags mechanically rise and fall as the train passes through foreign nations, and a guide helpfully points out that the rail line, funded mostly by Danorans, is almost ten times as long as Risur's own railroad.

But the exhibit climaxes with a huge room thrumming with the sounds of trains. Here a scale model of Risur shows five majestic rail lines crisscrossing the country, while guides tout how much the nation will prosper from the faster travel.

### Industry Tent.

Completely ignoring the civil unrest over the past half year, this pavilion highlights how much industry and the factories of Parity Lake have improved life in Flint, and presents a vision of the city of the future. A steamboat adorned with gorgeous women cruises around an indoor lake (subtle fans in the ceiling clear out the soot and steam). A model of the city is enchanted with an illusion showing 'heroic' smokestacks sticking up from the Cloudwood, and steel towers rising everywhere.

### Major Tents.

In a ring around the main pavilions, twenty large tents anchor the swaths of smaller booths of individual vendors. These tents belong mostly to local factories, with a few national and international arms manufacturers. The PCs aren't here to shop, but they can find any sort of non-magical weapon, armor, or technological invention here, as well as a few magical ones.

### Apex Tower Construction.

A local construction firm has no tent, just an open patch of ground, and throughout the expo they build a tower. Starting on the first day they lay a foundation of stones and steel. Using techniques fairly advanced for Risuri society – including primitive welding – they will build the tower 50 ft. high by the end of the month.

### Colleen Fuel Prospectus.

Funded in part by Risur's military, this company has been experimenting on using different fuels for mechanical engines. The party might discover, amid barrels of traditional oil, one barrel of witchoil, the soul-infused oil that Macbannin was refining in Adventure Two. The research group's owner, Colleen, bought the barrel from Lorcan Kell's people.

### Gonzel's Cannery.

A half-orc culinary entrepreneur is showing off his canned foods. People can buy a can full of food, which his cooks will prepare. Then, in a rough mockery of the Apex tower, he begins stacking empty cans on a table. By the end of the month, he has to stop because his tent isn't high enough.

### Liontamer Mechanical Orchestra.

The tall, wise-cracking owner of this tent builds crank-powered musical instruments that play themselves, from simple music boxes to his showpiece "orchestra," which has a piano, four violins (each playing just one string), a small drum set, bellows that pump through bassoons and oboes.

### Pemberton Industries.

The wealthy **Benedict Pemberton** hosts exclusive parties here for aristocrats and high-ranking members of government and military. Wary guards keep away the uninvited, but if the party passes by Pemberton himself spots them and recalls that they saved his life on the *Coaltongue* (see Adventure One). He invites them (especially any martial scientists, technologists, or Yerasol veterans) to a party in his tent that evening.

At the event, dozens of potential investors watch as Pemberton shows off his company's latest inventions, including a man-sized steel construct that can be crudely controlled by a person wearing an enchanted headband. Also present is B.E.A.R., a Battle-Enhanced Animalistic Replicant. He claims both would be well-suited to Risur's war effort, and suggests the RHC should try to buy some before he runs out.

### Sechim's Alkahest and Alchemicals.

If the party saved Heward Sechim's factory in the previous adventure, the alchemist is riding a wave of popularity and selling intricately-etched glass and weapons to fair-goers. He also lets people play a game of "Taste the Acid" (the acid is just really strong liquor). Sechim offers the party all the free drinks they want.

### The Trinket Stand.

This tent is a cooperative venture by several trinket sellers. They offer various knickknacks that seem out of place at a technology fair, but do brisk business because people are already here with money to spend.

Anybody who goes to the "jewelry booth" in the back of the tent and says they are looking for "an anniversary gift for my wife Ethel" is sold a small but ornate jewelry box. The box contains a slip of paper that gives a time and place where the characters can meet Kaja Stewart to discuss buying fenced goods (see page 18).

## Stage Area—Gun Alley.

On the northern edge of the park, a stage hosts daily performances of local orchestras, international celebrities, and the occasional military reenactment. **The Incident** (the next encounter in this adventure) occurs here, so we've included a thick knot of strange booths and NPCs that might draw the party's interest so they're present when the event occurs.

### Area 1. Gun Alley Stage.

Backed by a wooded hill, the stage is shaded by a large canopy. A broad field in front of it is often full of audiences.

### Area 2. Rock Rackus's Tent.

Famed explorer and musician Rock Rackus is scheduled to perform on the stage in the afternoon, followed by a lecture about his journey to the moon, then a book signing. When the PCs arrive he's alternately yelling or laughing at his stage crew as they set up massive moon-themed props. At the moment he is too busy to meet with the PCs unless they have obtained Prestige rating 3 in Flint, in which case he'll jump at the chance to talk to them. See **Jailhouse Rock** (in Act Two) for details.

### Area 3. Shooting Range.

Using a reinforced hill as a safety backdrop, **Timothy Lammers**, an enterprising war veteran missing half his lower jaw, lets people test fire weapons sold by nearby vendors. In exchange, the vendors give him a tiny share of the profits.

### Area 4. Al's Ammo.

A Drakran dwarf named **Alfonse Irongut** sells a variety of magical ammunition at this huge tent-booth. These include *+1 arrows*, *+1 bolts*, *+1 bullets*, and any other ammunition you wish to include. Alfonse is impressed by those who know the trade, and Gunsmiths receive a 10 percent discount, as does anyone who can bullseye a target on the short shooting range (ranged weapon attack vs. AC 20).

### Area 5. Badger Gun.

A pair of gnome twins named **Fildi** and **Dilfi** decided to combine their two favorite things: badgers and guns. They do not understand why not everybody is as excited as they are. They will even offer a special 20 percent discount if the PCs have a Prestige rating of 3 with the Unseen Court.

### Area 6. Nock's Gun.

**Nock**, a half-giant from Ber, decided that if a gun that shoots one bullet is good, one that shoots seven bullets is better! Unfortunately, current gun barrels aren't strong enough to survive the shot without magical strengthening, so the weapon is prohibitively expensive. And the gun has some "recoil issues" for people shorter than about 7½ feet tall. But that doesn't stop him from selling the weapon.

### Area 7. Steam-Powered Armor.

A group of human and tiefling engineers from Danor, led by a straw-chewing halfling named **Alloquicious**, have constructed a prototype of a new kind of armor, one that uses steam power to





# Gun Alley Stage



One square equals 5ft.



## Badger Gun.

Weapon (musket), uncommon

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



## Nock's Gun.

This seven-barreled gun weighs a good thirty pounds. The blast from the seven barrels tears its targets to shreds. You can choose to fire each barrel separately or to fire all seven barrels at once. Each barrel deals 1d4 damage (Small gun) or 1d6 damage (Medium gun). If you fire all barrels

at once, you have disadvantage on the attack roll, but the shot requires only one attack action instead of seven. Additionally, if you fire all barrels at once, you must succeed on a Constitution save with a DC equal to the damage dealt by the attack or fall prone.

### Martial Ranged Weapon

Name	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Nock's Gun	10,000 gp	7d6 bludgeoning	30 lb	Ammunition (range 10/20), heavy, loading, two-handed

enhance the wearer's strength, speed, and resilience. Predictably, it's experiencing technical difficulties, but Alloquicious is itching to test out the arm-mounted flamethrower.

A character with the Technologist theme can easily diagnose the problem, while other PCs must succeed on both a DC 19 Intelligence (Arcana) and a DC 19 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or tinker's tools. If the PC shares the solution, the Danorans get the device *almost* ready by the time **The Incident** occurs.

