



EN5ider Presents:

Cauldron-Born

Part Two

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



Act One, Thread One: The Downfall of Kell

IN THIS THREAD, THE PARTY MOVES AGAINST LOR-can Kell's crime gang.

The Kell Guild

The party has several options on how to proceed with finding Loran Kell. First, for the GM's sake, what is the party up against?

Kell's operations are based out of the Theater of Scoundrels, a debauched hang-out for thieves and thugs. Here Kell holds court and watches his minions practice their skills. The 'theater' aspect is a big draw to new members, because Kell throws a good party, and the stage often has raunchy, violent, and sometimes bloody shows. Guild members are encouraged to practice their lying by joining in plays.

Hierarchy.

Kell doesn't manage the daily affairs of his guild. He's just the figurehead who'll hunt you down and chop you up if you cause trouble. His lieutenants actually run the guild, foremost among them **Quentin Augst**, a lawyer based in Central district. Augst prefers opera to Kell's brand of low theater, so meetings of the guild leadership usually happen in one of their business fronts, the *Sunset Bench*.

The party likely took down **Rufus Hammerton** at the start of the adventure. Otherwise he's holed up in the Machete Hill stronghold (see below).

Fronts.

The guild operates the usual array of clubs, brothels, restaurants, and shops, but also have an atypical holding interest in a variety of factories – when the Ob needed certain goods, some factory owners capitulated to let the guild skim, others had their places burn down, but a few were killed outright, and their wills – forged and rewritten by Augst – put their whole businesses into guild hands.

Safe Houses.

Kell splits his time between several homes in Parity Lake and The Nettles, most of them gated villas. He also keeps numerous safe houses, usually multi-story buildings that are the tallest in the neighborhood. Conscious of how many times he's killed men who had no way out, Kell always plans his escape routes, and he's more than willing to leap between rooftops to avoid a trap.

Resources and Training

Out of a city of eight hundred thousand, Kell's guild has three hundred official members and a couple thousand citizens who directly do business with them, most of them in Parity Lake or The Nettles.

FROM THE PEN OF
Thurston Hillman

WITH ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY
Ryan Nock

EVOCATIVE COVER ILLUSTRATION BY
ShenFei

STUNNING CARTOGRAPHIC DISPLAYS BY
James Hazelett, Brian Patterson, Jonathan Roberts

MASTERFUL INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS BY
Claudio Pozas, ShenFei, Eleni Tsami
Includes art in the public domain

WITH UNPARALLELED LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN BY
Eric Life-Putnam

PLAYTESTED FOR MAXIMUM ENJOYMENT BY
Michael Border, Walter Byers, Justin Engelking,
Benjamin Riggs, Dennis Chiado



SEAMLESSLY UPDATED TO FIFTH EDITION BY
Mike Myler

ABLY PRODUCED AND FACILITATED BY
Russ Morrissey

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Jamie, because if I'm going to dedicate a book to you, it's going to be the one with a giant robot on the cover; and Dan Houston and Falkus, Kickstarter backers who introduced Dester Rathnine and Rosalyn Taylor; and to the hundreds of gamers who backed the original release of ZEITGEIST on Kickstarter; and to the over one thousand generous patrons of EN WORLD ENSIDER whose support has made this Fifth Edition update possible.

OPEN GAME CONTENT

The game rule information in this article is designated Open Game Content. All other material in this article, including maps, graphic elements, and illustrations (including graphic elements and illustrations in the public domain), narrative and descriptive text, character and place names, trade dress, "EN Publishing," "EN World," "ENSIDER," "ZEITGEIST," all EN Publishing product and article titles, and ZEITGEIST, EN World, and EN Publishing logos, are designated Product Identity.

The official guildsmen are trained in the theater in the best way to knife someone, or to use a hostage as a human shield. Almost all carry pistols, and some of Kell's favorites have access to choicer weapons smuggled in from Drakr.

By contrast, the entire Flint police force numbers just seventeen hundred, and they tend to carry maybe swords, night clubs, and crossbows. The guns they do get are cast-off muskets from the military. The authorities aren't looking to start a war in the streets.

Kell usually travels with two personal bodyguards – **Kate Glenn**, a corrupt priestess who protects Kell from hostile magic, and **Nick Reder**, a meaty bruiser who can hold back the largest foes.

The Ob have recently equipped the guild with high-quality firearms and alchemical weapons. A few prominent members of the guild have gotten magic or arcanoscientific gear, and Kell himself now enjoys riding around in a *figurine of wondrous power* that transforms into an armored carriage, drawn by tramping mechanical legs instead of actual horses.

In Hiding.

When he gets wind that the RHC are after him in force, Kell relocates to the Theater of Scoundrels, his seat of power. From there he prepares to fight the RHC, but tries to get in touch with his contacts in the Obscurati in case he has to run. Once things get too hot, Kell moves to a safe house and hides inside a *rope trick* to evade divination (see Kell Spooked, page 4).

Even if they can find him, catching him isn't easy. The Obscurati gave him a one-use item – a *gatecrasher charm* – which tears a hole in reality so he can slip into the Bleak Gate for a few minutes. It has nasty side effects though, and the trip isn't permanent unless there's someone from the Ob on the other side waiting to pull him all the way through. He can use the charm in a pinch to get a few minutes' head start on running.

