



ENsider Presents:

Always on Time

Part Two

A 5E-Compatible Adventure for 6th-Level Characters



Act Two: Turned Tables

THIS ACT TURNS THE PCs FROM PREDATORS TO prey as their targets receive word of being spied upon.

Layover in Trekhom

Exploration/Social. Montage.

When the train stops in a city of dwarves, it's hard for suspects to blend in, but equally hard for the party to shadow them.

Less than an hour after the attack, the train crosses the border out of the Malice Lands and into Drakr. A steel spire rises five hundred feet above the desolate landscape, guarded by a battalion of soldiers and mages. The train does not stop there, but over the next few hours it hits several small cities. At the conductor's urging, most people do not flee the train. He promises their needs will be better tended once they reach Trekhom.

The train is scheduled to arrive in Trekhom at 6:24 PM; if the party doesn't take a hand in getting the train moving again, it shows up 21 minutes late, by which time the enclave guards have gotten nervous.

With perfunctory formality, Malia comes through fifteen minutes outside of Trekhom. Still shocked by the morning's attack, she asks everyone to please return to their seats. After all that's happened today, she doesn't want anyone to fall prey to thieves hopping on board in the commotion to nick unattended valuables.

The train approaches Trekhom via a titanic, high bridge that passes over the mouth of a mighty sea. From a distance, you see pollution thicker than in any city you've been before. Huge steel mills churn coal smoke into the air. Gray snow drifts down from the sky, coating every surface in freezing wet grime. The enclave and surrounding railyard lie directly between the city center and the harbor, forcing the whole city to suffer from the smog in the name of efficient trade.

As the train arrives, night has already fallen and the air is thick enough with snow that you can only make out vague shapes of squat buildings, punctuated by massive towers.

Investigation.

When the train pulls up to the station, twenty enclave guards stand at ready, as well as the enclave's tiefling director. Conductor Xorin speaks with the director, and they quickly arrange for the basement of a nearby theater hall to be used as a makeshift morgue. Bereaved passengers have their tickets refunded and their lodgings paid for.

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OPEN GAME CONTENT
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Investigators try to question everyone so the railroad can prevent future attacks of this sort.

The train coming from Nalaam has already arrived. When word spreads of the monster in the Malice Lands, many of its passengers change their travel plans until they know it's safe.

Overnight, passengers in coach and second class are asked to take all their belongings off the train because new cars will replace the damaged ones.

This scene is meant to give the party time to catch their breaths. Nothing dangerous happens tonight unless they go looking for trouble.

The Grand Railyard.

The Avery Coast Railroad enclave sits within a crenellated wall, just to the north of a much larger conflux of railroads. Eight different railroads that span Drakr meet in a railyard that fills nearly an entire square mile. Hundreds of rail cars are parked along its tracks, and trains roll through the city at least once an hour.

People are free to come and go from the enclave, but the city does not offer much to the casual tourist. The city has no subrail due to disputes over subterranean property, but small overland rail lines weave between city districts. Older paths underground are also available, cramped for humans but lit with gaslamps and free of gray snow.

Law Enforcement.

Drakr is more prepared for dangerous travelers than the lands to the west. Human and dwarven mages – often armed with painful and borderline immoral magic such as mind control and soul-sucking necromancy – stand ready for people with uncanny combat prowess causing trouble.

Drakr is well-known for its harsh treatment of prisoners. Authorities here are said to prefer seeing people sent north to mining prisons than taking bribes to let them go. If the party gets arrested, they'd need to offer at least 500 gp to be set free.

Rendezvous with Their Ship.

As planned, the party's ship is waiting in the Trekhom harbor, perhaps stocked with supplies. If the party gets into too much trouble here, they can catch a ride and get to Sid Minos before the train does, but they'll miss out on the events in Nalaam.

The Grientos.

Ejeka wants to take her kids some place fun to take their minds off the carnage, but Damata is morbidly drawn to the theater where the bodies of the victims are being stored. People are talking about how a special guest is scheduled to speak tonight at the theater: Vlendam Heid, the dwarf who founded the major philosophical movement of Heid Eschatol.

Damata feels like it is fate that a man who wrote the book on preparing for death would be waiting for him on this trip where he expects to die. He insists on going, and Ejeka decides to go to a park with the kids to let them play in the dirty snow. Damata and Heid's interaction is presented in more detail below.

Arms Dealers.

Men hand out brochures near the hotel inviting visitors to various craftsmen of fine armaments. It has become a cottage industry in Drakr for weapons makers to collaborate with mages in the creation of new killing tools.

Either by following a brochure or following Verzubak after he toasts, the party might find their way to a shop called *Knigi, Grudi, Bongi, i Strely* (Books, Boobs, Bongs, and Booms), which caters to all sorts of marginally legal desires, with a library of controversial books and scrolls, exotic magical pornography, various drugs and paraphernalia, and of course, explosives.

New weapons include rifles, shotguns, and even magical bullets (granting no higher than a +2 bonus to attack damage).

Elanor & Isobel.

Elanor huffs out of the enclave with Isobel in tow, takes a trolley to an inn at the docks called *Korol Morya* (Sea King), and meets an esteemed dwarf ritualist, **Vankloff Jeanov**. They go to a private basement room, where Vankloff acts as a conduit for long-distance communication.

If the party manages to eavesdrop, they can hear Vankloff speak with three different voices through the conversation – one with a brusque Drakran accent, one a charming Crisillyiri, and one a smarmy Risuri. They ask how the trip is going and express concern at the story of the attack.

Elanor is obsequious, thanking these “august gentlemen” for their “fine taste” and promising to “deliver the goods unmarred – I haven't had to beat her once yet, she is very obedient.” She asks for specific instructions, and the Drakran voice responds that she can “simply come to the tower,” and she will be welcomed, and, importantly, paid very handsomely for her “fresh, ripe, delightful cargo.”

The Crisillyiri voice then asks if she has anything for his “other business interest.” Elanor responds that she'll make a list of “prospective fodder for the arena,” but warns that the best fighters were traveling first class and even he “can't go around abducting wealthy travelers, you might be killing my clientele.”

The conversation is over in less than five minutes. Vankloff gets a payment of 1,100 gold pieces. Afterward they share a drink, and then Elanor and Isobel return to the enclave hotel.

Cardiff.

During the investigation, Cardiff plays down his role in fighting the malice beast. Then he retires to his room in the enclave's fine hotel, changes clothes, exits discreetly, and rents a room in the cheaper hotel. He carries his briefcase hidden inside a duffel bag.

After midnight, Cardiff leaves the hotel and walks to the larger railyard. He's scheduled to meet his buyers at Warehouse Six at 7:00 p.m. His buyer is a small, fat dwarf with wrinkled face full of stubble, dressed in a Drakran military uniform, named **Ulrik Pevedin**. He's flanked by two human attendants, and a dozen other armed soldiers hide in the warehouse. Assuming the PCs don't barge in or otherwise try to intervene or interfere, the meeting proceeds as follows



Cardiff puts down his duffle bag as he enters the warehouse, then pulls out his briefcase. He sets the briefcase on the table, and opens it. Inside there are many sheets of paper, and the fat dwarf leers over them.

"Ahahaha! These documents will be very valuable on the open market, my spy friend. Thank you ever so much. Danor's military secrets are, ahem, safe in my hands. Please, have a drink with me and tell me how you found these." The dwarf reaches to sift through the documents.

Cardiff closes the briefcase, almost catching the dwarf's fingers. "You can figure that out yourself after you pay me."

The dwarf heaves another briefcase onto the table. Cardiff moves to open it, then pauses and turns it so it opens facing the dwarf. The dwarf laughs and opens it – no trap is triggered – and turns it around again. Cardiff counts stacks of platinum and gold coins, then inspects a bag of gems – the contents of the case are worth a total of 17,000 gp. He transfers the money to his duffle bag, leaving the dwarf's briefcase empty.

"You are too paranoid," says the dwarf, "even for this country. I would not kill you without being sure you are prepared for it."

"You can never be too prepared," Cardiff says. "Don't read page eight. It's trapped to explode." He walks away with his duffle bag, laughing as he goes.

Cardiff heads to the docks and catches a ship out at first light.

Stopping the Exchange.

If the party intervenes, Pevedin's fourteen goons will try to kill them. Cardiff will simply try to escape, either with the documents or with his reward (or both, if possible). Pevedin just covers. You can use for his guards the stats of the Privateer Officers (page @@), reskinning sabers as maces.

The documents are related to Danor's naval maneuvers, and give highly detailed records of every ship in the navy, its captain, crew, armaments, capabilities, and recent deployments. This would be invaluable in the event of a war with Danor.

Malia.

Malia is enlisted to help carry bodies from the train to the theater-turned-morgue. Afterward she takes a long hot bath and goes to bed early, but has trouble sleeping. Malia really doesn't do much else of interest for the rest of the adventure, unless the PCs prompt some action.

Mister Mapple.

It's possible Mister Mapple was captured by the train guards after the attack, in which case he's taken into custody, but manages to escape shortly before dawn.

If unfettered, Mister Mapple follows the PCs because he's curious about them. He might address them briefly – calling down from a rooftop, ready to flee in an instant – to ask their names and introduce himself. He leaves before long, then goes to spy on Isobel through the window of Elanor's hotel room.

Luc's Crew.

Much like in Orithea, the group works to let Luc and Ottavia head to a lighthouse at the harbor. Due to the sad events of the afternoon, Verzubak has a hard time finding people to gamble with, and Boone has to enlist a man as his drinking buddy, instead of a young lady. The group watches each other's backs, heads to the inn *Korol Morya* (Sea King), and then gets the signal from Verzubak. Ottavia writes a note and has it delivered to Bree.

"Just received sending. Tell others, our mission under surveillance. Suspected Risuri group sailed into Beaumont. Do not confront. Give information to me."

If the party failed the secrecy part of the mission training montage, instead the note contains brief descriptions of the PCs, short enough to fit into the 25-word limit of *sending*.

After seeing Luc off, Bree quietly shadows Boone. She doesn't see him kill his victim, but does find the body. She'll report this to Ottavia, who'll concoct a plan to deal with both the party and Boone, who has become a liability.

Luc and Ottavia meet up with a dwarf who owns all the prisons in northern Drakr, **Ramos Zoltan**. The lantern demonstration occurs without a hitch. If the PCs manage to get a glimpse into the meeting, they can see mock-ups of Trekhom's lighthouse, a few other city lighthouses along the Drakran coast, and the giant spire at the border of Drakr and the Malice Lands.

After leaving the lighthouse, Luc prepares a contingency. Using his family name as leverage, he gets the enclave director to agree to some special repairs for the train. He has a replica of his experiment installed on top of the locomotive, concealed under a sheet of steel as part of the smokestack. He is also given access to the train's interior overnight; he scribes sigils into the hidden backsides of the gas lanterns that light the hallways. In this way, he can activate his lantern to affect the entire train if need be.

Doomed Men Are Often Philosophical

Social. Real-Time.

Damata Griento has to decide how to face his death.

At 8:00 PM, the enclave clock tolls, and **Vlendam Heid** walks on stage, wearing a heavy brown suit and thick spectacles. The audience is filled with scholars, philosophers, and theologians, but a roped-off section in front reserved for railroad passengers is empty save for Damata. Depending on how the party has treated him, he might ask one or more PCs to come with him.

"People ask me," he starts, "how will the world end? How in the various hells should I know? I am not a prophet. I don't believe you can know what will happen. Yes, mages and priests can see paths and visions, but it only takes one unlikely interaction or chance meeting to change the course of the future.

"I don't say I know how the world will end. But I know that it will end. Every fire burns itself out. Tomorrow morning, look to the sun. Feel how



warm it is. One day it must burn out, and without it this world will freeze. Maybe some—.”

He stops, then looks down to the front row and adjusts his glasses.

“I prepared a speech,” he says. “They hired me and told me the audience would be layfolk. I tried to prepare something simple. I see I have some admirers in the back rows, but up front, it is pretty empty. You survived the attack on the train today?”

Damata nods.

Unexpectedly, Heid sits down at the edge of the stage and lets his feet dangle as he addresses Damata (and the PCs, if they’re present) directly.

“I have a contract, and I must speak on a level my audience understands. Let us be efficient. I wrote a rather long treatise on how best to prepare for death, and for other endings in life. Today there was a great deal of death on your train. I leave it to you: please ask whatever you want, and perhaps we can learn something from this tragedy.”

Damata thinks for a minute, then says, “The people who died today don’t have a chance to change anything anymore. I do. I hurt my family, and I can’t stand myself now. I want to change things. I see now that death can strike at any time, from any quarter, so I guess I should make amends while I have the chance.”

“I have dealt with this before,” Heid says. “Life has many chapters, and if you want the book to end properly, you must choose the path of each chapter well too.”

“Oh.” Damata slumps. “It’s hard, because I think if I try to fix anything, I’ll get myself killed.”

People in the back of the theater make furious notes.

This sets off an earnest discussion between the burdened, plain-spoken Damata and the more philosophical Heid, who is intrigued by Damata’s vulnerability. Damata explains his predicament. Heid offers no direct answers, instead asking questions to guide Damata to figure out what matters to him. Heid’s goal is to get Damata to act without fear, because he has come to grips with the possibilities of how this chapter of his life will end.

Final Will.

The PCs are welcome to get involved, but barring their intervention, Damata decides that he is likely to be beholden to the Family if he does not stand up to them. The only possible ending to this situation that he thinks would honor his family and his nation is if he follows the tradition of his ancestors and fights for his territory – in this case his family, his wealth, and his life. He is no fighter himself, but he comes from a family of warchiefs, and so he will rally warriors to him.

Unless somehow the party has completely avoided combat so far, Damata intends to ask the PCs to fight for him against the criminals who seek to make him their slave. He will offer to arm them and pay them in loot, as is the orcish way. If they refuse, he will see that as proof he is not worthy of his family name, and thus the weapons were not his to take. He will instead go to the meeting expecting with no payment, and will kill himself, because death is better than slavery.

The audience is quite excited, and Vlendam Heid himself asks to have the honor of a drink with Damata.

Recruitment.

Either at the theater or later in the evening, a slightly drunk Damata and Heid find the PCs in their room – waiting until dawn if necessary – and make Damata’s offer. Using the famous philosopher’s authority to back him up, Damata proposes that they are all free men, and that anyone who would threaten another man’s family to make him into a slave does not deserve to live. Those who would aid such a slaver likewise deserve to die.

When they reach Nalaam, he asks the party to accompany him as his warriors. He’ll have to see if he can buy some warpaint in the morning before the train departs, but he’s prepared to arm them, though they must return the weapons to his family after the battle. In exchange, he’ll grant them a place of honor at his villa in Ber, and will let them keep whatever loot they find after the battle. He knows the Family plans to have a wizard present to price and purchase the weapons, so there should be plenty of cash on hand.

Of course, if the party comes up with another solution (such as taking Cardiff’s pay-off and handing it over to the Family), Damata’s willing to change his mind. If the party refuses outright, Damata looks to Heid for strength, then nods and departs.

Weapons of the Warchiefs.

The simplest way to handle this is to just treat the items Damata carries as a collection of orcish tribal totems which anyone can wear. These totems only function when fighting for a warchief of the Griento family, and they grant the wearer 15 temporary hit points at the start of combat, and increase the magical bonuses to attack and damage of the PCs’ weapons by +1.