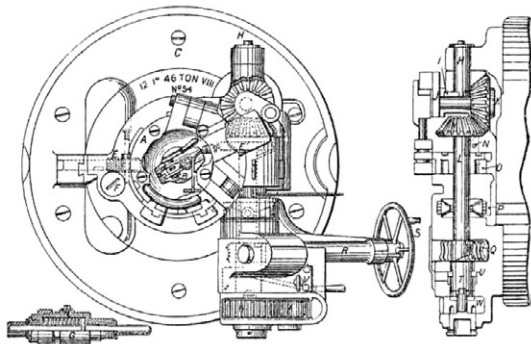
## Miscellaneous Tents and Booths.

Several other vendors sell more mundane arms, or offer gun-themed accessories like holsters, bandoliers, paintings, and ten-penny novels about gunslingers.

## Dwarven Philosopher.

A dwarven mercenary named **Kvarti Gorbatiy** roams the tents and booths in this region. He is legitimately intrigued by the variety of weapons on display, but his main purpose is observing Rock Rackus, whom he has been hired to assassinate. See Appendix Two, Radical Vekeshi Plot.

Kvarti might strike up a conversation with the PCs, whom he recognizes from the papers, especially anyone with an interest in guns. If any PC is an eschatologist, he'll gladly discuss philosophy, asking with black humor if Reed Macbannin seemed content with his life at the end.



## The Incident

### Action. Tactical.

*Monsters appear from nowhere to attack the fair-goers.*

- Simon Langfield
- 3 flying things
- 1 worm maw

This event occurs while the party is in the stage area, preferably during the first day. If your group has already discovered Kaja's fencing operation, they might be looking for Simon Langfield, as he is a former client of Kaja's.

When you begin the battle, read or paraphrase the following.

Screams erupt from a crowd of fair-goers not far from the stage as they run in panic. As they pass, horrid monsters that could only exist in nightmares pursue them. One massive creature is nothing more than a ring of flesh and bone, with teeth pointed inward, and lashing tentacles extending outward. The creature looks like it could swallow a man whole, though it has no throat, just a gaping maw. Its tentacles have already grasped one bystander—a young dwarf—and he dangles in the air.

Two smaller monsters buzz about the sky, like fleshy dragonflies the size of a man, with sleek bodies and elephant-like trunks that end in sharp beaks. The skin of all three monsters shifts from brown-dappled ivory to glassy translucence, as if they can't decide whether they're solid.

A human male with long blond hair stands amid the chaos, holding a solid gold staff in his right hand. He fires a magic missile from the staff, and a moment later a third dragonfly-beast materializes beside him.

The human is **Simon Langfield**, a wealthy novice mage who purchased the *staff of the Ancients* from Kaja Stewart. He was trying to get the discount at Al's Ammo by hitting a bullseye with a *magic missile* spell, but he accidentally summoned monsters from the planet Apet instead. He has no control over them and is just as shocked to see them as the PCs are. Monsters from beyond the mortal world are rare enough, but even educated PCs have never heard of anything like these before.



## Summoning.

Planar travel is extremely difficult in the world of ZEITGEIST. A sufficiently skilled spellcaster with the right spell and material can reach any of the worlds in the orbital system, and creatures can remain indefinitely. The exception is Apet, which cannot be traveled to or from without use of Ancient magic. Only a handful of people have done so since the Axis Seal, and their spells are lost to history.

It is much easier to summon a creature for a few minutes. Rather than bodily transporting the being, this creates a temporary aspect of it in this world. Even entities from worlds beyond the Axis Seal can be called this way. Again, however, Apet was especially sealed.

Simon Langfield's *staff of the Ancients* was used in the ritual to close off Apet, so it has the unique power to bypass the lesser seal. Its extreme age has damaged it slightly, though, and if precautions are not taken, whenever the staff is used, a tiny rift to Apet opens, long enough for a creature to slip through. These monsters have permanently crossed into the material world and are stuck here.

Note that these creatures aren't native to Apet. The Gidim brought warbeasts there millennia ago, and they lingered near the sealed portal, subsisting on bare diets of thoughts that filtered through. All the sentient Gidim mentally starved, and either degenerated into savages, or were devoured by their own beasts.

## Tactics.

Simon Langfield starts at Al's Ammo, and the worm maw remains there, while the flying things flit about, keeping their distance from those attacking them. The panic causes the crowds to clear out, but a few bystanders huddle behind cover to watch.

The worm maw has already grabbed one bystander, **Alforb Irongut**, drunken son of shop-owner Alfonse. On its first round the worm maw swallows him and drops him through its hole. He falls to the ground unconscious, and the maw becomes corporeal. Alforb dies at the start of the worm maw's next turn unless healed.



When he dies or is healed, the worm maw becomes insubstantial and phasing again.

The party might note with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check that Rock Rackus cowers at the edge of the scene, but he is quickly loading his gun like he wants to help. The dwarven "philosopher," Kvarti Gorbatiy, makes a tactical withdrawal to the top of the stage. Starting on round 2, the two men make their own contributions to the battle.

Simon Langfield, for his part, uses his *staff of the Ancients* to cast *magic missile* once per round at whichever monster is closest.

The monsters have only animal intelligence, and they're in wholly unfamiliar territory, filled with thoughts for them to eat. The worm maw has a taste for determination, so it is attracted to the PCs (likely the only people who aren't looking for a way to escape). It tries to "devour" its preferred victim, and will just randomly attack away anyone else who gets too close.

The flying things hunger for confusion and desperation, so they go after panicked bystanders, at least until they're attacked, at which point they retaliate. When reduced to half their maximum hit points, the flying things retreat and cause chaos throughout the fair; eventually, the creatures find nests in the city.

Like all creatures from Apet, these monsters exist naturally as thoughts, and only become solid if they're eating another creature's mind. Their fluctuating nature makes them tough to hurt until the party figures out their weakness.

Langfield keeps using his staff, which keeps summoning more monsters unless the party gets him to stop it. Once 3 more **flying things** appear, have one of them attack him and knock him out so he can't make any more.

### Simon Langfield

Medium humanoid (human), neutral good

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 22 (4d8 + 4)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** CON +3, INT +4

**Skills** Arcana +4, Perception +1

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Elven, Sylvan

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Spellcasting.** Simon Langfield is a 3rd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks).

He has the following wizard spells prepared:

**Cantrips (at will):** *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

**1st level (4 slots):** *shield*, *sleep*, *comprehend languages*

**2nd level (2 slots):** *scorching ray*

**Staff of the Ancients.** Simon Langfield is attuned to a *staff of the Ancients* (see sidebar) with 8 charges remaining.

#### ACTIONS

**Staff of the Ancients. Melee Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage. Simon can spend 1 charge from the staff to deal an additional 1d6 acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage (his choice).



**Flying Thing**

Medium aberration (thoughtform), unaligned

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

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

**Skills** Stealth +6**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, radiant, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks**Damage Immunities** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks**Condition Immunities** grappled, petrified, prone, restrained**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11**Languages** —**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)**Insubstantial Movement.** The flying thing can move through other creatures and objects without penalty. It takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage if it ends its turn inside an object.**ACTIONS****Beak.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.*Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.**Ray of Dark Light.** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) necrotic damage and the target can make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target suffers 1 additional point of negative energy damage at the start of each of its turns. At the end of each of its turns, it can attempt another Wisdom save, ending the effect on itself on a success. While a target is taking ongoing damage from the ray, the flying thing loses its thoughtform subtype (see "Thoughtform," below).**Staff of the Ancients.***Staff, rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)*

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

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

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

**Elemental Strike:** When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 1d6 acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage (your choice) to the target.**Spells:** While holding this staff, you can expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC and attack bonus:

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

**Worm Maw**

Large aberration (thoughtform), unaligned

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 68 (8d10 + 24)**Speed** 5 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

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

**Skills** Perception +5, Stealth +2**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, radiant, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks**Damage Immunities** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks**Condition Immunities** grappled, petrified, prone, restrained**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15**Languages** Common, Languages**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)**Insubstantial Movement.** The worm maw can move through other creatures and objects without penalty. It takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage if it ends its turn inside an object.**ACTIONS****Multitask.** The worm maw makes 4 tentacle attacks.**Tentacle.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.*Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 14) and restrained until the grapple ends. The worm maw has four tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.**Swallow Mind.** The worm maw chooses one creature it has grappled. The creature instantly falls prone, ending the grapple, and takes 14 (4d6) psychic damage and must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature is stunned until the end of its next turn. While the creature is stunned in this way, the worm maw loses its thoughtform subtype (see "Thoughtform," below).

**Kvarti Gorbatiy.** A dwarven locksmith turned mercenary, Kvarti wasn't interested in Heid Eschatol's philosophy until he found a book on the subject in the hands of a man he had assassinated. Now, though he presents a weary face to maintain his reputation, he goes through life content. He has all his affairs in order, and while he hopes to find a cause worth dying for, he would not be angry if his life was cut short.

When Kvarti is hired to kill someone, he knows he won't be close for the final shot, so he likes to find his victim and perhaps even make some small talk so he can better understand the context of the person's death.

Kvarti is more of a gunsmith than a philosopher, though. He has several custom-built firearms, including an enchanted, rifled musket. The stock is carved from the thigh bone of a giant, pulled from a glacier in Drakr's far north. Words are engraved into the bone in the long-forgotten abyssal language, but Kvarti claims the femur was already carved when he found it. The words read, "Cry out / for at the end of time / I rise."



## Thoughtform.

Creatures with this subtype are similar to incorporeal creatures. Thoughtform creatures are immune to all nonmagical attacks, and are resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks and damage from spells and other magical effects. Also, they ignore difficult terrain and can move through obstacles and other creatures, but they must end their movement in an unoccupied space. Thoughtform creatures take normal damage from psychic attacks.

Under certain conditions, some thoughtform creatures can lose the benefits of thoughtform (see “Mind Over Matter” below).

If a thoughtform creature would be stunned or paralyzed, it instead becomes corporeal until the end of the attacker’s next turn, losing its Insubstantial Movement trait.

A Spirit Medium automatically understands how thoughtform works.

## Mind Over Matter.

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

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

**Dexterity.** On a failed save, the thoughtform creature must use its speed to move up to 10 feet in a direction of the PC’s choice.

**Constitution.** On a failed save, the thoughtform creature loses its incorporeal trait until the start of the PC’s next turn. If it’s flying, it must land on its turn or fall.

**Wisdom.** On a failed save, the PC is invisible to the thoughtform creature until the start of the PC’s next turn.

## Diamond Encrusted Piece.

*Weapon (pistol), rare*

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

This gaudy and extravagantly decorated pistol grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls, and it is so flashy and impressive that, the first time in any encounter it is fired, all creatures with an Intelligence score of 6 or more within 30 ft. that see the wielder have disadvantage on all attack rolls against any creature other than the wielder until the wielder’s next turn. Creatures who spend at least a few hours in the presence of you and the gun get used to it, and no longer suffer this penalty.

Use the following two stat blocks for bystanders who might contribute to the fight.

### Kvarti Gorbatiy

Medium humanoid (dwarf), lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 14 (leather)

**Hit Points** 60 (8d8 + 24)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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

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

**Saving Throws** DEX +5, CON +5

**Damage Resistances** poison

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

**Languages** Common, Dwarven

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Deadeye.** Kvarti Gorbatiy scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 when making a ranged weapon attack.

**Dwarven Resilience.** Kvarti Gorbatiy has advantage on saving throws against poison.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Kvarti Gorbatiy makes two rifled carbine attacks.

**Rifled Carbine.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) piercing damage.

### Rock Rackus

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic good

**Armor Class** 14 (studded leather)

**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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

**Saving Throws** DEX +4, CHA +6

**Skills** Deception +8, Perception +2, Performance +8

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Spellcasting.** Rock Rackus is a 4th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following bard spells prepared:

**Cantrips (at will):** *friends, light, prestidigitation*

**1st level (4 slots):** *charm person, cure wounds, hideous laughter, heroism, thunderwave*

**2nd level (3 slots):** *invisibility, silence*

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Rock Rackus makes two attacks.

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

**Diamond Encrusted Piece.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.



**Aftermath.**

Panicked shouts die out slowly, and a crowd quickly grows in a wide, nervous ring. Someone calls out that a man is dead, killed by a stray bullet. The shot came from Rock Rackus, and if the bullet is removed, it's made of gold, as are all of Rock's bullets.

Four police arrive within a minute, by which point accusations are already flying. The chaos is cut short when Kvarti Gorbatiy, standing atop the stage, fires his rifle into the wood of the stage to get everyone's attention. He says that he had a high vantage point, and he saw Rock Rackus fire the stray shot. Gorbatiy views this as a way to save the performer's life. He was hired to assassinate Rackus, but he saw the man help out when strangers were imperiled, so he hopes for Rackus to be arrested long enough that people will stop calling for his head.

Unless the PCs intervene, the police arrest Rackus, with all the aggressive enthusiasm cops usually show dockers.

**Monsters and Staff.**

The dead monsters bizarrely do not disappear the way summoned creatures should. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check can determine that the magical energies of the monsters match energy stored in Simon Langfield's staff. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check can connect the design to the Ancients.

Alforb Irongut, if he survived, is in a stupor, but his father Alfonso can explain how the monsters appeared when Simon cast a spell with his staff. The staff is gold, but Simon insists it was made of wood when he got it. Over the following minutes, it reverts to its normal wooden appearance.

Assuming the heroes saved Simon Langfield, he is extremely grateful and tells them all he knows. Simon honestly has no idea how the monsters came into being, and does not connect it to the staff, though if PCs make that connection he will grudgingly turn it over to the RHC. Langfield further admits that he purchased it at a steep discount from a dark-haired middle-aged woman in a blue trenchcoat (Kaja Stewart), after setting up an appointment at the Trinket Stand.

Langfield's meeting took place in an alley beside a furniture store a block from the jewelry store Kaja's based in. If the party looks for Kaja there, though, they risk tipping off her spies that someone's on her trail.

**Take It to Evidence.**

Low-ranking RHC officers come by the site of the battle and begin to confiscate huge swaths of items. Standing orders for the RHC state that any previously unknown magic requires a thorough investigation. Mages come by and sense for magical auras they don't recognize, and they take anything that looks suspicious. The steam-powered suit, the various unique guns, and a lot of the mundane merchandise get taken away and locked up in the evidence room at the RHC Headquarters.

Many of the owners complain, but this is by orders of the king. The purpose of this event is to give the PCs some interesting resources to play with in the climax of the adventure.

**The Audit****Social. Montage.**

*The party is held to account for any law-breaking or corruption.*

A subplot runs throughout the whole adventure. Starting the evening of the first day, the head of the RHC, Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill, arrives at the Flint headquarters. A large retinue accompanies him, and his mission is to root out possible corruption, in the form of the PCs.

This plot thread is detailed in the appendices, in Part 3.