If you want to be more specific, the following items might suffice. Whatever form Damata’s items take, if the party steals them they will be cursed until they return the items to the Griento family. Whenever a cursed character gets into combat, he feels thick orcish hands grasp his limbs and prevent him from fighting. The cursed character is dazed until the end of his first turn each combat.

- Three sets of *bracers of defense*.
- Two *+1 throwing axes* that reappear in the wielder’s hand at the end of the turn they are thrown.
- Four *+1 daggers* that deal an extra 1d6 lightning damage.
- A set of *gloves of missile snaring*.
- One *brooch of shielding*.

Under Investigation

Puzzle/Social. Real-Time.

Luc Jierre’s bodyguards try to figure out who’s spying on them.

No Longer on Board: Cardiff.

During boarding, people mutter about news that another body was found overnight, ritually disemboweled like the last two. The prevailing theory is that whoever called the monster in the Malice Lands is trying to kill everyone on the train. Passengers are tense.

The train leaves at 7:30 AM. The coach cars are only a quarter full, and they only end up half full by the time the train reaches Nalaam in the evening. Before then, things seem to have mellowed out, and the day goes by without any attacks or monsters.



The situation will depend immensely on how the party has done so far in their reconnaissance. They likely have identified Luc as their target, but they might not know how the others fit into the situation. Or they could have figured out everyone's situation, and just need to lay low and not attract attention.

Now, though, it's the villains' turn to spy on the party. Ottavia passes along a directive to in no way let on that they're suspicious, and not to take any overt actions. They are just to make a slight effort to tease information out of the party. If the party failed to maintain secrecy in the initial planning, Ottavia knows for sure who the PCs are. Otherwise, you might include some of the following encounters in the lounge car throughout the day.

See "Investigative Skill Challenges" in *ZEITGEIST: Always on Time—Part 1* or the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide*.

Creepy Flirtations.

If the party has any female PCs, Boone will spend the morning flattering her shamelessly. If he feels he's got a shot, he suggests they retire to the party's suite while everyone else is eating lunch.

Throughout the day, the party might spot Boone flirting his way through second-class and coach. He only chats up women who look or sound Risuri.

Mysterious Couple at Lunch.

Luc and Ottavia enjoy wine and cheese, conversing by sign language. At one point Luc waves down Malia and stutters out a request. He wants to buy room service lunch for all the other first class passengers – fine meals. A server comes by the party's suite with fine wine and cheese, and does the same for Elanor and the Grientos.

An hour later, Luc goes to talk to the wait staff, asking for details on who ate what. He thinks he can detect a pattern based on how picky or paranoid the eaters were. He repeats the process – with cheaper wine – for the second-class passengers.

Statistical Analysis.

Verzubak's calculations show him who the most likely RHC spies are: they are likely in first class, they are likely Risuri, they are likely traveling under pseudonyms, and they likely have been on the train since Beaumont. If he's spotted the party following him, he's almost certain, but for all he knows, Elanor or Damata might be very clever spies. He craves proof.

His brand of proof is unusual. He walks down the length of the train, rolling dice in a cup and peering at the results. He uses his luck-based magic to measure the combined odds of getting a certain result on the dice with a given probability of each suspect.

Mind if an Old Soldier Expresses Her Thanks?

Bree finds a time when the party is in their suite, and she asks if she can come in and express her thanks for how they helped out against the malice beast. She has some find Alwyr Red, a liquor imported from the Far East, and she'd be honored to share it with them and swap war stories. She likes to tell the tale of how she got dismembered.

During the conversation, or if the party is hesitant to let her in, she mentions that she's actually pretty bored on this trip because the man who hired her for bodyguard duty, Caius Bergeron, never showed up. She already had a ticket, though, so she figured she'd ride anyway. She hopes the party's reaction will give them away (and she tries the same gimmick with several other suspects).

Your Presence Is Requested.

Though Elanor is devoid of empathy, she does value people, because they let her gloat. As the train nears Nalaam, Elanor has the staff deliver magically-written notes by her, inviting everyone in first class and a few suitable folks in second class to attend the Nalaam Arena's ten o'clock show this evening.

Nalaam, the Decadent Playground

Exploration/Social. Montage.

The party's chief suspects change their pattern amid countless distractions.

The train climbs into the snowy mountains and reaches Nalaam at 5:57 PM. The train from Sid Minos doesn't arrive until 6:08.

Fifteen minutes outside of Nalaam, Malia politely reminds you to please return to your seats. More than other cities on the route, Nalaam is renowned for its tricky thieves. She suggests you keep an eye on your personal effects, to make sure no one hops on board in the commotion and nicks your valuables.

Nalaam, a city founded upon a wellspring of magical energy, and controlled by a cabal of powerful wizards, announces its presence with light brighter and more colorful than the sunset. In the shadows of the surrounding mountains, the lights of this infamous den of iniquities hide many crimes and cruelties the rest of the world forbids.

As the train pulls into the enclave, you are dazzled by the gilded, glittering spectacle. Throngs of people ply business and pleasure out of polished marble carves and atop bizarre structures built in the shapes of arches, trees, even dragons. Above it all rises the Grand Casino, a tower of endless games of chance and skill, which generates immense wealth for the archmage lords of the city.

Nalaam, with all its temptations, beckons you.

Wellspring of Mana.

The Lords of Nalaam make their fortunes selling mana. Their Grand Casino is suffused with earth mana which leaks—unbeknownst to the public, but knownst to the city lords—from an Ancient sealed portal to Apet, the Plane of Earth.

The mana takes the form of crystals, silver dust, or even nuggets of liquid gold, but fades quickly if taken beyond the city's valley. Mages are drawn to Nalaam by the promise of being able to build sturdy structures of whatever shape they desire, and to craft weapons and armor of exceptionally strong steel. Danor is trying to get the city to set up a factory to produce steam engines of great quality, but have had little success so far.



Tonight several of the side characters' plots come to a head. Damata Griento kisses his family good-bye and marches to face a gang of criminals. Meanwhile, Elanor arranges for Mister Mapple to be arrested and thrown into an arena, then sells Isobel into sex slavery.

The people who aren't particularly active are Luc's crew, since they just want to lay low until their trap for the party goes off tomorrow. How dangerous this evening gets depends on how many friends the party has made and how much they're willing to risk their mission to help strangers who are in trouble. Helping Damata, Isobel, or Andrei von Recklinghausen here can pay dividends in later adventures, but the party can skip them entirely without affecting the core mission.

Fun and Games.

If the party isn't up for heroics, they might play cards, dice, or roulette at the casino, where cheating with magic is forbidden (which just means people have to be clever). They might visit one of the many very creative brothels in this city of mages, or simply shop for spells and magic. Plus there's always the Nalaam Arena, the Street That is Always Downhill, and the only ski resort in the world.

Literal Debts to Society.

Nalaam handles crime in a unique fashion. Since gold is king here, the city employs skilled economic theorists and an army of merchant surveyors to determine average values for anything that might be damaged by a crime – windows, carts, sense of security, even human life. When a criminal is caught – and since every city guard has a bell that can alert watchmages of severe threats, few major criminals manage to escape – magistrates determine the value of damages he imposed. He is then responsible for repaying that debt, plus 10 per-cent, in a fashion suited to his talents.

Offenders are branded with an arcane mark until their service is done. The point of this is not punishment, but to recoup losses, so as long as a person is not deemed a serious threat, Nalaam authorities prefer to get value quickly instead of locking people up. Petty criminals might simply be sent to a mine or farm, craftsmen are put to work crafting things, and violent offenders are sent to the arena as entertainment. The audience can pay to request specific bouts, or the criminals can volunteer in order to get out faster.

Timeline and Course of Events.

Assuming the PCs don't just ignore the NPCs in need of help, the most likely course of events is that the party goes with Damata to his meeting with the Family at 8:00 PM. Afterward they go to the arena at Elanor's invitation (you can encourage this by insinuating it's a good way to keep tabs on Luc and Ottavia), where they witness Mister Mapple fighting and surviving injury after horrifying injury. If they try to help him, after the final fight he'll climb out of the arena to attack Elanor and the prospective buyers of Isobel, who are watching from a cushy arena suite.

If the party doesn't get involved, Damata dies rather than pay the Family, Mister Mapple is defeated in battle and kept as a curiosity (until the Obscurati acquire him much later), and Isobel lives the rest of her life as a plaything.

The Grientos.

Damata casually tells his wife he has a business meeting to attend. At 7:00 PM, Ejeka and the kids head to the casino to watch a show with captive tigers. Damata leaves a letter for his family at the concierge desk, with instructions to deliver it in the morning if he hasn't returned.

If the party gets involved, see "Family Stone," below.

Elanor & Isobel, Mister Mapple.

Also at 7:00 PM, Elanor has arranged for a cadre of lawmages to visit her hotel suite. They dutifully escort her as she leaves the hotel with Isobel, and when they spot Mister Mapple following them they strike, using stoneshaping magic to trap him until he can be knocked unconscious and shackled. They cart the man off to the arena, and Elanor takes Isobel to meet the buyers.

They go to a tower near the main Nalaam Casino, pass through the guarded entrance, and proceeds to the top floor. To prolong the pleasure of the sale, she invites the three buyers to come watch a show at the arena. She wants them to see what passion Mister Mapple, a random hobo, had for young Elanor, in hopes of spurring the men to bolder bidding.

If the party gets involved, see "Hobo Maximus," below.

Luc's Crew.

Since there is no lighthouse here, and the Obscurati haven't managed to get a cell leader into any position of authority, the group has no objective this evening. Verzubak heads to the casino and makes a killing at dice, using magic to feel the flow of luck rather than predict the future or move the dice like most people try. Boone hits up a brothel, then later murders a female patron of the same brothel, leaving her in a gutter.

Luc and Ottavia leave their hotel briefly to browse an arcane commercial district, where mages sell potions, scrolls, and various reagents. Ottavia, in preparation for a plan the following evening, purchases a scroll that will let her create a detailed illusion. After that, they accept Elanor's invitation to the arena, and arrive shortly before the 10 PM show starts. Bree shadows them during their shopping and also goes to the arena, but has to guard them from afar because she cannot afford a suite.

Family Stone

Action. Tactical.

Sometimes you just need to stand up to a bully. Killing the bully works too.

Damata's meeting with The Family is set for 8:00 PM. If the party is accompanying him, he helps them arm up beforehand.

His creditors told him to bring payment in the form of magic items to a cave a mile from the railroad enclave in a seedy part of town. The cave – right next to an especially sleazy establishment called *Holes* – houses a forge owned by a priest who collaborates with the family. He launders stolen magic items into untraceable residuum, which can then be used to enchant new items.



All By Himself?

If the PCs declined to help, Damata spends his last hour adorning himself with orcish war paint, then sets out alone. He confronts the Family members, refuses to pay them, and then when they threaten his wife and children he raises a knife and slits his own throat, preferring death to being beholden to them. His body is never found, and his wife receives his letter the next morning, explaining everything. She and the kids ride in a grief-stricken haze to Sid Minos, where they meet up with a business associate of Damata and depart.

Guards at the mouth of the cave escort Damata and any guests in to a foyer/store-front, beyond which a tunnel leads to the forge itself. In the foyer waits a foul-mouthed Family *capodecina*, **Sylvester Fomazelli**, plus ten of his enforcers and the owner of the forge, **Azon the Stoneforger**.

If Damata had brought the items as agreed, their deal would have been concluded, and the Family would not attempt to squeeze blood from a stone. But when Damata shows up without payment, they threaten him, threaten his family, and tell him his children will work the mines outside Nalaam until the day they die. Damata responds with aplomb by telling the party to kill them.

Negotiating with or intimidating Sly is not easy. He's not willing to be disrespected in front of his men, and Damata will demand that his debt be wiped clean before he lets any of them leave. There's not much room for compromise on either side.

- 10 Family enforcers
- Sylvester Fomazelli
- Damata Griento

Family Enforcer

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 33 (6d8+6)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws DEX +5, CON +3

Skills Athletics +4, Insight +3, Intimidation +4, Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Family Enforcer attacks twice.

Dagger (2). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Pistol (2). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10+3) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker the Family Enforcer can see hits them with an attack, they can use their reaction to halve the attack's damage against them.

Tactics.

Sly starts by ordering his men to unleash a volley of gunfire against the party while he moves in to slit the throat of an enemy using Sneak Attack. At first he ignores Damata, intending to save him for last, but if he becomes wounded he tries with all his might to kill the half-orc. The enforcers provide cover for Sly, and flee if he goes down.

Azon and his guards don't get involved in the battle. The guards flee deeper into the forge and bar the door. Azon steps through the stone of the wall and follows them. He uses stoneshaping magic to keep the party from raiding his shop.

Aftermath.

Damata prefers to kill all the Family gang, but then leave quickly before police arrive. If the Family wins, they kill the party and are thrilled by how much treasure they can loot.

Sylvester Fomazelli

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (studded leather, shield)

Hit Points 55 (10d8+10)

Speed 40 ft.

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

Saving Throws DEX +6, INT +4

Skills Acrobatics +9, Deception +7, Insight +2, Intimidation +4, Perception +5, Stealth +9

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

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

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

Mobile. Sylvester can Dash through difficult terrain without requiring additional movement. Whenever he makes an attack against a creature, he doesn't provoke opportunity attacks from that creature until the end of his turn.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Sylvester attacks twice.

Dagger (6). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

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

**Damata Griento**

Medium humanoid (half-orc), chaotic good

Armor Class 13 (hide)**Hit Points** 39 (6d8+12)**Speed** 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws CON +4, WIS +4, CHA +3**Skills** History +6, Intimidation +3, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Survival +6**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16**Languages** Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Orc**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)**Rage (1/long rest).** On his turn, Damata can enter a rage as a bonus action. While raging, he gains the following benefits:

- Advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws.
- When he makes a melee weapon attack using Strength he gains a +2 bonus to the damage roll.
- Resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

His rage lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if Damata is knocked unconscious or if his turn ends and he hasn't attacked a hostile creature since his last turn or taken damage since then. Damata can also end his rage on his turn as a bonus action.

Relentless Endurance (1/long rest). When Damata is reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright, he can drop to 1 hit point instead.**Savage Attacks.** When Damata scores a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, he can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.**ACTIONS****Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage.

Hobo Maximus

Social/Action. Real-Time/Tactical.*Mister Mapple's identity is revealed as he is forced into a bloodsport arena.*

With Luc, Ottavia, Bree, and Elanor in attendance, it might be hard for the PCs to keep away from the arena. This scene puts the party into an uncomfortable situation that tests their willingness to risk their mission in order to stop an unrelated injustice.

Nalaam's coliseum has seating along only three walls, with the western quarter of its circumference open to grant a clear view of a majestic snowy mountain, which gleams in the full moon's light. Stadium seating rises over a hundred feet high, and the crowd is thick this evening. The luxury box suites sit partially-recessed at the lowest level, just forty feet above the arena floor on the eastern edge of the arena.

Elanor and her bidders have taken the central suite. The suite to the right is reserved for the party, while Luc and Ottavia watch from the one to the left. The suites have a rear section recessed into the coliseum structure and walled off for privacy, and a front balcony section with seats that overlook the event. These seats can be seen from the other suites, and only a 10-foot gap separates the

balconies. Fine foods, wines, and other luxuries are provided, and elite guards protect each suite, which are accessed by a private hallway in the interior of the building.

The night's events are presided over by **Lord Kulp, Master of the Games**, who directs the arena's staff to prepare various beasts or prisoners to battle in the snow-covered sands. Known as one of the more magnanimous of the city's lords, Kulp feels few qualms letting criminals die in the arena. He has been known in the past to grant mercy to those who seem wrongfully accused, however.

Audience Reactions.

The common folk in the stadium seating love the bloodshed, and between each 5 minute bout people rush to bookie booths to shell out coins. If enough people pay, a gladiator can be forced to fight again, or specific monsters might be called out. When famous guests are in the luxury suites, the crowd might appeal to them, cheering their names and the names of their favorite beasts in hopes the most expensive spectacles will be paid for from on high.

Ottavia is excited by the early bouts, but is shocked when people are brought out and start dying. Luc reacts to the carnage with detached curiosity, since he knows he cannot do anything to stop it, so he may as well learn what he can. Ottavia refuses to watch, but stays near Luc to protect him.

Elanor's Show.

Elanor and Isobel arrive accompanied by three mages – the brusque **Drakran Nikola the Necromancer**, the charming **Crisillyiri Father Balthazar**, and the smarmy **Risuri Jaime the Weevil**. Isobel is still veiled, and Elanor escorts the young eladrin to the balcony, waiting until the show is about to start so she can make her sales pitch. At 10 PM, right as Lord Kulp is beginning his pre-games spiel, mirrored spot-lighting from arcane braziers around the arena focus upon the central luxury suite's balcony. Elanor then instructs Isobel to stand and remove her veils.

Isobel slowly reveals herself a statuesque eladrin woman, with short-cropped, ice-blond hair and brilliant azure in her blank eyes. She wears a provocative, intimate outfit. The crowd cheers at the eye candy. Lord Kulp then cuts off the spotlights, annoyed, and he directs the audience's attention down to the imminent bloodsport.

To her bidders, Elanor crows, "Gentlemen, this is the famous eladrin maiden, Isobel Travers, raised since birth to appease every desire a man might have! And as you have just witnessed, her value goes far beyond a toy for you virile men. She will make you famous in this city. Powerful men will gnash their teeth with jealousy. Beautiful women will beg for a chance to serve you as she does, I tell you with no bragging. This sort of grandeur is priceless, so I'm sure none of you will mind starting the bidding at, let's say, five hundred thousand gold?"

The wizards glance at each other, seeing who'll move first, but Elanor wags a finger at them.

"Not so fast, you old dogs. Bidding won't start for half an hour. I have one more show for you. And first, why not see how you feel with the merchandise? Balthazar, come down, sit, please. Get comfortable. I'm going to go make myself a drink."



PC Involvement?

The party might sit this one out, might attack Elanor and the wizards as soon as they realize what's up, or might try to help Mister Mapple. His "parole" is set at 20,000 gold pieces, a fee no normal man could ever pay off. But if the party pays up, they can get him out of the arena, and sent up to their booth, perhaps to fight Elanor.

Alternately, the party might head into the arena themselves to help Mapple survive his fights. It's key to recall that Lord Kulp would love to see some foreigners kill Elanor and her twisted triumvirate, and if it happens at the arena he can cover for the party so there are no immediate consequences.

Infamous Mages.

A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the three mages and their reputations.

- **Nikola the Necromancer**, a gaunt and bald human who stole his fortune by working as an assassin who killed only the wealthy. It is said that he purchases all the bodies of prostitutes who die in Nalaam, and that his private keep in the mountains outside the city is guarded by their zombies.
- **Father Balthazar**, the Clergy's highest priest in Nalaam, who siphons much of the wealth from the church into his own mansion. None move against him because it is said he can actually summon demons to do his bidding.
- **Jaime the Weevil**, a tiny man from Risur who forsook his druidic order and became obsessed with controlling animal pests, particularly bed bugs. He made his fortune both by controlling Nalaam's pests and offering "protection" to make sure they would not afflict people's homes and businesses.

In a city of slime and corruption, these three are arguably the worst. They are not lords of the city, but they flaunt their power and so have earned the lords' ire. Each is overconfident in his magical power.

Blood in the Snow.

The first 10 minutes of the show just has pretty criminals trying to dodge a half-dozen angry bulls. Then a pack of starving wolves are sent in against a dire bear, which wins the fight handily. Then six men are sent out onto the field, among them Mister Mapple. Their shackles are opened from afar by magic, and the bear chases them down as the men run for weapons scattered around the floor.

Mister Mapple, on the other hand, tries to climb up the wall out of the arena, but mages around the edge of the wall knock him back with gusts of wind. Frustrated, Mapple joins the fight against the bear. Three men die, but Mister Mapple saves the last man and kills the bear with a two-handed axe. The crowd is thrilled.

The spotlights turn again to Elanor's booth, and Elanor stands, holding out a handful of gold coins. Lord Kulp asks if she has a request, and she says she wants to know the name of the man who killed the bear. Mapple just curses at her in response, but then Elanor tells Isobel to stand, and Mapple realizes who she is.

Elanor says, "This man was following me and my cute young friend these past three days. He's going to die tonight, but I want to know his name before I pay for his next fight."

Mapple responds, "I know what indignities you plan for her, that poor, that beautiful sweet maid. Ask my name? I name you first, Bitch! I think no other word would bear the shame of being worn by you. When I get free, no man, woman, or child will remember you, but remember *me* they will. I am Andrei von Recklinghausen, and I swear to free the woman next to you even if I have to tear out your damned heart, Bitch. Send me more beasts! I shall build a ramp of their carcasses and climb forth from this pit!"

Elanor, feeling safe just thirty feet above Mister Mapple, laughs and sweeps her handful of gold so the crowd can see.

"A thousand gold pieces, Lord Kulp. My request?" She pauses, and the crowd shouts various monster names. "Bring out the pyrecat!"

The crowd whoops with delight, and from deep in the bowels of the arena, a deep roar echoes through the stadium. Lord Kulp gestures, and workers scramble, and soon a giant gate opens on the far side of the arena floor. A single fiery eye flickers in the darkness. It roars again, and its mouth lights up with flame as the huge creature strides into view.

The pyrecat stands as tall as an elephant, with all the deadly grace of a tiger despite that it is missing one eye, and that one of its forelegs ends just above the paw, which has been replaced by a rune-inscribed hook almost as big as a man.

Possible Battles.

If the party doesn't get involved, the pyrecat runs down Andrei, formerly known as Mister Mapple.

As nimble and strong as Andrei is, he manages to jump off walls and tumble through its legs for almost a minute, nicking it with his axe. It swipes at him a few times, knocks him down, but he pushes his entrails back into his abdomen and keeps fighting.

He leaps onto its back, and it bucks, trying to shake him loose, until finally it's right beneath the party's suite. Andrei raises his axe for a strike against the spine, but the cat immolates itself. Its fur turns to fire, and Andrei screams and jumps away. But he's high enough now that he gets hold of a stone decoration just underneath the party's balcony. He hangs one-handed and bats out the flames, which he seems incapable of regenerating from.

Before he can recover, the huge predator swings its hook claw up and pierces him through the chest. It yanks him down, pins him to the snow, and roars a blast of fire into his face. The crowd roars too, and the pyrecat drags Andrei away, back through the gate to devour.

This still doesn't kill Andrei. City mages who noticed his regeneration ability quickly get him away from the cat and help him recuperate, so they can study him.

Elanor uses Andrei's enthusiasm for Isobel to drive up the bidding. By the end of the evening she sells Isobel to Father Balthazar for 1,500,000 gold pieces.

If the party decides to get involved – and what group of "heroes" worth the name wouldn't, really – the ensuing fight can get quite complex. Note that Isobel is in no condition to take any actions of her own. She has 20 hit points and AC 10.

- Andrei von Recklinghausen
- Elanor Yanette
- Nikola the Necromancer
- Father Balthazar
- Jaime the Weevil
- Pyrecat

Terrain.

The luxury suites are just 40 feet above the arena, which is an oval roughly 200 feet across, dotted with massive columns, some cracked and toppled. The coliseum mages don't get involved, at Lord Kulp's direction. Luc and Ottavia run for the exits, while the rest of the crowd can't believe their good fortune to witness such mayhem.

Tactics.

If threatened by the PCs, Elanor at first tries to grab Isobel and drag her away to the hallway, but Lord Kulp controls the stone in the building, and so locks the door (unless the PCs try to enter the suite through the door, which he'll allow).

Nikola shouts to the others, "Pick one. Kill him. I need bodies." Balthazar and Jaime focus their attacks on the same target. Nikola uses his unnaturally bonded familiar (a floating spectral hand that

uses the statistics of an owl) in conjunction with *vampiric touch* to attack a target able to heal allies. Meanwhile Elanor uses her spells to try and distract or debilitate PCs and keep them from harrying her allies.

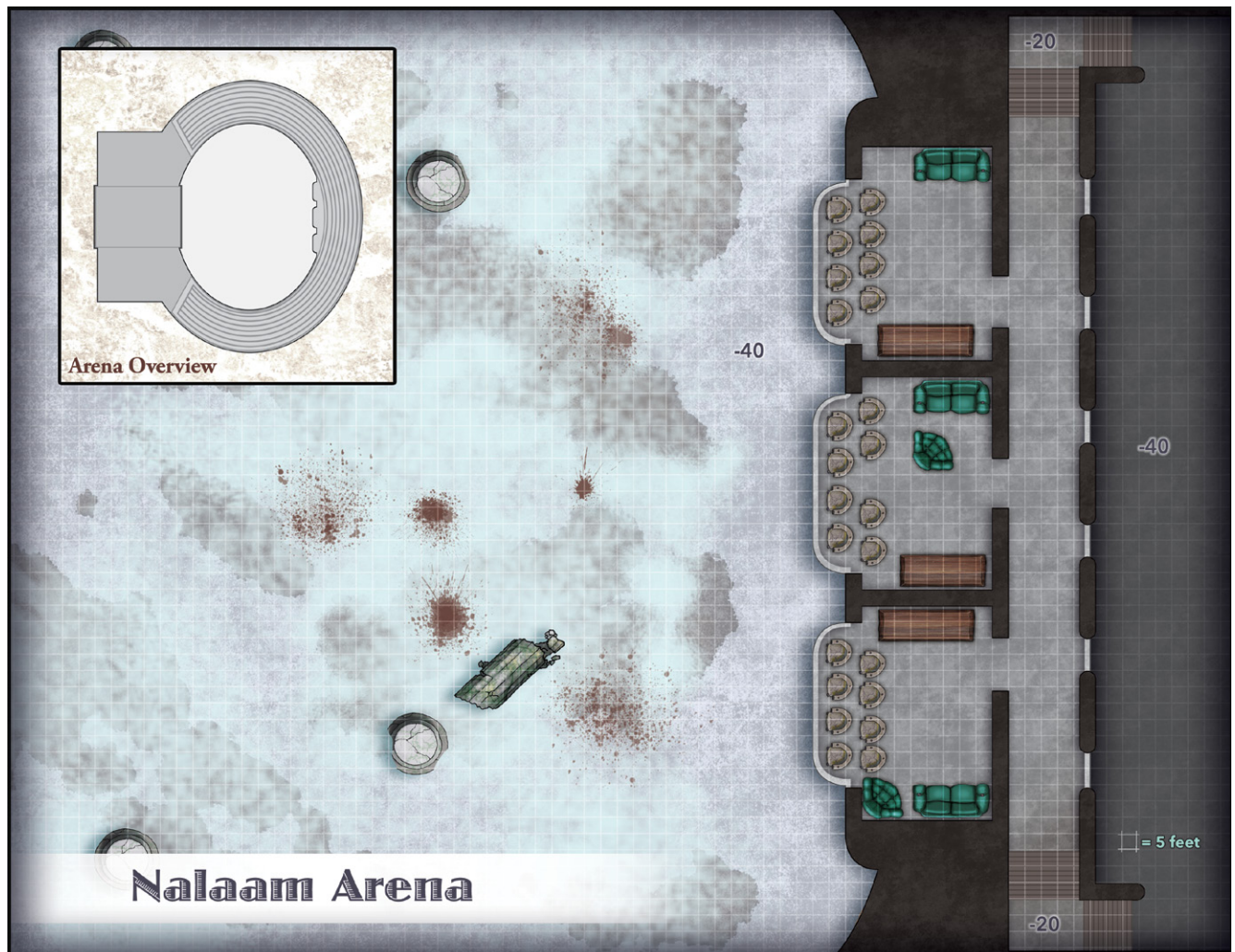
If Andrei manages to reach the luxury suite, he tries to throw Elanor off the balcony into the arena.

The pyrecat is not picky with who it attacks.

Aftermath.

If the party is defeated, Lord Kulp finally intervenes and calls for an end to the fight "for the safety of the audience." Guards carry the party away and arena healers stabilize the PCs. Any survivors from Elanor's group vociferously demand the PCs be arrested, incarcerated, even executed, but Kulp insists the arena's charter sanctions their actions. The party will be released once they're conscious, though given the state of the arena's recuperation rooms, their train suite might end up hosting bed bugs.

Should the PCs prevail, Lord Kulp invites them to his private chambers beneath the arena and thanks them for getting rid of a blight that has steered this city the wrong way for years. If any PC is a Vekeshi Mystic, he briefly recites a common saying of the order in Elvish to see if anyone notices: "The best revenge is to live."





Von Whatlinghausen?

The party might recognize Andrei's surname and question him about it. He doesn't like to go into details, and instead claims that his father abandoned him, and while he was angry for a while he decided he should use it as an opportunity to become his own man.

But if the party mentions knowing Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, Andrei is conflicted. He'll feign indifference, but will want to know as much as possible. For the duration of the adventure he'll resist the urge to track down his creator, but eventually curiosity and pride will overtake his better judgment. Andrei will be making an appearance later in the campaign.

Lord Kulp then offers to see Isobel safely to Elfaivar, where her people can help her. Andrei is suspicious and wants to go with her. It'll be a few hours before she recovers enough from the spells and drugs affecting her in order to actually talk to people. She's never had real freedom, but she wants to get far away from Danor. She says she has heard of Gale in Risur, and might want to meet her.

Andrei Von Recklinghausen

Medium humanoid (living construct), neutral

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (14d8+42)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws INT +3, WIS +3, CHA +2

Skills Acrobatics +5, Athletics +7, Intimidation +2, Stealth +5, Survival +3

Damage Resistances psychic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, diseased, exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

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

Regeneration. Andrei regains 5 hit points at the start of his turn. If he takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of Andrei's next turn. Andrei dies only if he starts his turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Andrei attacks twice.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Elanor Yanette

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil sorcerer 4

Armor Class 14 (mage armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws CON +2, CHA +5

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +7, Insight +4, Intimidation +5, Persuasion +7

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. Elanor is a 4th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Elanor knows the following spells from the sorcerer's spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights, minor illusion, prestidigitation, resistance*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, color spray, detect magic, mage armor*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, suggestion*

ACTIONS

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

Jaime the Weevil

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (leather)

Hit Points 44 (8d8+8)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws CON +4, WIS +5, CHA +2

Skills Arcana +4, Nature +7, Perception +8, Stealth +7, Survival +8

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Druidic, Elvish

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Blight Fasting. Jaime requires half as much food, water, and rest as normal.