**That's Classified****Social. Real-Time.**

*A military academy requests the PCs hand over corpses of the strange monsters.*

If any PC is a Martial Scientist, he is contacted by **Colonel Sebastian Harlock** the next morning. Though highly decorated, the man has never made the papers. He requests the PC recover the bodies of the unusual monsters and deliver them in iced crates to The Battalion, a martial academy in Flint's western bayou.

Harlock emphasizes the importance of Risur's military studying any newly discovered creature or magic. He can arrange for boat transport of the remains, but he needs the PC to actually take the bodies, which otherwise will go into the RHC Headquarters' morgue. The PC can come along if he wants to be sure this is a legitimate military operation, and the crates are delivered to the Battalion, where they're received by old men in military mage uniforms.

Harlock offers no compensation, but says that anything they learn that might be useful in dealing with future similar threats he will pass along, as long as he has clearance to do so.

If the PC goes along with this, then when the PC returns from the Ziggurat of Apet, he will find waiting for him in the mail a copy of a thesis, *Methods of Extricating Warriors from a Variety of Tentacled and Tendriled Monsters*. This grants the Tentacle Technique bonus ability. Also, if no PC receives the vision of The Sealing of Apet, the PC will also receive a brief treatise on how conscious thought affects the creatures (see the "Mind Over Matter" sidebar on the previous page).

**Tentacle Technique.**

As an action, you can choose one creature within 30 feet who is currently grappled. That creature makes a melee weapon attack against the creature grappling it, and can then make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check to escape the grapple. If the attack hit, the creature has advantage on the check.







## Investigations

### Puzzle/Social. Montage.

*The PCs search the fair for leads to the whereabouts of a dangerous black market.*

The PCs have plenty to do at the fair, but after **The Incident**, their main goal should be to apprehend Kaja Stewart. She has been using the expo to find buyers and fence rare or illegal magic items, including three relics from the ziggurat of Apet. These magic items eventually lead the PCs to Pardwight University's Museum of Natural History, where Dr. Xambria Meredith can point them to her dig site in the High Bayou, and the shady philanthropist Caius Bergeron who funded it.

For the duration of the expo, Kaja uses a jewelry shop near the Lanternwood Subrail Station as her base of operations. Each day she chooses a new spot to conduct business, usually within a few blocks. She has runners deliver messages to and from the Trinket Stand (page 11), so she knows who might be coming and what they'd be interested in. She always travels with a construct bodyguard, and when she gets a bad feeling, she'll bring along back-up.

There are plenty of routes to the arcanoscientist criminal, and most lead to the under-construction Lanternwood Subrail Station, unless the PCs push extra hard to move the location. It's even possible that if the PCs are proactive, they might locate Kaja before **The Incident** occurs. We include two possible routes below.

### Common Criminals.

A ring of young children pick the pockets of festival attendees. Characters who spend an hour observing the crowds can make a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, they track these young thieves back to their source. The ring was set up by a middle aged woman who calls herself "Mama." If the party doesn't spot them, they might find out about the ring by asking the police about criminals they've arrested.

The pickpockets themselves are fairly unimportant, but amongst the stolen items the PCs discover an amulet matching the sort used at Macbannin's laboratory to gain access to the lower levels. If pressed, the young thief describes the man who carried the amulet

**Morgan Cippiano.** Morgan Cippiano came over from Crisillyir a few years ago with instructions to foster Family interests by recruiting Crisillyiri immigrants and any local Risuri followers of the Clergy who had a similar ideology. 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.



A devout Clericist (follower of the Clergy), Morgan strives to keep a moral code while running a branch of a powerful criminal organization. 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.

as a short human with dark hair and a goatee, wearing a striped gray shirt, a gold bow tie, and violet pants. The party can use this description to locate **Isaac Randal**.

Isaac Randal was a researcher working for Macbannin on the witchoil project, and he fled when the earthquake struck. Now that his source of funding has been cut off, Randal is selling off equipment and technology that he scavenged. If PCs confront him, he tries to flee. If captured he admits selling everything he took from the lab to his former associate, Kaja Stewart. If suitably threatened or plied, he can be convinced to set up a meeting.

Randal knows that Kaja's started working with some criminal gang, and that they're interested in finding out who Macbannin was working for. He will send a message through the Trinket Booth (see above) claiming that he found a lead. Kaja will respond back, suggesting a meeting later in the afternoon, when the rain has cleared out the construction workers at Lanternwood.

### A Friend in the Family.

The Family is using the expo, and all the extra dock activity that comes with it, to move a large shipment of illegal fey pepper into the city. The Bosum Strand docks are far from the expo, but if the PCs think to scout there for suspicious activity, they might hear talk about the shipment (Charisma (Persuasion) DC 17), or notice the activity surrounding it (Wisdom (Insight) DC 17). The PCs' informants might also tip them off.

If the PCs make a move on the smugglers, one of the Family bravuras recognizes the PCs and suggests they talk to **Morgan Cippiano** before they try arresting anyone. Alternately, the PCs might spot Morgan Cippiano from a distance as he attends the expo.

If the PCs talk to Morgan, he offers them a deal. Rather than stopping the shipment, they can just accept a small gift—a month's supply of fey pepper. And in exchange, Morgan will point them to somebody they'll find more interesting: a fence outside of the Family who is accompanied by a construct powered by black oil. If they take him up on the deal, Morgan tells them how to find Kaja Stewart through the Trinket Booth.

## Kaja and Her Toys

### Action. Tactical.

*The heroes find the fence, and she doesn't go down without a fight.*

The following battle assumes that the PCs pose as potential weapon buyers for Kaja's fenced goods, and meet her in the Lanternwood Subrail Station construction yard. If your players try a different approach, alter the details to suit your needs.

When the PCs reach the construction yard, read or paraphrase the following:

The afternoon rains have sent home the construction crews, and the guards have left the premises. A gate in the wooden fence hangs open to the construction yard, and within you can see the massive pit dug for the future train station. A few steel and stone columns rise to suggest the skeleton of a future building, with only a flapping tarp stretched between them as a makeshift roof to keep the pit from flooding.

Stacks of lumber, bricks, and girders provide plenty of hiding places, and the fence is feeble enough to offer numerous escape routes. But you spot someone on the far side of the pit, a woman with a high-colored coat and a huge coil of hair. Beside her towers a man, seven feet tall, draped in a black coat, his face concealed with a wide-brimmed hat.

- Kaja Stewart
- 1 iron bodyguard
- 4 walking turrets
- 2 Kell-Guild pistoleers (optional)

Kaja waits on the other side of the pit from the obvious entrance to the construction yard, guarded by a construct similar to the bleak golem the PCs faced in Adventure Two, poorly disguised as a human; a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check easily uncovers this disguise. In addition to her iron bodyguard, Kaja has brought several walking turrets, constructs that are little more than guns with legs. They hide amid the construction supplies, resembling nothing more than inert pieces of metal until Kaja gives the word, at which point they animate and attack. A successful DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a PC to see the walking turrets.

If the PCs talk to Kaja, she has them wait on the far side of the pit, where they can attempt to make a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check to convince her they are legitimate buyers. Then she'll wave the party to come across the wooden bridge, while her golem opens a chest to reveal a variety of guns (including some exotic gun-blade mixes), plus the *blade of the Ancients* and *amulet of the Ancients*, and any other magic items that you might wish to include. She asks for market prices, (32,000 gp for the blade and 28,000 gp for the amulet) but might be haggled down to roughly 80 percent of that price.