Defile the Land. Before casting a spell with a casting time of one action or less, Jaime may spend a bonus action to defile the land around him. This defiles an area of land equal to a 5 foot radius times the level of the spell. This increases the level of the spell by 2. This trait has no effect on cantrips.

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

Friend of Vermin. Jaime can understand and be understood by vermin (as if under the effects of speak with animals) and has advantage on Charisma ability checks against vermin.

Land's Stride. Moving through nonmagical difficult terrain costs Jaime no extra movement. He can also pass through nonmagical plants without being slowed by them and without taking damage from them if they have thorns, spines, or a similar hazard. In addition, he has advantage on saving throws against plants that are magically created



or manipulated to impede movement, such those created by the *entangle* spell.

Spellcasting. Jaime is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Jaime has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, druidcraft, guidance, produce flame*

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, detect poison and disease, entangle, faerie fire, purify food and drink*

2nd level (4 slots): *barkskin, flaming sphere, heat metal, spike growth*

3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals, plant growth*

Wild Shape (2/long rest). Jaime can use his action to magically assume the shape of a beast that he has seen before so long as it has a CR of 1/2 or less and no flying speed (if the creature has a flying speed, Jaime cannot use it). He can stay in a beast shape for 2 hours. Jaime then reverts to his normal form unless he expends another use of this feature. He can revert to his normal form earlier by using a bonus action on his turn. Jaime automatically reverts if he falls unconscious, drop to 0 hit points, or die. While Jaime is transformed, the following rules apply:

Jaime's game statistics are replaced by the statistics of the beast, but he retains his alignment, personality, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. Jaime also retains all of his skill and saving throw proficiencies, in addition to gaining those of the creature. If the creature has the same proficiency as Jaime and the bonus in its stat block is higher than his, use the creature's bonus instead of his. If the creature has any legendary or lair actions, Jaime can't use them.

When Jaime transforms, he assumes the beast's hit points and

Hit Dice. When he reverts to his normal form, Jaime returns to the number of hit points he had before he transformed. However, if he reverts as a result of dropping to 0 hit points, any excess damage carries over to his normal form.

Jaime can't cast spells, and his ability to speak or take any action that requires hands is limited to the capabilities of his beast form. Transforming doesn't break Jaime's concentration on a spell he's already cast, however, or prevent him from taking actions that are part of a spell, such as *call lightning*, that he's already cast.

Jaime retains the benefit of any features from his class, race, or other source and can use them if the new form is physically capable of doing so. However, he can't use any of his special senses, such as darkvision, unless the new form also has that sense.

Jaime chooses whether his equipment falls to the ground in his space, merges into his new form, or is worn by it. Worn equipment functions as normal, but the GM decides whether it is practical for the new form to wear a piece of equipment, based on the creature's shape and size. Jaime's equipment doesn't change size or shape to match the new form, and any equipment that the new form can't wear must either fall to the ground or merge with it. Equipment that merges with the form has no effect until he leaves the form.

ACTIONS

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

Hit: 5 (1d6+2) magical piercing damage or if wielded in two hands 6 (1d8+2).

Thrown Magic Spear. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6+4) magical piercing damage.





Nikolai the Necromancer

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (mage armor)

Hit Points 91 (14d8+28)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws CON +5, WIS +4, CHA +2

Skills Arcana +6, History +6, Nature +6, Persuasion +2, Religion +9, Stealth +6

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Spellcasting. Nikolai is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Nikolai has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, mage hand, resistance*

1st level (4 slots): *false life, mage armor, magic missile, unseen servant*

2nd level (4 slots): *invisibility, misty step, ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, dispel magic, vampiric touch*

ACTIONS

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

Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage or 4 (1d8) if wielded in two hands.

EQUIPMENT

Combat Gear. Nikolai carries a *scroll of bestow curse*.

Father Balthazar

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)

Hit Points 105 (14d8+42)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws STR +4, CON +6, WIS +5

Skills Arcana +2, Deception +5, Religion +2

Damage Resistances fire

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Spellcasting. Father Balthazar is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Father Balthazar has the following cleric and druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, produce flame, resistance, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *bane, cure wounds, protection from evil and good (good only), sanctuary, shield of faith*

2nd level (4 slots): *blindness/deafness, enhance ability, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *call lightning, conjure animals, spirit guardians*

ACTIONS

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

Hit: 4 (1d4+2) magical slashing damage.

Negative Channeling (Recharge 6). As an action, Balthazar roils with baleful energy, dealing 9 (2d8) damage to all creatures within 30 ft. Half of this damage is fire and half is necrotic. A creature that succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw takes half damage.

Pyrecat

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 84 (8d12+40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	13 (+1)	21 (+5)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws DEX +4, CON +8

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +9, Perception +7, Stealth +7

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Immunities fire

Senses passive Perception 17

Languages —

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Keen Smell. The pyrecat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

One-Eyed. The pyrecat cannot see out of its flaming right eye. It cannot make opportunity attacks except against targets that either it attacked or that attacked it since the start of its last turn, or targets adjacent to those creatures.

Pounce. If the pyrecat moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the pyrecat can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Quick. The pyrecat has advantage on initiative checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The pyrecat attacks once with its bite and twice with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d10+6) piercing damage plus if the pyrecat is not already grappling a creature in its mouth, the target is grappled (escape DC 17).

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8+6) slashing damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 6). The pyrecat exhales fire in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



Act Three: Off the Rails

IN THIS ACT, THE PARTY'S QUARRY TRIES TO TAKE them out before they reach the gathering of the Obscurati.

All Downhill from Here

Social. Montage.

As the train leaves Nalaam and enters Crisillyir, Luc and company fortify in case of trouble.

No Longer on Board: Elanor, Isobel, Mister Mapple.

The next morning, the train departs at 7:30 AM amid light snowfall, rolling downhill out of the Penance Peaks and into Crisillyir. By mid-morning the snow from the mountains turns to a drizzle of sleet, but the train's run in worse. Malia assures everyone they're in no danger.

If Boone's murders have not been discovered yet, Bree finds an opportunity to slip a note to Luc, which reads:

"Boone is a liability. He's been responsible for the murders in each city. Can you add him to the roster of what you're already planning?"

Lantern Light.

Luc's goal is to get the party all in the same enclosed location – preferably their suite, and preferably alone. Then he'll activate the replica of his lantern hidden atop the locomotive, which will pull the party into the deadly plane of Nem.

Luc has marked the top of the party's suite's door frame with a subtle rune, and if he can think of any inconspicuous way to get items with that rune into the party's possession, he does so. Options include marking coins and arranging for those coins to be included as change when the party buys lunch, or having Bree give coins to the party after the battle in Nalaam, claiming she made money on their fight with Elanor, and she wants to share her winnings. If the party is careless with their belongings, Bree might have accessed their rooms the night before and stitched tiny patches with the rune under collars or cuffs.

If necessary, Luc might mark the threshold of the first class lounge car to catch the party there, or even mark both ends of Car 17, which would also affect the Grientos. He's wary of having to leave his own suite, but if he has to, he'll mark Cars 17, 18, and 19 and try to slip away with Ottavia to the forward cars. He's willing to risk a few innocent bystanders.

If the party has been dutifully following Malia's recommendations to return to their seats 15 minutes before the train stops, Luc will strike as the train enters Sid Minos. This makes it easier for him to adopt Ottavia's secondary trap if his first trap fails.

Beating the Players.

In the first act, the party has to get to the train and figure out the dynamics of how things work. In the second act they learn about the various passengers and tick them off the list of suspects. Now in the third act, they should have little doubt that Luc is their target. Luc, meanwhile, knows he's being watched, and he tries to take out the party.

Our hope is that one of these attempts will actually work, and the party will end up in contact with the demoness Ashima-Shimtu, who provides clues to a key mystery of the campaign and plays a prominent role in later adventures. Meanwhile, the villains will be lulled into a sense of security, so when the party comes to spy on their gathering they won't face overwhelming numbers of guards and look-outs.

Hopefully the players will enjoy their comeback from near death, and not feel their opponents' temporary victory is unfair. And if the party manages to outwit the villains, don't try to force the defeat.

Kill Them in Their Sleep?

First, Luc has no intention of killing anyone himself, at least not directly. Second, he doesn't want to risk anyone in his crew being seen committing murder. Third, he thinks he's clever, and wants to prove it, so he trusts the lantern trick will kill the party without leaving any signs of foul play. Finally, he doesn't want to risk going near them, in case he or his allies get caught in the lantern's light and end up in Nem as well.

If the party hasn't followed a pattern, Luc will use his trap whenever he gets a chance. If the train's getting close to Sid Minos, he might even trigger it if he can just get half the party.

Fall-Back Plans.

If the party won't cooperate and come together, Luc's preferred gambit is to have Bree pass a note to Boone:

"We need to gather them all in the same location. Approach one, say you want to talk to them in private and spy on their behalf. Try to get them into their suite. We have a spell that will knock you all unconscious. You won't be harmed, but we'll be able to kill them before they wake."

With luck, Boone will get the party all into their suite. The note is marked with Luc's rune.





Three Milestones

Action. Tactical.

Luc Jierre activates a replica of his lantern, pulling the party into a ghostly parallel of the train.

The train is scheduled to reach the Sid Minos enclave at 5:22 PM. Luc prefers to strike 10 minutes before this, just over three miles out from the enclave.

Fifteen minutes before the train stops in Sid Minos, Malia makes the rounds, asking you as usual to please return to your seats so you can keep an eye on your personal effects. Though the train has been assaulted by a monster and brigands, so far nothing has been stolen from the Very Important Passengers, and Malia wants to keep it that way. Again, she reminds you, the enclaves are busy, often thick with thieves, and it's easy in the commotion for someone to nick unattended valuables.

She leaves, and you approach down the coast toward Sid Minos, coming in with a good hour of daylight to spare. Light rain obscures your view, but the air is clean, thick with the fresh scent of the sea and only the train's own smoke to ruin it.

The gas-light lamp in your room flickers red, then starts to deepen to purple, and the sound of rain swiftly fades away. Outside, the sky begins to turn black.

When the time is right (likely at 5:12 PM, ten minutes before the train stops in Sid Minos) Luc activates the replica of his lantern. For anyone he's not targeting, the only hint of oddity is that all the gaslight lamps throughout the train flicker red momentarily. But those affected by the lantern's magic are pulled into the plane of Nem. They see the gas lamps turn a deep purple, and the sun outside dims to a tiny speck, as if it had suddenly moved far away.

When the lantern activates, each creature in the area must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be hit by the lantern. A creature that is hit falls under the lantern's effect for 10 minutes. Normally it would last 5 minutes, but Luc loaded an extra dose of oil into the replica lantern. Doing so will destroy the lantern after this single use of its power, however.

Creatures hit by the lantern are pulled from their bodies into the plane of Nem, a spirit world on the far side of the Bleak Gate. The world resembles reality but is bereft of occupants and slowly fades away as the disembodied creature wanders away from the spot where it left its body. Even if their body moves, the spot where they entered Nem is an invisible gateway. If they ever stray more than 3 miles from that gateway, they pass into the afterlife and cannot be resurrected. This is normally not a factor with the lantern because it will not burn long enough, but because the train is moving, time is tight before the party is doomed.

While in Nem they cannot see or be seen by living creatures. They gain the Incorporeal Movement feature (a PC can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain, taking 1d10 force damage if the PC ends its turn inside an object.)

If their souls leave the area of the lantern (in this case, they would have to leave the train, because every car is affected by the lantern), they instantly return to the spot where they first entered

the plane of Nem. This does not reset the "3 mile" travel limit, so simply hopping off the train will not save the party.

If their bodies are moved outside of areas marked by Luc's rune, and if any tiny runes on their person are removed, their souls snap back to their bodies.

Countermeasures.

Those who avoid the lantern's attack might flee their room when they see their allies fall unconscious. If they can shatter all the gaslight lamps within the car (the gas flames have turned a deep purple even in the real world), or if they can carry their allies out of the area affected by Luc's rune, they can end the encounter early.

If the party – either in the physical world or in Nem – reaches the replica lantern on the locomotive and shatters it before the train travels 3 miles, they snap back to their bodies. Someone unaffected by the lantern might manage to threaten Luc and force him to end the lantern's effect early. Alternately, a PC might trigger the train's emergency brakes or detach the rear cars from the front so they coast to a stop before traveling three miles. If the train is split, the replica lantern's magic quickly fades.

Where the Hell Are We?

PCs who are affected see the world fade to darkness, and those allies who have not yet been affected slowly disappear (then possibly reappear moments later when they *are* affected). The sky seems filled with ash, and the landscape outside looks like it has been abandoned and decayed for centuries.

Any Skyseer immediately knows they have somehow been transported to Nem. Others can guess that they're not in the Bleak Gate, because they've been there before, and this place is not just empty, it's ethereal and unreal. It feels distinctly different.

It's common folklore known to anyone that makes a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check that the land of the dead lies on the far side of the Bleak Gate, and that ghosts almost never stray more than three miles from where they died. If the party doesn't figure out the danger right away, they notice within 30 seconds that the world is slowly fading away to blackness.

The Ghost Train.

The party is in the "spirit" of the train, identical in form but lit only by purple gas-lamps, and growing ever darker as time passes. Aside from those also affected by the lantern, they see no one else living. However, the presence of fresh souls attracts reapers, which fly in from the distance. Also, as the party explores the train they find faceless spirits called vestiges of tragedy, which linger at the spots where people died recently. For each person who died during the screaming malice attack there is one vestige, most of them concentrated in Cars 10 to 14.

If anyone looks out the windows, they can easily notice a purple glow coming from up ahead. By popping up to the roof, they can tell there's a lantern glowing atop the locomotive.

Murder Train.

If Boone is still on the train, Luc made sure to exile him too, to eliminate a murderer and tie up a loose end.

Ghosts of the four people Boone has killed since boarding the train fade in and out around him, which causes him to panic. If he's not with the party, he flees the ghosts and inevitably crosses their path. He begs for help, even as the ghosts point at him and moan that he murdered them. The ghosts' spirits are trapped in his pistol and cannot cross over to the afterlife until the gun is destroyed, but are harmless, save for the fact that they spoil Boone's secret.

Timeline.

Track the passage of time. The train is traveling at least 20 miles per hour, though it slows down as it nears the enclave. The party has 10 minutes (100 rounds) before they are cut off from their bodies forever. If a PC falls off the train they effectively "respawn" in the spirit world wherever they were when they were affected by the lantern.

- After 5 rounds the dimming of reality is undeniable so the party should realize they have to act fast.
- In round 10, if Boone wasn't already with the party he comes running toward them, chased by ghosts of his disemboweled victims.
- On the 20th round, after the party has had some brief time to talk and figure out what's going on, the first wave of reapers attack.
- On the 30th round, the world has faded enough so that everything is dim unless the party has their own light sources.
- On the 40th round, a second wave of reapers attack.
- On the 50th round, the world fades to darkness. Unless they have light of their own, all they can see is the glow of the lantern ahead and tiny motes of starlight overhead. Even the sun has faded. The only sound is the clickety-clack of the railroad tracks.
- On the 60th round, a third and final wave of reapers attack.

Alternately, instead of having reapers attack and lights dim by round, the GM might have this happen based on how close the party gets to the locomotive. Reapers might strike at Car 16, then lights dim at Car 13, then more reapers at Car 10, then darkness at Car 7.

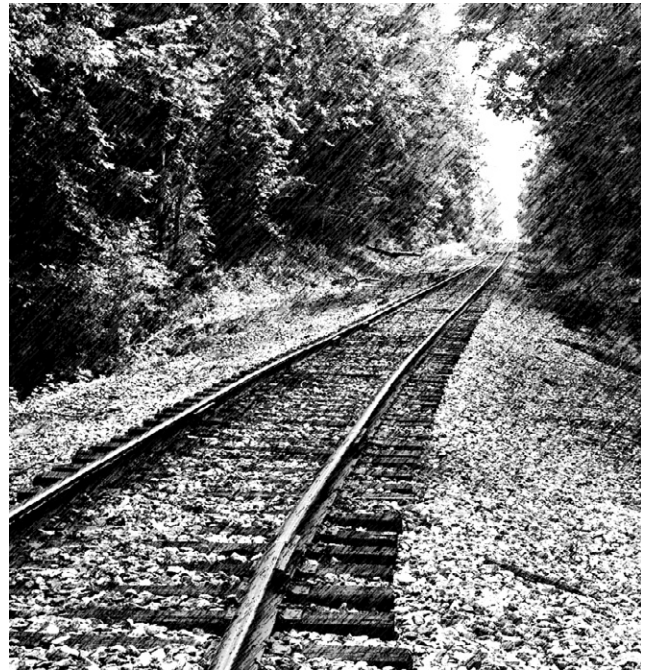
Monsters.

The train has a number of vestiges based on the victims who've died so far, and they attack when the party draws near if they're inside the train. Waves of reapers fly in, 5 at a time. And at the locomotive waits a ruin wraith, intelligent enough to know it must protect the lantern in order to ensure the party is trapped.

The party need not fight these spirits, just survive them. The reapers fly in from the front, since they're not fast enough to catch the train, and if the party avoids the cars where people died or runs along their roofs, they can get to the locomotive quickly.

Boone will try to help the party if they help him, but when they get near the front of the train he'll turn on them so they can't reveal his secret. He hopes to kill them, then break the lantern and return to the real world so he can kill Luc.

If anyone else was brought over with the party, they are likely unable to aid in any sort of battle. It might be safest for them to hide in their rooms.



- 15 reapers (5 per wave)
- 0 to 80 vestiges of tragedy
- 1 ruin wraith
- Olivert Boone

Terrain.

The ghost train is identical to the real version, minus the living people. Light dims throughout the encounter.

Tactics.

The reapers target whoever has the fewest hit points and flee after they take any damage since they're not used to lively folks around here. The vestiges just stand in the train but attack if anyone comes within 10 feet. The ruin wraith confronts the party when they reach the fuel cars and it weaves through them, trying to shove people off to force them to start over from the other end of the train.

Boone waits until the party is distracted by some other foes, then guns down a PC point-blank. He makes a break for the front of the train, glancing back at the party with a charming grin on his face. He apologizes for having to strand them here, but he can't let anyone who knows his secret live.

Aftermath.

Destroying the lantern is as simple as breaking any lantern. Once the lantern shuts off, the PCs snap back to their suite. Any damage their spirit-forms suffered remains, but manifests as one level of exhaustion rather than physical wounds. Unless Luc had to spring his trap early, the train should almost be into the Sid Minos rail enclave. Except for those grabbed by the lantern's light, no one on the train has any idea someone just tried to murder the party.

If the party fails the GM can still salvage the adventure! Instead of having Ottavia trap the party on the Isle of Odiem they might appear there, trapped in a sort of Limbo, and have to reach the bottom of the tomb in order to return to the land of the living.



Reaper

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 6 (1d8+2)

Speed fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Ethereal Sight. The reaper can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The reaper can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Target the Living. The reaper has advantage on attack rolls against living creatures.

ACTIONS

Reaper Sickle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) necrotic damage.

Etherealness. The reaper enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

REACTIONS

Spiteful Retreat. When reduced to 0 or less hit points by an attack made by a creature within its reach, the reaper can make an opportunity attack before it dies.

Vestige of Tragedy

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 5 (1d8+1)

Speed fly 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Ethereal Sight. The vestige of tragedy can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Hunger For Life. When a living creature comes within 10 feet of a vestige of tragedy, the creature loses its stand idle trait.

Incorporeal Movement. The vestige of tragedy can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Stand Idle. A vestige of tragedy does not take any actions and is immune to damage until a living creature triggers its hunger for life trait.

ACTIONS

Dark Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) necrotic damage.

Etherealness. The vestige of tragedy enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.



Ruin Wraith

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 65 (10d8+20)**Speed** fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws WIS +6, CHA +5**Skills** Intimidation +8, History +5, Religion +5, Perception +9, Stealth +9, Survival +6**Damage Resistances** acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons**Damage Immunities** cold, necrotic, poison**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19**Languages** —**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)**Ethereal Sight.** The ruin wraith can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.**Feast of Ruin.** When a creature within 30 feet of the ruin wraith would regain hit points from a spell or feature, the creature does not regain any hit points and ruin wraith regains that many hit points instead.**Incorporeal Movement.** The ruin wraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.**Quick.** The ruin wraith has advantage on initiative checks.**Unnatural Aura.** Animals, whether wild or domesticated, can sense the unnatural presence of a ruin wraith at a distance of 30 feet. They do not willingly approach nearer than that and panic (as the confused spell) if forced to do so unless a master succeeds at a DC 17 Wisdom (Handle Animal) check. A panicked animal remains so as long as it is within 30 feet of the ruin wraith.**ACTIONS****Otherworldly Touch.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (4d8+3) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A humanoid slain in this way makes a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or rises as a vestige of tragedy under the ruin wraith's control after 1d4 rounds. The vestige of tragedy becomes free-willed undead when the ruin wraith is destroyed.**Etherealness.** The ruin wraith enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.**Olivert Boone**

Medium humanoid (tiefling), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (studded leather, Charisma)**Hit Points** 65 (10d8+20)**Speed** 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws DEX +6, CON +5, WIS +2**Skills** Acrobatics +9, Deception +8, Intimidation +8, Perception +5, Sleight of Hand +6, Stealth +9**Damage Resistances** fire**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Elvish, Infernal**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)**Gunslinger's Luck.** Olivert adds his Charisma modifier to his AC.**Improved Critical.** Olivert's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.**Infernal Legacy.** Olivert knows the thaumaturgy cantrip and he can cast the hellish rebuke spell as a 2nd-level spell once with this trait, regaining the ability to do so when he finishes a long rest. In addition, Olivert can cast the darkness spell once with this trait and regains the ability to do so when he finishes a long rest. Charisma is his spellcasting ability for these spells (spell save DC 13, spell attack +5).**Mysterious Aim.** Olivert can use a bonus action to gain a +2 bonus to damage with his firearms until the start of his next turn. In addition, when making a ranged weapon attack Olivert ignores anything less than total cover.**ACTIONS****Multiaction.** Olivert attacks twice with each of his pistols.**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.**Demonic Pistols (2).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10+4) magical piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage if the target is below half its maximum hit points. The first time each encounter that Olivert attempts to draw or retrieve any item, if he is not already holding these weapons, he draws them instead of whatever he intended to get. Once per day Olivert must kill a sentient being and smear the weapons with its blood. If he does not, he suffers a cumulative -1 penalty per day to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma ability checks due to the guns whispering into his mind, compelling him to feed them. If this penalty exceeds -8, Olivert is driven mad and kills himself with the weapons. The weapons cannot be destroyed as long as Olivert is alive and attuned to them. The curse can be removed by remove curse or greater magic, which requires using the weapons to kill a pregnant she-goat submerged in holy water.



Follow that Carriage!

Action. Real-Time.

Upon reaching Sid Minos, Ottavia enacts a ruse to lure the party into a death trap.

While the PCs are trapped in Nem, Ottavia uses a scroll she purchased in Nalaam to create an illusory duplicate of Luc (and possibly Bree and Verzubak if she thinks the party knows they're part of Luc's crew). When the train reaches the rail enclave in Sid Minos and Ottavia realizes that Luc's plan to kill the party has failed, she puts her own into motion.

Luc hides in the bathroom of his suite, with Bree and Verzubak perhaps guarding him, while Ottavia leads the illusions on a mad dash through the enclave to a carriage house that provides taxi service. She tries her best to be conspicuous, picks an impressive-looking carriage with purple banners along its roof, and waits long enough for the party to spot her before getting on board.

Although she *can* speak, she has written a note saying, "Please take us quickly to the harbor, to a boat that will take us to the Isle of Odiem." She hands the note to a man in charge of dispatching carriages, and he finds a carriage for her. She leaves the note with him as a bread crumb in case the party needs help pursuing her.

The Isle of Odiem.

Everyone in Sid Minos knows Odiem – a rocky spur a half mile off the coast marked by a lonely ruined lighthouse – is a damned and cursed place. Ships that sail too close at night are caught in a current of blood that dashes them against shoals, and it is said that drowned sailors rise and devour any who linger on the island past sunset.

A DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check recalls that the island was converted nearly a thousand years ago into a vault by the Clergy. There they kept the most dangerous items found by their godhands, including creatures possessed by demons (since killing the creature would only unleash the fiend within).

Ottavia and her illusory companions ride a carriage down to the harbor, where she hands another note to the owner of a 20-foot long sailboat, offering to pay a large sum to get her to the island before sunset (at 6:30 PM). The man only agrees because she is a priestess of the Clergy, and claims she comes on official business. When the boat reaches the island she casts *augury*. If she learns that the party is not pursuing, she'll tell the boatman to turn back.

If the party is in pursuit, she disembarks with her illusory crew. The boatman makes a gesture of blessing and makes for the mainland at full speed without looking back, though he will return at first light the next morning.

If the party wants to pursue Ottavia, don't make it hard for them. Any carriage driver would know where hers was headed, and even following on foot isn't difficult. At the harbor, their own ship likely waits and can provide a rowboat. If they don't want to draw attention to their vessel they have to offer at least 500 gp before any sailor will risk the trip so close to dark, or they can buy their own rowboat for 50 gp.

Without Ottavia.

Luc waits half an hour to make sure the party has left the train, then sends Bree out to verify it's safe. Overnight, they stay in the enclave hotel, and Bree shares the room to protect him, since they figure pretending not to know each other is moot now.

Not Falling For It.

If the party doesn't follow, Ottavia returns to the rail enclave and links back up with Luc. They plan during the evening for how to keep the party from learning anything important in Vendricce the following day, and make a contingency to destroy the lantern if it is about to fall into their hands.

When the PCs try to board the train the next morning the rail enclave's tiefling director meets them with a phalanx of guards. He refuses to let them on, claiming there is a problem with their paperwork. He's obviously been ordered to keep them off the train, and if the party decides to fight, the train's staff will flee so no one will be able to drive it. Luc certainly won't ride it if he knows the PCs are on board. The party can stow away, or catch a ride with their ship.

Super-Spies.

Truly excellent spycraft by the party might keep their identities from being discovered by Luc's crew. In this case, the characters avoided the "Three Milestones" encounter and will avoid this encounter as well.

The Grientos.

With or without Damata, the Griento family leaves the rail enclave and goes to the home of a portly local businessman, **Cordell Donofrio**. They spend the night and do not return to the train.

Insula Memoriarum

Social/Action. Real-Time/Tactical.

Ottavia rains magic down upon the party as the dead rise from the sea.

The island's surface looks rocky from a distance, but up close there are countless tiny outcroppings of rusted and pitted metal. Powdered rust mingles with gray mud to coat the ground. Once on shore, Ottavia's trail is fairly easy to follow, because everywhere she stepped the mud has been churned to reveal rust red wet footprints. They lead to a tall structure at the southern edge of the island; it was once a lighthouse, but it has rotted out in many places, and parts of the wall have fallen away.

Ottavia heads inside, then laboriously climbs the damaged steps and then the stone wall in order to reach the top level. From there she can look out and watch the party's approach, as well as keep an eye on the descent of the sun. She wants to stall the party for a few minutes once they reach the lighthouse, so she dons her *headband of roaming thoughts* so she can communicate telepathically with them while remaining hidden.



When they come within 100 feet, she addresses them.

"I am Ottavia Sacredote, oracle of the Clergy, and my task is to protect the man you pursue. He acts for the betterment of civilization, and he has deemed you a threat. But unlike some in my faith I do not rush to judgment. If you can defend your aggression, do so, and I shall listen. If you cannot, let he who is willing to risk his life to harm my charge be the first to step across the lighthouse threshold."

If the party negotiates, Ottavia has trouble lying because of her headband, so the party can learn of her mission's parameters, namely to protect Luc until he reaches Vendricce, where he'll meet the leaders of the Obscurati. They can also tell that Ottavia is enamored of Luc, and while she recognizes he has a vengeful streak born from being looked down upon most of his life, he has sympathy for those who suffer. Keeping him free from harm is not just her mission; it's personal, driven by a need to give him a chance to prove that her faith in him is not misplaced.

If she becomes convinced the PCs are enemies, or if they try to enter the lighthouse prematurely, she tells them to wait, and then she uses her *enthrall* spell to try and captivate as many PCs as she can. If the spell does not affect all the PCs, she abandons that tactic and attacks. If her spell does affect them all, however, she begins to give a sermon on the nature of corruption, expounding at length upon how a desire for personal power can lead people to abandon others in need, whether that power is wealth, political clout, or supernatural might. The enthrallment keeps the party from noticing

as the sun sets and the dead emerge from the sea. Those affected can take no action to resist, up until the moment the first drowned corpse comes within 30 feet.

Another voice – feminine, sultry and breathing heavily – whispers into the party's minds as Ottavia speaks. "The priestess's sermon will see her foes dead. Her rivals, visitors to this island, are welcome below, where it is safer." Throughout the ensuing encounter, the voice beckons them to come below the island.

- Ottavia Sacredote
- The Voice of the Island
- Up to 1,000 drowned dead of Odiem

Terrain.

Standing stones 12 feet high surround the lighthouse, their ancient wards eroded by sea and rain. Living creatures native to this plane gain a +2 bonus to AC while adjacent to them. The northern cliff is a sixty foot plunge to rocks and crashing waves.

The doors to the lighthouse are weathered bronze, and if barricaded from within it they could hold the horde of undead at bay. When the party arrives, Ottavia has barred them, but characters might find their way over or through the wall so they can open the doors from within.

The walls of the lighthouse rise 30 feet high in the front section. There used to be a second floor accessible by wooden stairs, but they have long-since rotted away. The outside walls are still sturdy, but the roof of the front section is gone. Climbing is fairly easy with a DC 8 Strength (Athletics) check.



Lighthouse Tower:
Second floor

Lighthouse Tower:
Third floor

Lighthouse Tower:
Fourth floor

Lighthouse Tower:
First floor

= 10 feet

CURSED ISLAND

Escape Options.