In any circumstance, Kaja refuses to answer any questions about how or where she obtained the items, or how the staff summoned the monsters. If the PCs ask too many questions, or otherwise rouse her suspicions, she suggests they leave quickly. She conjures a musket out of thin air, and begins to withdraw toward her secret exit.

### Possible Ambush.

If the PCs tipped off Kaja even before the meet-up, she brings two **Kell-guild pistoleers** as back-up, who hide under tarpaulins to the west of the main entrance, requiring a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot. Also, Kaja has rigged the bridge so she can drop it as a bonus action. She hopes to drop the PCs into the pit as they cross, then shoot them like fish in a barrel.

### Tactics.

Kaja prepares for the meeting by casting *mage armor* and *stoneskin*. During combat tries to keep her distance from the PCs, shooting from cover when possible. She uses *shield* regularly, relies on *misty step* to maneuver to cover without needing to move through the slick mud, and summons firearms to attack. She waits to summon her cannon until she can hit at least three people.

If anyone reaches her, she orders all her allies to focus on that foe. Otherwise, she'll order her iron bodyguard forward, and will support it with spells and gunslinging.

If her iron bodyguard is destroyed and she is reduced below half her maximum hit points, Kaja tries to flee. She surrenders if at any time she is reduced to 3 hit points or fewer.

### Terrain.

Almost every space other than the sawdust paths at the entrance is slick with mud. Moving slowly is safe, but at the end of any action wherein it moves, a creature must make a successful Acrobatics check with a DC equal to 8 +1 per square of mud the creature entered or fall prone.

The muddy walls of the pit make climbing out difficult, requiring a successful DC 19 Strength (Athletics) check, and even the stairs are slippery, requiring a successful DC 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. A creature that fails either of these checks fails to exit the pit and falls prone. The steel pillars in the pit have many hand holds and are easily climbed, rising 40 or 50 feet (20 ft. above ground level at the top). Horizontal girders connect these pillars high above the battlefield. Some spaces along the outer perimeter contain iron reinforcing bars pointed upward, meant for future construction. These spaces require a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to vault, or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to weave through. A creature forced into one of these squares takes 1d4 piercing damage from sharp metal.

Eight massive steel pillars surround the dig site, each rising 50 feet above ground level. Giant tarpaulins stretch between the tops of these pillars, but rain still pours through the gaps. Scattered ropes hold the canopy in place. Encourage the PCs to do weird things, like snapping a rope and riding the backlash across the pit, or cutting a few to cause a tarp to fall and pin everyone in a 30-foot radius.

### Aftermath.

Assuming the PCs leave Kaja alive, she won't answer questions in the short term, but the party may be able to get a few answers out of her with a longer interrogation back at the RHC headquarters. Encourage them to take her in for questioning, and mention that the basement jail has a few cells suited for magic-using prisoners. You want the players to be familiar with the layout of their HQ before the events of Act Three.

Kaja genuinely has no idea how the staff summoned the monsters. She simply fenced the items, and even when she worked for Macbannin all she knew was that the items came from some archaeological site. She did not get a chance to examine them for danger before she stole them and ran.

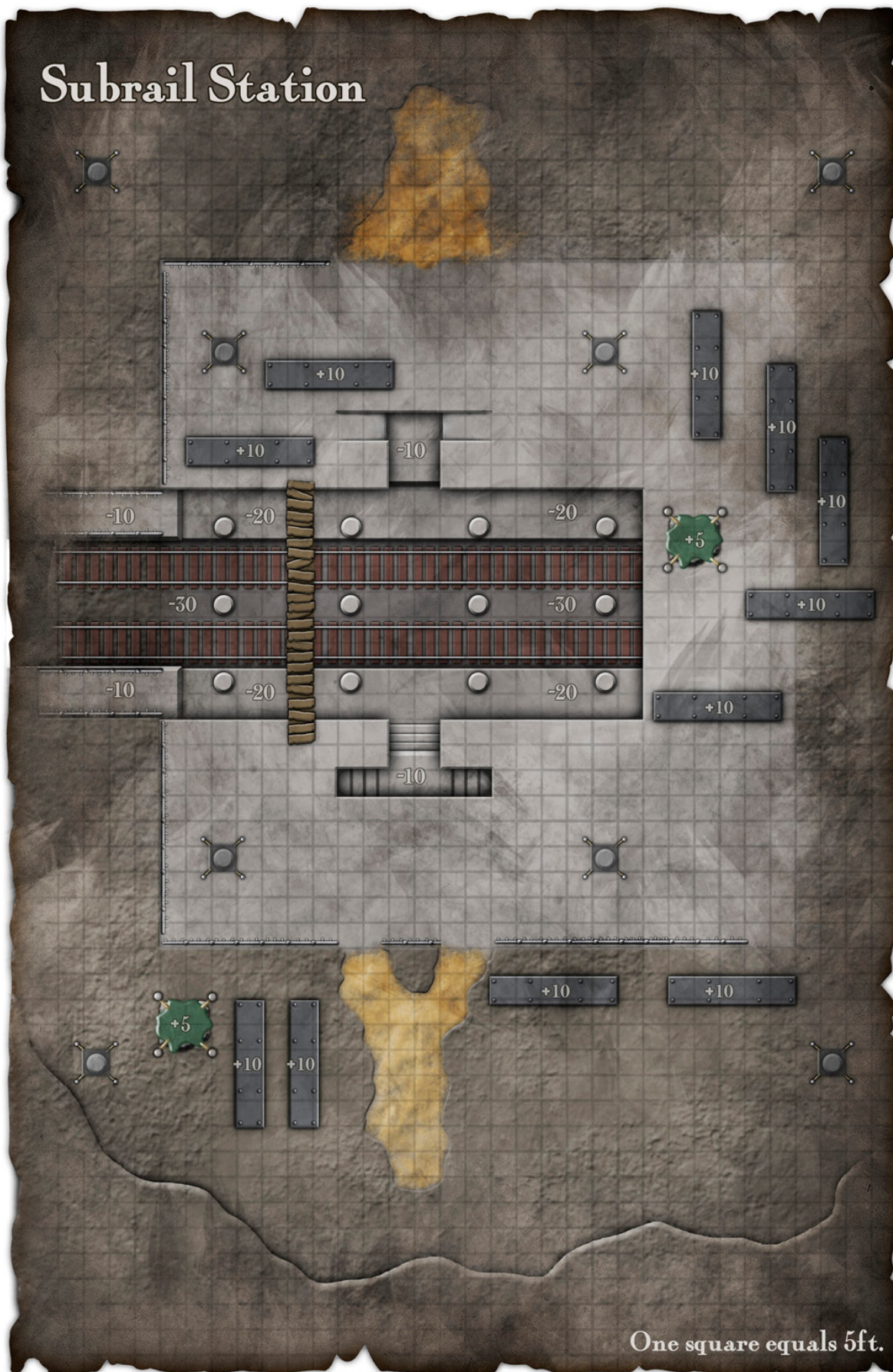
She does recall a tiefling showing up at the laboratory when the items arrived, and Macbannin being upset, saying something about it "compromising protocol." She can describe Caius Bergeron, though she has no idea about the man's name, location, or affiliations.

The iron bodyguard was carrying a chest filled with contraband, including the *blade of the Ancients* and *amulet of the Ancients*. Characters who examine the sword or amulet can make a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check, connecting them with the Ancients on a success. They appear fairly primitive, but if their powers are used they briefly transform to solid gold.





# Subrail Station



One square equals 5ft.



**Kaja Stewart**

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

**Armor Class** 13 (16 with *mage armor*)**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** INT +5, WIS +3**Skills** Arcana +8, Persuasion +6**Senses** passive Perception 10**Languages** Common, Elven, Sylvan**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Spellcasting.** Kaja Stewart is a 9th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She knows the following sorcerer spells:

**Cantrips (at will):** *light, mage hand, message, true strike***1st level (4 slots):** *detect magic, expeditious retreat, mage armor, shield***2nd level (3 slots):** *blur, misty step, see invisibility***3rd level (3 slots):** *dispel magic, slow***4th level (3 slots):** *stoneskin***5th level (2 slots):** *creation***ACTIONS**

**Multiattack.** Kaja makes two attacks, using her pistol and pistol bayonet in any combination.

**Pistol Bayonet.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, one target.

*Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

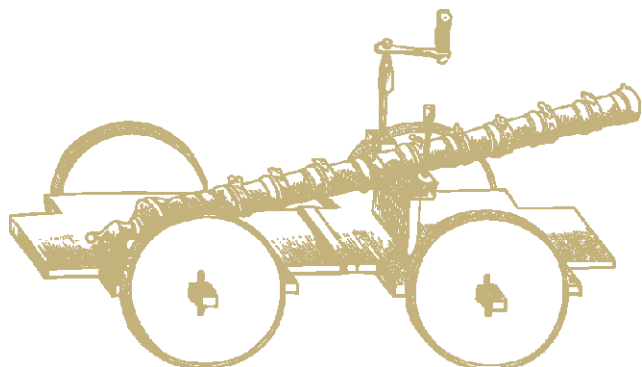
**Pistol.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage. Whether she hits or misses, the target cannot take opportunity attacks against her for the rest of her turn.

**Carbine.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 50/150, one target.

*Hit:* 10 (1d12 + 4) piercing damage. When summoned, the carbine is loaded with an enchanted reaving bullet that burrows into the target, seeking an artery. If the attack hits, the target takes 1d6 piercing damage at the start of each of its turns until it or another creature makes a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check as an action to dig the bullet out.

**Cannon.** With a grandiose flair, Kaja aims her conjured cannon, choosing a point within 200 feet. Creatures within 15 feet of that point must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) bludgeoning damage, pushed 5 feet and falling prone on a failed save, or taking half as much damage on a successful save. The area of the blast is filled with opaque dust and smoke until the end of Kaja's next turn.

**Iron Bodyguard**

Medium construct, unaligned

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 85 (10d10 + 30)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

**Skills** Athletics +7**Damage Resistances** fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine**Damage Immunities** poison, psychic**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10**Languages** understands Common and Primordial but can't speak**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Guard.** The iron bodyguard is attuned to a master, in this case Kaja Stewart. When its master is endangered, spirits swirl outward from a witchoil reservoir in the bodyguard's chest, bonding it with its master's life force. While the bodyguard is within 5 feet of its master, attacks against the master have disadvantage.

**Warding Bond.** While the bodyguard is within 60 feet of its master, the master has resistance to all damage. Each time the master takes damage, the bodyguard takes the same amount of damage. This effect ends when the bodyguard is reduced to 0 hit points.

**Find Master.** The bodyguard can unerringly find its master as long as she is on the same plane.

**ACTIONS**

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the attack hits, the iron guardian can also attempt to Grapple or Shove the target as a reaction.

**Kaja Stewart.** Kaja was recruited as an arcanoscientific researcher by Reed Macbannin. When she realized she might be arrested for her involvement in his project, she hid, taking a collection of magic items from a laboratory located away from Macbannin's primary manor.

An expert in theoretical planar physics, Kaja devised the way to refine witchoil from the veil between the real world and the Bleak Gate. She now works for Lorcan Kell, and in the intervening months since her flight she has focused on crafting pocket dimensions for the purpose of concealing weapons and contraband. But unlike most of her cohorts who worked for Macbannin, Kaja is looking for a way to go back to work on her old project. Together she and Kell are trying to get in touch with the Obscurati, though they don't even know that's the group's name.





### Walking Turret

Small construct, unaligned

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 16 (3d10)

**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

**Damage Immunities** poison, psychic

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

**Skills** Stealth +7

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius); passive Perception 10

**Languages** understands Common and Primordial but can't speak

**Challenge** ¼ (50 XP)

#### ACTIONS

**Ungainly Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage and the target is pushed 5 feet. If the attack misses, the walking turret falls prone.

**Integrated Pistol.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

### Kell-Guild Pistoleer

Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral evil

**Armor Class** 14 (studded leather)

**Hit Points** 55 (7d8 + 14)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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

**Skills** Intimidation +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common, Elven

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Pack Tactics.** The Kell-guild pistoleer has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the thug's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Kell-Guild thug makes two melee attacks.

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

**Pistol.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

**Gear.** The Kell-Guild pistoleer possesses a *potion of greater healing*.



## Kaja's Exit

### Social. Montage. Level 5.

*The fence is removed from the stage.*

If the characters take Kaja into custody, she sits in her cell for a day, and then Saxby has her transferred to the RHC branch in the capital city Slate.

Kaja knows nothing about Saxby's involvement with the conspiracy, but just in case the Lady Inspectress is having the prisoner sent away. She calls in some favors from the military, and soon thereafter a carriage with armed guards arrives at the RHC to escort Kaja away. The military is intrigued by her gun-summoning powers, and intends to put her to use.

(Alternately, you could have Kaja murdered in her cell, but we think that it makes the RHC HQ seem insecure if another witness dies so soon after Macbannin. Better, we think, to just move her off-stage. The party might encounter her again much later in the campaign.)

## Mangled Golem

### Puzzle. Real-Time.

*This mysterious murder scene won't be solved any time soon.*

This scene does not tie directly into the current adventure, but it lays key groundwork for events in Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*. It's intended to be an unsolved mystery for the party which they can return to later to get a break in their case.

Shortly after the PCs track down Kaja Stewart, they get a request for help from the constables who have been assigned to the Macbannin case. They've heard about the party's fight with Kaja and her golem, and they think the party might have some helpful insights on a scene they're investigating. They ask that the party keep it quiet, since Lady Saxby would not like the two groups collaborating.

### The Scene.

The body was discovered in the basement of a steel mill in the thickest factory cluster of Parity Lake. The burning steel and firegeoms concealed the stench of decomposition, but workers found him just yesterday. The man had to have been dead for weeks at least.

What got the case kicked over to the RHC was the presence of two strange things: a ring of rusted iron, and a slender golem which is torn to pieces.

### What Happened.

During the climax of Adventure Two, an unwilling member of the Obscurati conspiracy tried to escape their compound in the Bleak Gate. He died in the attempt.

Alexander Grappa, known as the Mindmaker, had been working for the Ob under the direction of Leone Quital, known as the Steelshaper. Grappa designed the consciousness of the colossal golem called Borne, whom the PCs should have little or no inkling of. Grappa developed doubts about the project, then eventually overheard a meeting between three high-ranking members of the conspiracy. Too valuable to kill, Grappa was locked up, which angered the colossus, leading to the minor tremors throughout Adventure Two.

Eventually Grappa arranged for his (man-sized) golem handservant to invite Kasvarina Varal, the eladrin mage who shared leadership duties of the Obscurati, to come speak with him. He interrogated her, then managed to catch her by surprise and wipe her memories. He hoped that by giving her a second chance to see the world she might turn against the conspiracy.

Using a mind controlled Kasvarina as cover, Grappa left his cell, snuck to the giant construction bay where Borne was being assembled, and then wiped the colossus's memories. The childlike golem strained against its bonds, provoking the massive earthquake that struck as the party attempted to defeat Reed Macbannin. During the chaos, Grappa fled the Obscurati compound, bringing his handservant golem and Kasvarina with him.