Aside from heading down to the vault, the party might rain magical attacks down upon the undead at the base of the cliff, then climb down and attempt to swim the mile back to shore. Each round, 10 of the undead rise from the sea and attack. Each PC must swim at least 500 feet with DC 8 Strength (Athletic) checks each round, at which point they get beyond the range of the undead. A heroic fisherman spots them and brings them aboard his boat.

A spell caster might also manage to teleport the party to safety. If they signal their boat from the lighthouse, their crew can get no closer than 100 feet from shore. The crew is then busy fending off the undead, leaving it to the party to close the gap.

Finally, the party might just hole up at the top of the lighthouse tower and push off any undead that try to climb up. The drowned dead depart a few minutes before sunrise at 7:02 AM, giving the party a chance to rush back to the train before it departs. However, the guards at the enclave will refuse to let them board, so they might have to stow away.

The upper levels of the lighthouse tower are missing huge sections of the northeastern wall, and to ascend a character will have to climb around or jump over the gaps. The roof of the fourth floor is missing, and the walls are only waist to chest high, granting Ottavia cover against attacks from below.

Unstable Terrain. Due to the island's curse, whenever a living creature in the lighthouse is reduced to half its hit points for the first time in an encounter, the stones beneath their feet buckle. That creature's space becomes difficult terrain and at the end of its next turn the space collapses. On the ground level that causes a 20-foot fall into the first chamber of the vault below. On higher floors it can lead to a deadly plunge. A character that falls this way can make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to catch themselves but be left dangling over the gap.

Tactics.

Ottavia enjoys a strong advantage being in the high ground and behind three-quarters cover; she rains *guiding bolt* spells down as the PCs try to enter the lighthouse. She switches to *shatter* if they start to climb the lighthouse tower.

The undead arrive 5 minutes after the party arrives and can be seen approaching from hundreds of feet away. If Ottavia's *enthrall* attempt succeeds, the horde shambles up and might attack while the party is distracted. 10 of the undead show up around the edges of the map, with another 10 every round, all pressing toward the lighthouse. If blocked at the door, they laboriously climb up the walls and try to get inside. The sea below is also full of them, reaching up and moaning, longing to bring the living down beneath the waves with them.

The party might be able to hold off the undead horde, but it should be obvious that they have little hope of being able to escape the island. However, the stairs that lead down in the lighthouse offer an avenue of escape.

The Voice of the Island can aid the party if they get into a real tight spot, but otherwise the PCs mostly hear calls for them to come to her.

Aftermath.

Ottavia's goal really is to protect Luc, which to her means the party cannot be allowed to leave the island. She'll fight as long as she can, but if captured she is too honorable to betray the party to the dead. Likewise, if the party makes an effort to avoid a fight she might actually ally with them to avoid the horde of the drowned, since she's confident they're stuck here at least until dawn.

Ottavia Sacredote

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful good

Armor Class 19 (+1 scale mail, *ring of protection*, fighting style)

Hit Points 78 (12d8+24)

Speed 25 ft.

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

Saving Throws STR +0, DEX +3, CON +3, INT +6, WIS +4, CHA +4

Skills Arcana +8, History +8, Nature +8, Religion +8, Perception +3, Persuasion +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Celestial, Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Deaf. Ottavia automatically fails all hearing-based Wisdom (Perception) checks.

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

Headband of Roaming Thoughts. Ottavia has an enchanted headband (uncommon rarity) that lets her project her thoughts. This helps her be understood more clearly by people who cannot sign, but when using it she has disadvantage on checks made to lie (making it nearly impossible to do so) and she tries not to use it unless necessary.

Spellcasting. Ottavia is an 8th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Ottavia has the following bard and cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, light, sacred flame, spare the dying, resistance*

1st level (4 slots): *command, cure wounds, detect magic, guiding bolt, identify, sanctuary, shield of faith*

2nd level (4 slots): *augury, enthrall, locate object, shatter*

3rd level (3 slots): *mass healing word, sending, tongues*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion, guardian of faith*

ACTIONS

Flaming Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) magical piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) fire damage.

Voice of the Island

Unknown entity

Blood-Bound. The blood of the ancient demon Ashima-Shimtu has dripped into the sea for centuries, and now she is bound to the island. She is aware vaguely of everything happening on the surface of the island, and can occasionally extend her influence.

ACTIONS

Damning Word (Recharge 4-6). Every one of the drowned dead of Odiem is stunned this turn. If they are grabbing any characters, they release them. The Voice of the Island only uses this trait to give the PCs time to escape if they are overwhelmed.



Drowned Dead of Odiem

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 13 (2d8+4)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws WIS +2, CHA +2

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages --

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Grasp of the Sea. When grappled by a drowned dead, the target of the grapple counts as being submerged, but cannot hold their breath. One round after being grappled, the target must start making saving throws or begin drowning.

Relentless as the Tide. Five minutes after a drowned dead is destroyed, it immediately regenerates back to full health. Only freeing the demon Ashima-Shimtu can break the island's curse and allow the drowned dead to be permanently destroyed.

Staggered. A drowned dead must use an action to move its speed. A drowned dead can move up to its speed and attack in the same round if its movement is in a straight line that ends adjacent to the target of the attack.

ACTIONS

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

Crypta Hereticarum

Exploration. Montage.

The only safe haven against a horde of undead is a cursed vault.

At the bottom of the stairs lies the entrance to a centuries-old vault. A gallery once provided a place of worship and reflection. Warnings in archaic language cover the walls, but most have been defaced. A pair of bronze doors hang open, their warding sigils scraped or melted off. A makeshift iron door-bar leans against the wall, formed from three swords melted together. Some time in the past few decades, another group got caught on the island and had to barricade themselves down here against the undead.

Beyond the doors, eight chambers are connected by hallways lined with bones of priests who were interred here to help sanctify the island and keep its evil from leaking out. The chambers contain various heresies, horrors, and demon-possessed men and beasts. Parts of the vault have sunk and become flooded, but the passages are navigable. In the center lies the vault's greatest and only remaining prisoner, the ancient demoness Ashima-Shimtu.

The feminine voice from the surface continues to invite the party deeper, but it never responds to their attempts to communicate, or strays much from the "come to the center and I will free you" line.

Exploring.

By default we present the vault after it has been cleared out through centuries of tomb-robbing. The cursed denizens have scattered across the world, and the traps have long since been disarmed, destroyed, or have simply decayed.

However, if you want to have a full dungeon crawl, you can add additional traps, monsters, and treasure on the way to the center chamber. Perhaps each chamber has an encounter of a level that matches its number, and unlocking the central chamber requires defeating all eight other encounters and lowering wards.

The vault also makes an ideal place for you to present special items or plot hooks for your players. If any character has ties to the Demonocracy or the Clergy, or if they you intend to introduce any sort of prophecy or destiny, stumbling upon clues in an accursed tomb does have some classic cachet.

Each chamber has roughly the same layout as the central chamber, which is the only one presented in detail in the map. A front gallery contains lore for how to fight evil, and cases or warding circles hold monsters or cursed items. Then beyond, a lower level has multiple layers of wards for some prominent evil, like a large monster, a relic that melts flesh, or heretical text that will drive the reader insane.

Chamber List.

Though now empty, the chambers once contained a variety of evil.

1. Vault Entrance
2. Heretical Texts
3. Unholy Arms & Armor
4. Blasphemous Artwork
5. Accursed Items
6. Afflicted Innocents
7. Damned Souls
8. Beasts of the Infernal Horde
9. The Prison of Ashima-Shimtu, Lady of the Forked Tongue, Last of the High Fiends, Seneschal of the Demonocracy, Keeper of the Secret Which Must Not Be Lost

From chamber 7, a tunnel leads north that ends in a pair of heavy bronze doors: the entrance to chamber nine. The doors have no lock or handle, and powerful magic holds it shut. A handprint has been pressed into the metal, and a ring of sigils surround the handprint. A DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that this is a spell to open the door, prepared specifically for the unique wards of this tomb. To use the spell, someone has to place their hand in the handprint. The ritual requires one use of Channel Divinity (or does damage equal to a quarter of the character's maximum hit points), and then the doors open.

The chamber beyond is not damaged or defaced like the rest of the vault, but looks fresh and preserved. Polished obsidian forms the ceiling, walls, and floor. The stone glistens and reflects the image of those walking over it. Time, however, has taken some toll, and a central section of the room has collapsed into a sump, twenty feet deep. From the doorway, there is no sign of any defenders, but the room feels foreboding.

If the party wavers, the voice promises they are almost there.

Sinistra Diaboli

Action. Tactical.

An insane heretic godhand seeks to offer up the party to the demon in the center of the vault.

Three centuries ago, one of the godhands of the Clergy (a sort of paladin-monk) grew obsessed with the lore of Ashima-Shimtu. He decided he would pledge himself to the demoness and find a way to free her. He found a way to bypass the door that guarded the central chamber of the vault, but in so doing he triggered a curse that trapped him underground. Worse, he discovered he could not actually free his mistress.

Not that Ashima-Shimtu wanted the crazy man as a minion anyway.

To keep himself alive, the godhand broke the seals holding lesser fiends, and he bound himself to them so he no longer needed to eat. Over the centuries he has killed other tomb robbers, and gathered various cursed items to his “lair” to help him defend his mistress. Now he hears her whispering to the party, beckoning them closer, and he hopes to kill them as an offering.

Meet Gene.

The godhand, Gene, sits on a small stone outcropping in the middle of the room, facing a 6-foot tall gold mirror. The old, bearded man looks fairly serene, sitting with his eyes closed in his silvery-white robes. He has no reflection in the mirror.

Once the party has gathered, he stands and turns, revealing a grim expression his face. Without a word, he begins to attack.

- Gene, Lunatic Godhand
- 8+ golden doppelgangers

Terrain.

Four complete (and one partial) warding circle glow with faint light. Gene has long since released the monsters within. When a creature enters one of these circles, it must succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check. On a failure, it is trapped. A trapped creature cannot leave the circle or affect the circle, and can neither attack anyone outside the circle, nor use any sort of magic that goes beyond the circle. A creature can attempt to break free of the circle once per round at the end of its turn. The creature can be released via forced movement, or by damaging the circle.

The pit in the center of the room is filled with rubble and sections of water 10 feet deep.

Cursed Mirrors. Around the chamber Gene has placed golden mirrors, which create evil reflections. They have warped over time, though, so the reflections are feeble and misshapen. Whenever a creature with a soul enters a space within 10 feet of the mirror, a golden doppelganger appears adjacent to that creature. Gene sacrificed his own soul, so he is unaffected.

A given creature can have multiple doppelgangers at once, but there can be no more than 8 at a time. If a mirror is knocked over, however, it no longer functions.

Gene, Lunatic Godhand

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (Wisdom, bracers of defense)

Hit Points 76 (8d8+40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	17 (+3)	—	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws INT +3

Skills Acrobatics +6, Deception +11, Insight +10, Intimidation +8, Perception +10

Damage Resistances variable (see text); bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities aging, disease, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Common

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Demon's Souls. Gene is possessed by various demonic spirits which have given him immortal life. Gene does not possess a Constitution score, but relies on his Charisma score in its place.

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

Hands of Heaven and Hell (1/turn). When Gene hits a creature with his enchanted brass knuckles, he may pummel it or another adjacent target dealing 2 (1d4) lightning damage. Each time he deals lightning damage the brass knuckles gain one charge, which lasts until the end of the encounter. When the brass knuckles have at least six charge counters, the next attack Gene hits a creature with them he gains a number of temporary hit points equal to the damage the attack deals.

High Jump. Gene has advantage on checks made to jump.

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

Quick. Gene has advantage on initiative checks.

Regeneration. Gene regains 5 hit points at the start of his turn. Gene dies only if he starts his turn with 0 hit points.

Stillness of Mind. Gene can use his action to end one effect on himself that is causing him to be charmed or frightened.

Variable Resistance. When Gene is struck by elemental damage during combat, he gains resistance to that type of damage for 1 minute.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Gene attacks three times.

Enchanted Brass Knuckles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) magical bludgeoning damage and if Gene has already hit the target once this turn, it must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure the target is stunned until the end of Gene's next turn or drops one object it is holding (the object lands in an adjacent square of Gene's choice).

REACTIONS

Slow Fall. Gene can use his reaction when he falls to reduce any falling damage he takes by 40.



Golden Doppelganger

Medium construct, neutral evil

Armor Class same as target

Hit Points 1

Speed same as target

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
— SAME AS TARGET —					

— SAME AS TARGET —

Saving Throws same as target

Skills same as target

Damage Resistances same as target

Damage Immunities same as target

Condition Immunities same as target

Senses same as target, passive Perception same as target

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Features. The golden doppelganger does not possess any of the target's class features but otherwise has the same features as the target.

ACTIONS

Attacks. The golden doppelganger has the same melee and ranged weapon attacks as the target.

Tactics.

Gene leaps into the fray and tries to shove and maneuver the party near to mirrors so their golden doppelgangers appear. He then begins talking, but only addresses the doppelgangers. He mostly grumbles semi-coherently about how long he's been stuck here without people to talk to, and how his mistress stopped being so nice after he lost his soul.

He also tries to trap people in the warding circles or dump them down into the sump in the middle of the room. If anyone tries to enter Ashima-Shimtu's chamber at the north end, Gene flies into a rage and will not relent until he has removed them.

Aftermath.

When defeated, Gene's fires burn out and he slumps to the ground. He smiles through blood-stained teeth and jovially calls out to Ashima-Shimtu in the northern room, "Mistress, you have visitors!"

Then he collapses, dead.

Ashima-Shimtu

Social. Real-Time.

Trapped for centuries, this survivor of the Demonocracy can make a deal to aid the party in their mission.

When the party enters the northern chamber after defeating Gene, read or paraphrase the following:

You hear the sea waves crashing from a wide well in the center of the room. Above it, a naked woman, her flesh scaled like a serpent, her face inhuman, hangs suspended. Six hook-tipped chains pierce her legs, her back, and her arms. Another hook that sealed her mouth swings loose, and it flutters in the breeze from her lips.

She raises her head and looks at you. The chains stretch and pull at her skin, and she draws a sharp, wounded breath. When the spasm of pain passes, she speaks.

“When Triegenes, founder of the Clergy, defeated the Demonocracy, most of the fiend rulers were slain. Because their souls could not return to the hellish planes that spawned them, the corruption drained into this world. Ashima-Shimtu, however, bargained for her life, offering to be a prisoner, and in exchange she would provide guidance on how to find and trap the trace essences of the other high fiends.

“The Clergy chained her above this well that leads to the sea, and ringed the wall of the pit with blessings. Now she hangs above a massive font of holy water. The vapor forever stings her, and should she ever wriggle free she will fall and be dissolved. She upheld her end of the bargain for centuries, and learned to meditate and ignore her physical existence so she would not go mad from solitude. Eventually the Clergy captured every fiend’s essence it could find, and they locked them into the same vault with Ashima-Shimtu.

“And so the Lady of the Forked Tongue would have been forgotten, if not for the holy war between the high elves and the Clergy.

“Five hundred years ago, two people came to the Isle of Odiem and received from Ashima-Shimtu a ritual that could give physical form to a belief. The ritual was used to conjure forth an avatar of the goddess Srasama; when she was slain the eladrin race was nearly annihilated.

“The surviving heads of the Clergy learned that Ashima-Shimtu had been involved, but she refused to give them the secret of the ritual unless they released her. They threatened to kill her, but she knew the temptation to wield such power made her too valuable to kill. And so she remains, the Keeper of the Secret That Must Not Be Lost, waiting for the day the hierarch of the Clergy releases her.

“Today is not that day. The visitors to her prison could never break her chains. But she sees value in them.”

Here Ashima-Shimtu identifies the PCs one by one, showing a mystical awareness of their souls and identities. For instance, she might say, “The killer who masquerades as an arm of the law to forget her sins. The knight who abandons all for the sake of duty, causing suffering in those who would love him. The drunkard druid who has betrayed tradition for the march of progress. The learned arcanist who turned to Vekeshi mysticism to aid her in vengeance.”

This gives the GM an opportunity to develop or resolve inter-party drama, or simply to frame some of the personal journeys of the characters.

Then she makes her offer.

Ashima-Shimtu has meditated, and being the guest of priests this past millennium has given her time to consider matters of morality. She could condemn these intruders to a slow death of starvation, as she has so many times before, but she offers them instead their freedom, since she cannot have such herself.

“This is no devil’s bargain, nor a gift that must be repaid by force of infernal contract. The visitors to her prison desire to leave. They need only step to the lip of this well, speak the name of where they would travel, and dive in. Ashima-Shimtu will see them safely there. More, she will conceal them for a time, so that the divinations of their enemies will think them dead. She thinks this is the least she can do to thank her visitors for removing the unpleasant man who had bothered her.”

Then, eerily, the demonesse seems to smile with amusement for a moment before lowering her head. The chains themselves seem to relax, and she sighs as the pain subsides.

If the party is wary, Ashima-Shimtu is not much for talking. She never addresses the party directly, but instead speaks as if narrating the scene. If the party declines, she lets them go as they will.

If the party agrees, they can name Vendricce and dive into the pool. Ashima-Shimtu’s blood magic carries them through the sea, and they wash ashore near the harbor of Vendricce just before sunrise.

Make a note of any PC that were reduced below half hit points during the fight with Gene. Unless the party takes special effort to clean themselves of blood, when they dive into the pool Ashima-Shimtu’s blood magic grants her some slight connection to them, which she will make use of later.

Terminus East

Exploration. Real-Time.

A party of Obscurati welcomes Luc as he and his lantern arrive in Vendricce.

The train departs Sid Minos at 7:30 AM. Luc spends the day dejected at the thought that Ottavia is gone, having sacrificed her life to protect him. The train arrives in Vendricce at 5:42 PM.

This is currently the end of the line, and so no other train has come from the other direction. However, track is under construction heading east, with the intent of crossing the Strait of Sjögren into Elfaivar. The first quarter mile of bridge is complete, but beyond that just a skeleton of stone and steel rises from the sea. The track currently runs to the end of the completed bridge section, but a barricade waits at the edge of shore, surrounded by warning signs,

Final Orders.

The party’s boss Delft knows they’re scheduled to reach Vendricce on the 16th. That morning he has an RHC mage perform up to three *sending* spells to find out the status of the mission and suggest a course of action. He encourages them to capture Luc if possible, kill him if necessary, and recover the lantern for study. Any additional information is just a bonus.



to ensure no one accidentally drives a train off the end of the bridge and into the harbor.

Because the party can reach this location so many different ways, we present the actions and resources of the Obscurati group here, and leave it to your players to plan how to accomplish their mission and then escape. Also, we assume the players will realize the train is primed and ready to roll, making it the best possible escape vehicle, since its course will lead to the harbor, where the party's ship awaits.

Private Depot.

When the train arrives in the Vendricce rail enclave, the passengers all leave, then porters go through to make sure no one's fallen asleep and that no luggage gets left behind. Luc, Bree, and Verzubak remain on board.

Then the train does some maneuvers to detach most of the central section, leaving just the locomotive, the fuel car, Luc's first class suite car, and the first class lounge (Cars 1, 2, 18, and 19). This small train pulls up beside a private depot building, stopping at 6:15 PM. Aboard the train are only engineer Steeg, Bree, Verzubak, and Luc (and possibly Ottavia if she never lured the party to the island).

At this point the train depot appears empty, but Lya Jierre waits inside for the sun to set, at 6:30 PM. At that point she walks out onto the platform and calls out to her brother. Luc and Bree step off the train onto the platform. (Verzubak remains on board, chatting with engineer Steeg.)

Luc carries his lantern covered with a dark sheet. Lya is dressed for a lavish ball (but still has her sword at her hip), and she gives her brother a boisterous hug.

Luc says that he expected there would be a group here to greet him. Lya says they're here, and she produces a small vial of lantern oil from within her dress. She asks if they were followed, and Bree explains the events of the trip.

As long as the PCs aren't visible and threatening, Lya is unconcerned. She hands Luc the oil and directs him to light the lantern. The lantern glows with blue light, and their surroundings peel away, revealing another train depot, this one gloriously illuminated by candles and chandeliers within while somehow much more deeply dark outside. The lantern has shifted them into the Bleak Gate, and for the next 5 minutes the two worlds will be coterminous. Everything within 50-feet of the lantern exists in both planes at once.

Bleak Gate Defenses.

Inside the Bleak Gate version of the depot waits Nicodemus the Gnostic, a few tier four members of the conspiracy who work in the Obscurati palace, and a detachment of elite guards who wear capes clasped by golden pins in the shape of an open book. The grounds outside are patrolled by additional guards.

- Lya Jierre
- Luc Jierre
- Bree Kaldeckis
- Verzubak Tantalovich
- 4 Obscurati bookpin guards
- 8 Obscurati musketeers

Driving the Train.

If the party plans to escape on the train, a Technologist can start it moving without trouble. Anyone else needs to succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence check to figure out how to operate it, though the party might be able to do that in advance. Due to the lessened weight of this short train, it accelerates by 30 feet per round, to a maximum speed of 800 feet per round.

Obscurati in Vendricce.

Though it's unlikely the party will encounter them in this adventure, the Obscurati has a palace on a wooded, hilly stretch of shore 10 miles north of the city, and an underwater dock beneath it, accessible by submarine. The stately grounds appear perfectly respectable, but various passages lead to a parallel version in the Bleak Gate, where most of the conspiracy's affairs occur.

The party will return in Adventure Seven, *Schism*, and even when they're 15th level they won't have enough power on their own for a frontal assault. If the party tries one now, they'd likely be spotted within a few minutes. Then they'd be run down by trackers on horseback and captured before they could make it back to the city.

Nicodemus, head the conspiracy, is wearing a different body than the last time the party encountered him (at Macbannin's manor in adventure two, *The Dying Skyseer*). He has a weak connection to his current host, so he cannot contribute in a fight. However, he is completely fearless, since he cares not one whit if his body dies. The other guests at the depot are Risuri engineer **Lester Guillory**, Danoran astronomer **Dustin Huff**, and twin sisters **Emily and Anna Davis**, political liaisons to the government of Crisillyyr who help with the conspiracy's finances. None of them are combatants.

Layout.

Lya has Luc place his lantern on one of the tables in the depot. The effect of the lantern extends 50 feet from it. The party is in the real world, but the lantern lets them see and interact with creatures in the Bleak Gate who are in that radius, and vice versa. However, if any of the characters in the Bleak Gate leave the radius of the lantern's effect, they fade out of view from the real world.

North of the private depot lies the grand station, where dozens of spare train cars and locomotives park for service. A low hill separates this scenic depot from the sprawl of those rails. On a hill to the south, the enclave keeps a small barracks of about 200 soldiers, present in case forces from Elfaivar attack. These facilities also exist in the Bleak Gate, but are empty and inaccessible in any case.

In the Bleak Gate version, a small corral beside the depot currently holds 4 carriages and 8 horses. After the meet and greet finishes, they'll carry everyone off to the Obscurati palace.

Welcome into the Fold.

The party can see the following events through the depot's windows.

Lya welcomes Luc and Bree into the private depot. She begins to explain the basics of their group while introducing him to the other guests. She explains that some things still have to remain secret for now, but his invention, when scaled up and reproduced as lighthouses and clocktowers, will help them change the world.





Recurring Villainy.

Ideally, as soon as Lya is below half health she'll break off combat. Perhaps she jumps off the train and crashes into a fruit cart, or if she's fighting in the streets a phalanx of two dozen soldiers charge in, and she's able to flee through their ranks. We know players hate it when NPCs escape, but recurring villains are fun.

If the party does manage to capture her, the events of adventure five, *Cauldron-Born* can still occur, because Danor will contact King Aodhan, and the moment the party set foot on Risur, he would order her release for the sake of the peace summit. Until then, she would be amiable as long as they did not kill her brother. In any case, a powerful *geas* forbids her from admitting any of the secrets of the conspiracy to outsiders.

If the party works extra hard and manages to break the *geas*, recall that the campaign can still work even if the heroes figure out the secret early. Lya knows about the seals, the colossus, the lantern, and the plan that involves them, but even then she doesn't know about the various liabilities that the PCs will be able to exploit in later adventures to take down the conspiracy, nor about the secret history of how Nicodemus and Kasvarina brought about the Great Malice. Right now the party is close to cracking some of these mysteries anyway, so while some of the later twists will have less impact, they'll feel like they've scored a major coup.

Luc stutters as he tries to ask how they're changing things. He is willing to accept almost anything if it will get him respect and authority, but his conversations with Ottavia have him mindful of how people with power tend to abuse it.

Lya admits she was uncertain too at first, but when they get to the palace, Nicodemus will have a chance to explain in more detail. She assures her brother that they're doing this to make things better, and that they are aided by the wisdom of some of the wisest people of the past five centuries.

Nicodemus charmingly cuts her off there, chiding her for saying too much in mixed company. He turns the conversation to Luc and compliments the man's intellect, and his bravery for having made the journey while being spied on by hostiles. He apologizes, and says that there are some logistical issues they have to handle before proper pleasantries can begin.

Nicodemus produces three amulets, similar to the ones the party saw Macbannin's crew using in the witchoil laboratory. He explains that they'll need to be wearing that when the lantern goes out, and it will bring them across the veil into the Bleak Gate, where the *real* party waits. Normally the trip between the two planes is a hugely involved process requiring multiple gates that slowly shift you stage by stage by stage. But with Luc's lantern, the process will be so much more efficient.

Luc, Lya, and Bree put on the amulets, and Nicodemus tells them to mingle. He'll be back in a moment, but he needs to handle some last minute security first. The other Obscurati members come up to gush to Luc, while Nicodemus walks outside. He lights up a cigarette, tells the guards to keep watch, and then scans the night, looking for signs of the party.

A few minutes later, the light from the lantern starts to dim, and the guards move to prepare the carriages. Nicodemus goes inside,

and as the door swings shut behind him the lantern goes dark. The depot is empty, and the connection to the Bleak Gate is gone.

If the party hasn't acted by now, Luc and the lantern are beyond their reach.

Heightened Security.

If the adventurer's aren't benefiting from Ashima-Shimtu's aid to hide from divinations, and they have not otherwise taken precautions, the Ob have used plenty of magic to make sure they know if anyone's crashing their event. If Ottavia lives, they will have used *sending* to at least discover whether she's alive

Nicodemus in any event now knows the identities of the party. If he thinks they're coming, he knows they have a knack for avoiding traps, so he prefers to deter them instead of trying to capture or kill them.

Inside the depot, the bookpin guards cover the entrances. A pair of musketeers wait outside each entrance, and another two stand watch on the platform by the train.

Battle Plan.

The party might try to get help from Malia, who could let them hide aboard the train, and whose scoped rifles would be quite handy in this situation. If the party has watched a lot of heist films, they might manage to turn Verzubak to their side and have him replace Luc's lantern with the (repaired) replica from atop the locomotive before they even get to Vendricce. Or the party might just set fire to the depot and sweep in when people exit.

Until the party comes within 50 feet of the lantern, they are effectively invisible to the guards at the depot, which the party might abuse by attacking from outside the light's radius. If the party approaches from behind the train, the musketeers might not hear them (passive Perception 14).

The lantern's light cannot be snuffed prematurely without destroying the lantern, which the Obscurati won't do except in dire circumstances. If the party attacks, they have a limited time to get past the guards and accomplish their goal – be it murder, destruction, or abduction.

If the party hasn't figured out the purpose of Luc, Lya, and Bree's amulets, they might get a nasty surprise when they try to drag Luc away and he vanishes at the edge of the lantern's light because the party's in the real world and he's in the Bleak Gate.

A stand-up fight against the depot's whole security force will likely not go their way, but if they sweep in and escape in a hurry, they might be able to survive a few rounds of attacks and then get away so the majority of the guards can't follow. Bree and Lya will remove their amulets and give chase, however.

Tactics.

Every combatant's main goal is to protect Luc. Bree stays by his side and covers him, while Lya charges any enemies she thinks she can reach, taking off her amulet if she needs to attack PCs who are beyond the lantern's light. The musketeers fire from afar, not daring to close and only using their pistol-whip if absolutely necessary. The bookpin guards form a heavily armored perimeter around Bree and Luc. Nicodemus, while he does not fight, will stroll through

the battle, doing his best to look harmless so he can reach the party and learn about them. If injured, he smokes a leaf of Nicodemus cigarette while he dies.

If the party gets away, Lya will definitely pursue. Whether her brother is safe or not, she knows that the party recognizes her, and she can't let them tell King Aodhan his future bride is conspiring against Risur.

Lya Jierre

Medium humanoid (tiefling), lawful neutral

Armor Class 20 (Intelligence, studded leather)

Hit Points 80 (12d8+24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws DEX +9, CON +6

Skills Acrobatics +8, Deception +6, Insight +7, Perception +7, Performance +6, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Infernal

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Bravery. Lya has advantage on saving throws against fear.

Escape Contingency. If reduced below 20 hit points or incapacitated by any means, Lya triggers a magical contingency, crafted at great expense, and travels to the Bleak Gate.

Improved Critical. Lya's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Infernal Legacy. Lya knows the *thaumaturgy* cantrip and she can cast the *hellish rebuke* spell as a 2nd-level spell once with this trait, regaining the ability to do so when she finishes a long rest. In addition, Lya can cast the *darkness* spell once with this trait and regains the ability to do so when she finishes a long rest. Charisma is her spellcasting ability for these spells (spell save DC 11, spell attack +3).

Precise Strike (1/turn). Lya deals 7 (2d6) extra damage with a melee weapon attack.

Quick. Lya has advantage on initiative checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Lya attacks twice.

Razorburst Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) magical piercing damage and if the target has fewer than 5 hit points remaining, the weapon shrieks as mechanism of bladed teeth unfold from the hilt to saw back and forth. The target makes a Constitution saving throw (DC equal to the attack's damage). On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice—hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, the attacker chooses which extremity the target loses. Creatures without extremities are unaffected. A severed arm or hand prevents use of anything that the creature was holding or carrying. A severed foot slows the target's speed by 10 feet. A severed leg renders the target prone.