He hoped to reach the Flint harbor and sail to Elfaivar, where he could work with Kasvarina to rebuild her memories and defeat the conspiracy. But Leone caught up with him in the basement of this steel mill.

Leone easily overpowered Grappa, then tried to slowly torture him to death by pouring a vial of witchoil down the Mindmaker's throat. Grappa managed a desperate spell to transfer his consciousness to his golem handservant, then immediately used his new body to crush his original skull with a bronze fist to end his suffering. Furious, the Steelshaper tore the golem apart.

Leone took the confused and wailing Kasvarina back to the Ob compound, and in an act of spiteful carelessness he left Grappa's body to rot, thinking no one would find it.

### The Victim.

The victim's wrists were bound together by a twisted steel bar, as were his ankles. It would take either magic or great strength to bend the steel, and this was done very precisely.

He had some sort of necklace, because links remain near his body, but most of it is missing. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the chain matches the amulets used at Macbannin's manor to slip partially into the Bleak Gate.

The dead body is highly rotted, but the PCs can determine the date of death by making a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check. It died sometime early in the Summer. The apparent cause of death is a shattered skull, and the size of the wound matches the fist of the damaged golem in the corner. A cursory look determines the man was human, in his fifties or sixties. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that he has an old gunshot wound to his leg. A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) or Intelligence (History) check reveals that his teeth suggest he received dental care from a Risuri army doctor.

Probing the throat or closely examining the body allows characters to make a DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine or Perception) check. On a success, a character spots nearly a pint of witchoil, some of which was swallowed. Casting *detect magic* reveals there is no soul energy trapped in the oil; if the man had died while the oil was anywhere nearby, his soul should have been sucked in.

The victim had 5 platinum pieces and twenty gold pieces in his pocket, as well as a bundle of papers with ship schedules, berth numbers, and mentions that passengers were welcome, all of which were set to depart between the 5th and 15th of Summer. All of them were bound for Elfaivar.

Finally, a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that his socks have the initials "A.G." stitched into them.

### The Golem.

The golem is in a hundred pieces. Its chest is "only" torn into four components, while its face cracked apart into countless tiny pieces. The main bulk of its "skull" looks intact, though, and it feels quite heavy. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that it was a finely-crafted internal structure appropriate for containing an advanced intelligence.

The body is unimposing. Before it was smashed to bits it probably stood about 5' 6", slender, mostly bronze. But again its internal structure is of the finest quality, with miniscule gears in the hands that would have allowed nuanced movements. The face, shattered though it is now, could once have displayed fantastic expressions. Even a Technologist has never seen such wondrous craftsmanship.





It looks too fragile to use as a warrior, though.

It has a few chain links amid its wreckage, just like the necklace the victim was wearing.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that, oddly, it looks like the golem wasn't hit by an object; it was torn apart, almost like it exploded along every major seam and joint. Casting *detect magic* specifically on the golem's head reveals that it still possesses an aura of magic, suggesting the thing might still be conscious, just blind and mute.

### Other Clues.

Looking around the scene, everything has a fine layer of ash, which just drifts onto everything in the factory, even in the basement.

The party can find several inches of torn fabric by the rusted ring by making a successful DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check. It's several layers of cotton and dyed silk stitched together, and if the party asks around at different clothiers around town (or perhaps talks to Morgan Cippiano, a knowledgeable fan of fine attire), they discover it's likely from an eladrin woman's dress, the sort made before the Great Malice. A DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the threads have residual magic on them, which given how long they've been removed from the garment suggests the enchantment was very powerful to begin with.

A few ingots of iron stored on nearby shelves have fallen onto the ground, and a few are below the victim's body. Examining the ingots with a successful DC 19 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that they were shaken free, probably during the earthquake in the Summer, but there's no sign of ash on top of them, which suggests the victim died very soon after the quake.

### What Now?

The other constables have to follow up on any suggestions the PCs make, but they thank them for their help, and promise to inform them of any breaks. They will have the body buried, but plan to take the remains of the golem to the RHC Headquarters, in hopes of perhaps reassembling it and getting it to talk.

The party might take an interest in fixing the golem, but it's a daunting project that would take even a skilled technologist several months. If the PCs try any clever spells, its memories are muddled from Grappa's memory wipe. In Adventure Five, the golem becomes active, either by the party's actions, or other RHC operatives. It can provide critical clues at that time, but until then, it's just a riddle.

## Pardwight University Museum of Natural History

### Social. Real-Time.

*The PCs search for answers amid academics.*

After confiscating the staff, sword, and amulet of the Ancients, the most logical place to go is Pardwight University. Asking about the artifacts, they are quickly directed to **Professor Hans Weber**, Professor of Antiquities and current curator of the Museum of Natural History.

Professor Weber, a human originally from Drakr, believes himself smarter and more capable than just about everybody in the world, and he gets along well with anybody as long as they don't challenge his beliefs. Weber is busy preparing for the coming museum exposition featuring many wonders of the Ancients.

Professor Weber is a born lecturer who loves the sound of his own voice, and at the slightest cue he quickly rattles off some of the Ancients' astounding accomplishments, including their understanding of astronomy, magic, and goldsmithing that have gone both unheralded and unmatched for centuries. Weber is happy to answer any questions the party has, though like all mainstream scholars he has no idea about the Axis Seal.

### Recovered Relics.

Most of the museum's Ancient artifacts come from older digs, but when Weber heard rumors a few months ago of the discovery of an Ancient ziggurat in the High Bayou, he extended an offer to the young archaeologist who was heading the excavation: Dr. Xambria Meredith. Xambria sent back a detailed list of items recovered, with the caveat that her sponsor would have final say on their placement.

When Xambria returned a month ago as the sole survivor of her expedition, Weber arranged for her to stay at a Pardwight University apartment, both out of sympathy and out of a hope she would support his claim to the artifacts, should they ever be recovered. If the PCs mention having found and claimed them, Weber is at first ecstatic, then subdued.

Weber can set up a meeting between the PCs and Xambria, but he warns them that the tragedy placed a tremendous strain on Xambria. They should be gentle when speaking to her. As for the relics, he'll quickly produce paperwork from his office which shows he has a legal claim to the amulet, staff, and sword. He says he tried

finding Xambria's sponsor, but couldn't. With him missing, ownership falls to Pardwight University.

He will keep the relics in a royal safe hold until shortly before the exhibition. Royal guards will protect the items from thieves, while mages ascertain whether the items are a hazard to the nation.

### As for Caius...

Weber has met Caius Bergeron in the past, and says the tiefling has been very generous to the university, but he was secretive at the best of times. He appears to have vanished at the same time as Xambria's tragedy.

## Xambria

### Social. Real Time.

*The party gets critical clues from someone who wants answers as much as they do.*

Dr. Xambria Meredith, originally of Mitchell University in Slate, is currently recuperating at Pardwight, where she has been given a temporary office and living quarters. She readily talks to people who might help her find answers about what happened to her dig.

Xambria speaks politely to the PCs, and does her best to answer their questions. Though naturally charming and gregarious, she has odd gaps in her memory. When asked directly about her dig she might get a distant look and insist, "I told you I don't remember."

In truth, much of Xambria's "trauma" results from the alien entity Sijhen, which has merged into her mind, and her odd behavior is often a result of the PCs asking questions that Sijhen does not want her to answer. Be careful not to play Xambria as crazy or unhinged. You want the PCs to trust her.