REACTIONS

Parry. Lya adds 3 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit her. To do so, Lya must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

EQUIPMENT

Combat Gear. Lya carries two *potions of superior healing*.

Luc Jierre

Medium humanoid (tiefling), lawful neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws DEX +4, WIS +4, CHA +2

Skills Acrobatics +4, Arcana +7, Deception +2, Insight +4, Persuasion +4, Perception +6, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Infernal, Sylvan

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Infernal Legacy. Luc knows the *thaumaturgy* cantrip and he can cast the *hellish rebuke* spell as a 2nd-level spell once with this trait, regaining the ability to do so when he finishes a long rest. In addition, Luc can cast the *darkness* spell once with this trait and regains the ability to do so when he finishes a long rest. Charisma is his spellcasting ability for these spells (spell save DC 10, spell attack +2).

ACTIONS

Wayfarer's Lantern. Luc uses the *Wayfarer's Lantern*.

Obscurati Bookpin Guard

Male humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 20 (plate mail, shield)

Hit Points 45 (6d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws STR +5, CON +5

Skills Athletics +5, Deception +2, Insight +5, Intimidation +4, Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Bravery. The Obscurati Bookpin Guard has advantage on saving throws against fear.

Power Attack. When the Obscurati Bookpin Guard makes their first melee weapon attack in a turn, they can choose to take a -5 penalty to their melee weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to melee weapon damage. In addition, the Obscurati Bookpin Guard can use a bonus action to make one melee weapon attack after they use a melee weapon to reduce a creature to 0 hit points or score a critical hit with it. The Obscurati Bookpin Guard can only use this feature on their turn.

ACTIONS

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage or if wielded in two hands 8 (1d10+3).





New Magic Item.

The Wayfarer's Lantern

Wondrous item, artifact

The eight-faced cap of this lantern (AC 8, 10 hp) depicts symbols of seven planets and the sun. Eight brass arches beneath contain a light that glows without flame, held contained without glass. As the light touches you, reality seems to shift, as if you're in a whole different world. You can use a bonus action to adjust the lantern to shed dim light in a 25-foot radius or normal light in 50-foot radius, or to turn off. The lantern's greater powers require it be fed special fuel—oil that has been attuned to a particular plane by steeping it in some item attuned to that plane. Typically this is some form of meteorite that has been ground to dust. An ounce of this oil burns for 5 minutes. Each ounce of oil is effectively a consumable item of uncommon, rare, or very rare rarity. The potency (its rarity) is based on how much meteor dust the oil contains and determines the strength of the effect. A given ounce of oil must be attuned to a specific plane.

As an action, you can fill the lantern with oil and light it. The lantern either affects everything it illuminates, or only creatures that you choose. To specifically target a creature you require either line of sight to it when you light the lantern, or the creature (or its gear or domicile) must be marked with an arcane sigil prior to lighting the lantern. Targeted creatures that leave the area of the lantern's illumination are no longer affected, but they will be affected again if they return to the area. The lantern's effects extend 50 feet in every direction, ignoring even total cover or concealment. A creature with total cover or concealment has advantage on saving throws to resist the lantern's effects because the light is not actually touching them, but the magic can pass through solid objects. Choose an effect below appropriate to the oil's planar attunement. Each round targets must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC equal to the rarity of the oil used: uncommon—DC 12, rare—DC 14, very rare—DC 16). A creature that is hit falls under the lantern's effect for 5 minutes. If it later moves beyond the radius of the lantern it is no longer affected, but it will be again as soon as it comes back into the area. The lantern's effect lasts for the full 5 minutes. It cannot be snuffed prematurely without shattering and destroying the lantern.

- **Any.** Within a minute a random encounter occurs as creatures native to the plane are drawn to the lantern. The encounter is up to GM's discretion based on the current party level.
- **The Dreaming or Bleak Gate.** Those affected are physically transported to the coterminous spot in either the land of the fey or the land of shadows.
- **Vona.** Affected creatures have advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Wisdom (Perception) checks. Affected creatures with any sort of vulnerability to radiant energy or sunlight take 3 (1d6) radiant energy damage at the beginning of each round.
- **Jiese.** An affected creature takes 3 (1d6) fire damage at the beginning of each round. Objects catch fire more easily. Alternately, affected creatures become argumentative and hostile. Any creature that remains under the effect for at least a minute becomes dazed (at the end of each of its turns, the creature receives a new Wisdom saving throw to end the effect).

While so dazed, if it ends its turn and has not attacked anything, it must attack or move towards and attack the nearest creature. If it succeeds its save against being dazed, it recognizes that its mind is being affected, and is immune from the compulsion for 5 minutes (if it is still in the radius of the lantern after that time, it can be attacked again.)

- **Avilona.** Howling winds blow across affected creatures. At the beginning of your turn roll 1d8 to randomly determine the wind's direction. Whenever an affected creature ends its turn, it slides 1d4 × 5 feet in that direction. Alternately, other types of weather can be called forth, albeit in a limited area.
- **Av.** Any creature under the lantern's effect for at least a minute becomes *slowed* (as the spell). On a failed Wisdom saving throw, it falls asleep and has vivid shared dreams. If it succeeds it shakes off the effect and is immune for 5 minutes.
- **Mavisha.** The flow of water within the area obeys the mental command of sentient creatures. An affected creature can use an action to raise, lower, or part water, or increase a vessel's speed by 10 miles an hour, but it's not fast enough to be used as a weapon. Multiple creatures thinking in opposition can rouse the anger of the water, causing it to manifest as a **water elemental**.
- **Urim.** Illuminated stone, crystal, and metal becomes harder. Affected creatures gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons.
- **Apet.** Affected creatures can teleport 50 feet as a bonus action (otherwise as *misty step*), but must remain within the radius of the lantern's light.
- **Nem.** Affected creatures are pulled from their bodies into the plane of Nem, a spirit world on the far side of the Bleak Gate. The world resembles reality but is bereft of occupants and slowly fades away as the disembodied creature wanders away from the spot where it died. Even if their body moves, the spot where they entered Nem is an invisible gateway. If they ever stray more than three miles from that gateway, they pass into the afterlife and cannot be resurrected. This is normally not a factor with the lantern because it will not burn long enough. While in Nem they cannot see or be seen by living creatures. They gain ghostly traits (as explained in "Three Milestones"). This power can be useful for scouting environments. If their souls leave the area of the lantern, affected creatures instantly snap back to the spot where they first entered Nem. If their bodies are moved from the lantern's area, their souls snap back into their flesh.



Bree

Medium humanoid (human), neutral good

Armor Class 19 (breastplate, shield +1)**Hit Points** 102 (12d10+36)**Speed** 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws STR +6, CON +5, CHA +2**Skills** Athletics +6, Deception +2, Insight +7, Intimidation +5, Perception +7**Senses** passive Perception 17**Languages** Common**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)**Bravery.** Bree has advantage on saving throws against fear.

Butcher's Girdle. When one of Bree's limbs becomes severed, she can move and control the limb as if it were still fully functional. Whenever she moves, the limb can fly up to 30 feet (maximum height of 30 feet), though it must remain within 100 feet of Bree or it falls inert. She can use her limb to attack, though if Bree cannot see her target she has disadvantage. If the limb shares the same space as the Bree, she can spend a bonus action to reattach it to her body, restoring full function. Bree can use an action to intentionally sever one of her own limbs with a blade, self-inflicting 25 damage. A missing leg gives Bree the prone condition (even she can stand up, she can't balance well enough to fight at full effectiveness).

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

ACTIONS**Multiattack.** Bree attacks twice.**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage or if wielded in two hands 8 (1d10+3).**EQUIPMENT****Combat Gear.** Bree carries a *potion of superior healing*.**Verzubak Tantalovich**

Medium humanoid (dwarf), lawful neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)**Hit Points** 60 (8d8+24)**Speed** 25 ft.

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

Saving Throws CON +6, DEX +6, INT +4**Skills** Acrobatics +9, Deception +5, Intimidation +2, Perception +6, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +11**Damage Resistances** poison**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16**Languages** Common, Dwarvish**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)**Dwarven Resilience.** Verzubak has advantage on saving throws against poison.

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

Lucky Ki Dice. When Verzubak rolls these two six-side dice, they can yield any number he wants. Numbers outside the range of 2 to 12 will be quite suspicious. If Verzubak had a ki pool, its maximum would increase by 1.

To add flavor, the GM can pick one d20 for Verzubak and only ever use it for his attack rolls. Only the GM may touch this die. Once per session, if the selected die rolls badly, the GM is allowed to make a "cleansing" re-roll to get the bad numbers out. If the rules are violated, the GM must retire the chosen die and replace it with another.

Quick. Verzubak has advantage on initiative checks.**Stonecunning.** Whenever Verzubak makes an Intelligence (History) check related to the origin of stonework, he has a +7 bonus to the check.

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

ACTIONS

Dagger (10). *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage plus the target makes a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or takes 14 (4d6) poison damage.

REACTIONS

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

Obscurati Musketeer

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)**Hit Points** 18 (4d8)**Speed** 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws DEX +5, CON +2**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Athletics +1, Intimidation +5, Perception +6, Survival +6**Senses** passive Perception 16**Languages** Common, Elvish**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

Improved Critical. The Obscurati Musketeer's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Precise Aim. When making a ranged weapon attack the Obscurati Musketeer ignores anything less than total cover.

ACTIONS

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

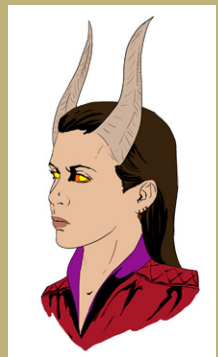


Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.

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

Despite her youth, she was awarded the position of Minister of Outsiders, giving her great leeway to travel and make alliances. For the past three years, she has worked with King Aodhan to keep the peace between Danor and Risur, and as they began making plans for a formal alliance, she accepted the king's offer of marriage as a symbolic gesture of unity.

Secretly, she is the leader of the Obscurati's Golden Cell, tasked with determining how to open the great seal on Axis Island. Lya should be portrayed as a complex character with competing motivations. Though she gets involved with Risur out of a desire to gain great political power, she does so without malice. She believes the Obscurati is working toward a more meaningful and lasting peace, but she's aware that to reach that goal she must tell ever more elaborate lies and, regrettably, battle would-be heroes.



short-distance teleportation works normally.

- Naval crews scramble to blockade the harbor, which the party can see as they approach.

On Foot.

- If the party flees through the city, they see frantic and confused patrols running down the streets, lanterns in hand, stopping any foreigners.
- A patrol confronts them as they near their destination (the edge of the city, the harbor, or a safe house), and calls for reinforcements.

Train to Harbor.

- Lya boards the train at the rear and runs along the top. If she can, she gets to the engine and brakes the train, but likely she ends up engaged in a sword duel atop the roof of the fuel car. She might slice off a PC's hand before eventually leaping free when the fight turns against her. Bree might join her.
- City soldiers mounted on horses gallop alongside the train and fire muskets. Use the statistics for Obscurati Musketeers but be clear these are different troops.
- As the train nears the harbor, construction workers try to wave for it to stop, and they leap out of the way at the last second as the locomotive plows through a barricade of timbers. Not 10 seconds later the train flies off the end of the track and crashes into the incomplete bridge beyond. The impact shatters the boiler, which explodes in a cloud of deadly steam and sends a rumble of thunder across the harbor.

Escape the Noose

Action. Tactical.

The party has mere minutes to reach their ship and flee before they're trapped.

Don't think of this scene as a specific encounter, but rather a reminder of the resources at your disposal to ratchet and release tension during the adventure's climax. If it seems your players feel successful for simply spying and getting away, or if they defeated everyone at the depot and survived, you can let them reach the harbor and board their ship without extra trouble.

But you want them to feel like they've earned a victory. Use these resources and ideas as needed to bring the party to the edge before they succeed. If they're on the train, it's a five minute ride to the harbor. On foot it's a quarter hour or worse, depending on how stealthy they are.

General City Reaction.

- At the sound of combat at the train depot, alarm bells ring from the barracks to the south. Dozens of troops begin to scramble out the doors over the next minute. Horns sound an alert across the city, and the military and local city guards arm up and march for the harbor, which is the party's presumed destination. The alarm signals a high-level magical threat, and people flee indoors.
- The city's churches ring golden bells, creating a cacophony that disrupts teleportation magic. It's not enough to stop the party from getting away, but attempts to cast such spells require a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check to work. Personal

Out of the Harbor.

- The party's ship hoists sail, catching guards at the docks off guard. It sweeps out into the harbor, and the crew mans their posts bravely as bullets and arrows from the docks strike all around them.
- If the party had to ditch into the water, their ship sails up and crew throw them lines just as naval cutters are drawing near.
- Two warships have navigated to the mouth of the harbor, and the party's ship has to surge at full speed in order to sail between them before they can angle their guns for a devastating volley.
- Finally, if the party has still had it too easy, the *Cachalot* rises from the depths to block their path. Caught between two cannon-laden warships and a submarine with only a dozen men, the party's best chance for escape might be to attack and board the *Cachalot*, claim it as their own, and flee beneath the waves.

Aftermath

Real-Time. Social.

The party returns to Flint and debriefs with Chief Inspector Delft to gauge the success of their mission.

The party likely gets back to Flint on the 24th of Winter. Delft meets them in a secluded location, and works with the party to figure out everything they know. Have the PCs walk through the events of their mission and answer the following questions.

- Who was Caius Bergeron meeting in Vendricce?
- Who else was attending that meeting? Who from that meeting was also on the train?
- What allies and accomplices did they have? What possible alliances and connections does this suggest for the Obscurati conspiracy?
- When did each of those people of interest board the train?
- What did they do each night when the train was stopped? Provide an answer for each person of interest and each stop – Cherage, Orithea, Trekhom, Nalaam, Sid Minos, Vendricce.
- Did you notice any patterns, codes, or other identifying traits?
- What do we know of the conspiracy's goals? How will they accomplish these goals?
- Do you have any clues who in Risur might be allied with them? What about allies in other countries?
- Who do we tell, and where do we go from here?

Using the Intelligence.

If the party took any prisoners, it will take at least a few days to get any useful information out of them. Luc has the most valuable intel, and if the party also has Ottavia as a prisoner he might even be turned into an asset.

If they recovered the lantern, learning how to use it is fairly easy, but acquiring oil suffused with the right planar energy could be a quest in and of itself. Or the party could just requisition it, and get it in a few months (i.e., it will take until the next adventure begins).

No matter how much information the party has, they don't have the manpower or resources to return to Vendricce right now. The politicians are already balking about the money spent on this mission. Delft is going to need time to get support from people in power, and he thinks the party might want to lay low for a while in case the Ob retaliate.

He will speak to King Aodhan, but even if he convinces the king and gets more resources, the Ob are hard to pin down. They still can only guess what all the Ob's plotting is building toward. However, they do know Lorcan Kell's thieves guild has some connection to them, and so for the next two months the RHC will try to whittle down their power base and look for leads to the Obscurati leadership.

And then, two months from now, the Ob will be coming to their doorstep: Lya Jierre is going to be attending a peace summit in the Spring. When she arrives, the party will be ready to capture her and her allies, and to thwart whatever they are plotting. 🐉