### Foggy Recollection.

Xambria's story of the doomed expedition goes something like this. After discovering the ziggurat in Spring, she sent news and several artifacts to her sponsor, the wealthy philanthropist Caius Bergeron. Bergeron wanted to be kept apprised, especially if she found something he called a "golden seal": a large golden disk bearing astronomical symbols, which would radiate powerful protective magic.

The dig cleared through traps and collapsed passages, but in early Summer Xambria sent word that she had found a seal. A few days later she went to the train station in Bole to meet a group of specialists sent by Bergeron: three tieflings who were obviously spell casters (a rarity among Danorans), and a pair of human guards. She recalls this was a little while after she got news of some big scandal in Flint, but she doesn't remember the exact day.

She led the specialists to the dig, brought them to the seal, and then left at their request. The next day the specialists were still working at the seal, so she left to pick up supplies she was expecting to arrive by train. The round trip took a few days, and when she returned to the dig site, she discovered the bodies of her colleagues. They all lay dead either at the base camp or just inside the ziggurat. There was no sign of the specialists, but she dared not venture inside. She fled in a daze, boarded the train back to Flint, and reported the deaths to the police and the University.



Eleni Tsami 2011

### Priceless Antiquities.

In the real world, it's amazing enough for a museum to have a gold-decorated sarcophagus or a gem-studded crown worth millions of dollars. In a fantasy setting, how does government deal with museums wanting to display artifacts that might actually possess perilous magical powers?

Museums must allow royal inspectors to check relics for magic, and then to examine magic items for possible danger. A large stodgy body of bureaucrats determines what's safe enough to display, what's so dangerous it must be confiscated, and what is something the government might want to lay claim to, but allow on display for the time being.

The three Ancient relics the PCs have recovered, while very valuable and powerful, do not pose a significant threat. Anyone who might use the staff to cast spells would be able to use magic anyway, and likewise the sword is only as dangerous as its wielder. The amulet is wholly defensive. The only concern is that they might summon more monsters. To protect against that, Professor Weber offers to wrap the relics in gold thread. Additionally, as part of the Ancient exhibit, the entire gallery has an inlaid band of gold in the floor. Summoning in the relic room is impossible.

If the party wants to requisition any of the relics, they can get at most two; Weber has enough pull with people in power that he will at least hold onto one item. He's worried the constables might lose them and ruin his exhibit. They'll actually be safer at the museum than in the RHC headquarters. And the party does not have enough authority to prevent Weber from hosting the Ancients exhibit and showing off the relics.



She's convinced that Bergeron's specialists had something to do with the deaths, and she asks the PCs to return to the ziggurat and uncover the truth. She also thinks Caius knew there were dangers at the ziggurat. She tried to track him down when she got back to Flint, but the ways he had told her to get in touch were dead ends. She doesn't have the resources to find him, but she hopes the PCs might.

### The Truth.

Xambria's version of events is mostly true, with a few edits imposed by Sijhen. Xambria was there when the specialists opened the Ancients' seal, and while they took precautions and set up a magical ward, one of Xambria's diggers panicked and disturbed the ward, unleashing the monsters. A host of Gidim war beasts glided through the portal, and only thanks to Sijhen bonding with her was Xambria able to resist their psychic energy and escape.

### Details of the Ziggurat.

If the party asks Xambria for a map of the ziggurat, she apologizes. Her memory is muddled, and though she remembers that there were traps, and some sort of indoor rainbow, she can't recall specifics. She suggests they look for her journal, which she probably left at camp, and which should detail everything they need to look out for.

Unfortunately for the PCs, Caius Bergeron sent a follow-up expedition about two weeks ago, and they have already ransacked the camp for all useful documents. They also carried off the golden plate that sealed the portal to Apet.

### Ancients and Other Evening Conversations.

If the party spends a long time talking with Xambria, she'll inevitably go off on tangents about her study of the Ancients. She has a theory of how their civilization ended. Excavations of Ancient sites turn up tons of gold relics, but scholars have never found actual gold mines or the forges necessary to make such items.

She suspects the Ancients might not have made the relics, but

rather traded for them or looted them from another group that was more advanced. This foreign group could have come from another world, using magic that is impossible now. She theorizes that either these foreigners' method of travel was destroyed, or the Ancients actively fought them away. Perhaps Ancient culture collapsed without the presence of their foreign allies, or maybe the Ancients were too weak after fighting off invaders to sustain their culture.

She cites other examples of extinct entities that were once common – dragons in Ber, or the demons of Triegenes's time. She also claims that old Clericist scrolls in Danor make mention of "Egal the Shimmering, lord of the golden legion" among a list of demons and other heresies. She thinks perhaps Egal was the source of all the Ancients' gold.

Her theory happens to be partially right, even though to most people it sounds like a crackpot idea. The PCs might, however, have kept the *wand of Egal the Shimmering* from the smugglers in Adventure Two, which happens to be made of solid gold.

The idea is to present Xambria as a prospective ally in solving the deeper mysteries of the campaign, and to get the party to like and trust her. Tricking players is tough, but if you pull it off, the reveal that Xambria is the adventure's villain will make a huge impact.

## Caius Bergeron

### Social. Real-Time.

*A tiefling noble is surprisingly unhelpful.*

Finding Bergeron can be quick if the PCs have contacts among the elite in Flint. Otherwise, the party has a long process of several Charisma (Persuasion) and Intelligence (Investigation) checks to find someone who might know him.

The tiefling has a room at the Silver Swan Inn in North Shore, and can be found there most afternoons. He's far too refined (and too well guarded) to flee at the threat of law enforcement presence. He'll even offer to buy them a meal and discuss business with them.

At first Bergeron acts the part of the history-and-art-loving philanthropist. He is open to any questions about his philanthropic works, though his answers are often vague. He pretends to be simply interested in history and selling antiquities, and says that digs are often dangerous. He claims Xambria contacted him, and he offered compensation and aid. She said she wanted nothing to do with him, and so he assumed their arrangement was over. He plans to send another expedition, but the weather is turning foul up in the High Bayou, so it will have to wait until Spring.

If the PCs make any accusations, Bergeron asks them to leave until his lawyer can be present. If they arrest him, he won't even be processed into a cell before word comes in to let him go. Saxby tells the PCs to leave Bergeron alone.

If PCs manage to examine Bergeron's room at the Silver Swan, it is as described in Act Two ("There Goes the Main Suspect"), with a few exceptions. The map on his desk shows only Xambria's dig site, and the pages torn from his books are present and describe discoveries made by Xambria's expedition (including the golden seal).

With no other leads in Flint, the party's next step for answers lies at Xambria's dig site. 🗺️

**Caius Bergeron.** Caius Bergeron comes from a wealthy Danoran noble family with a reputation for philanthropy. His great-grandfather founded the expedition that first discovered the Axis Seal, and members of his family have been recruited into the Obscurati ever since. He was a potential next-in-line to take over Golden Cell after the Duchess attacked Axis Island, but he prefers the academic side of the project.

His current stay in Flint lets him check up on several of his sponsored digs. He's also been tasked by the Ob top tier to keep an eye on possible loose ends from Macbannin's defeat. In particular, he's watching Lorcan Kell and Kaja Stewart, evaluating whether to leave them alone, recruit them, or kill them.

Caius is constantly reading—at all times he'll have with him either a book or a pile of letters from archaeologists who benefit from his philanthropic donations. He keeps his fingernails and tail tip sharpened, and tends to leave deep scratches in furniture when he's impatient. He has a love for the Crisillyiri dish *polip alla infanti*, or live octopus, sliced and eaten while the tentacles still squirm.