What You Gonna Do When They Come for You?

Exploration. Montage. Level 7.

The party kicks in doors and runs down criminals to find Kell.

To capture Kell, first they must find him.

If your group has an idea of their own, run with it, but as a base suggestion we assume they'll try to drive Kell into the open by dismantling his guild. The party has several avenues, and each successful operation contributes to the overall challenge of finding Kell. It's up to the party to lead the task force, and men's lives are on the line if they screw up.

Task Force Makeup.

Most of the city's police keep to their regular duties or prepare security for the peace summit. But thanks to the wonders of overtime pay, the party has 50 officers at their disposal. Delft tried to get men from districts where Kell was unlikely to have moles, but unbeknownst to the party, three officers in the task force are actually on the take, and will rat out the party's plans to Kell's guild, making things more difficult if the party doesn't clean house.

Dirty Rats.

The moles send word to Kell's guild as soon as the task force is convened. Thereafter, each day choose one of the following effects for each mole:

- **Misinformation 1.** If the party has officers case an area, the mole reports a juicy but false lead. If the party follows up on that lead, their effort is wasted.
- **Misinformation 2.** If the party sends out a scouting mission, the mole either under- or over-reports the danger by half, to lead the task force into a trap or waste its resources.
- **Tip Off 1.** When the party sends out a Bust Up a Joint mission or Sting mission, the mole warns those involved, and when the task force shows up, no one is there.
- **Tip Off 2.** When the party sends out an Assault mission, the mole warns the guild so they can prepare their defenses. Increase the number of defenders by half.
- **Cold-Blooded Murder.** If none of the other options present themselves, at night the mole kills a fellow cop and passes the murder off as a Kell-guild assassination.

When a mole sabotages the party, each PC who went on the mission can make a DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check to detect the mole. Also, if the party gets suspicious, once per day each PC can make a DC 18 Intelligence check with a +1 bonus for each previous sabotaged mission, and on a success they figure out who one of the moles is. The party might also use its own methods to catch moles, and perhaps use the moles to feed false information to the guild.



Running the Task Force.

The party can deploy their 50 officers as they see fit, but each officer can only undertake one mission per day. Some missions gather intelligence. Others, called **strikes**, damage the guild, and the task force needs 6 strikes for a partial victory, or 8 for a complete one.

Targets.

The task force has a variety of targets, most of which require some investigation to find.

- ♦ **Front.** A business the guild uses to launder money, have meetings, and keep an eye on an area. In Parity Lake, this might be a shoe store, bookseller, seafood restaurant, bath house, bar, brothel, etc. These are usually warehouses in Bosum Strand, money-lenders in Central, and high-end boutiques in North Shore. The Nettles doesn't have enough commercial activity to host any fronts.
- ♦ **Den of Thieves.** Hang-out spot for members of the guild. These will usually be bars or clubs, but sometimes they're just swanky homes with a good view.
- ♦ **Illicit Transaction.** Meet-up where guild members commit some major crime. Examples include smuggling magical poisons in the linings of hats, selling stolen military muskets, kidnapped women being charmed and magically altered to look like elves, planning to assassinate an ombudsman, wizard brought in to torture a captured cop for info, etc.



- ♦ **Stronghold.** One of three well-defended compounds that could easily repulse most police assaults. A fancy tower called Grand Suites and a mansion dubbed Casa de Kell are both in Parity Lake. The Nettles hosts a gated compound called Machete Hill.
- ♦ **Theater of Scoundrels.** The guild's seat of power in eastern Parity Lake.

Missions.

Each officer can be assigned one mission per day. Each mission has a Minimum Officers and Optimal Officers entry, though sometimes the party will need to scout to know these figures.

- ♦ **Case a District.** Look for Kell-guild activity.
- ♦ **Scout.** Watch a Front, Den of Thieves, Stronghold, or the Theater to see how many hostiles are present.
- ♦ **Bust Up a Joint.** Go into a Front or a Den of Thieves to look for information. Success earns one Task Force Token at a front, or two tokens at a den of thieves.
- ♦ **Sting.** Swoop in during an Illicit Transaction. Success earns 1 Strike and a Task Force Token.
- ♦ **Assault.** Attack a stronghold to earn 1 Strike. Attack the Theater of Scoundrels to earn 3 Strikes.

Going after the Theater of Scoundrels right away is foolhardy, since the task force is outnumbered and moles in the task force would spoil the attack. Waiting gives the party time to find the moles and spoil the guild's morale so people desert.

A smarter course is to chip away at the organization around the edges, frightening the guild members and driving some into hiding, making for an easier takedown. Still, the timeline is tight. With average skill rolls, it's actually likely that the task force won't manage to reach 8 strikes.

Party Involvement.

The party might undertake a mission themselves, or lead a group of officers. Each mission takes roughly 4 hours, once you factor in coordinating all the officers, getting into position, the mission itself, then clean-up and interpretation of any info found. This will cut into their time for the other threats facing the city. Each 7th level PC counts as 8 extra officers when determining whether you have the minimal or optimal amount.

You can briefly narrate their involvement and have one PC roll the appropriate check to determine the outcome, or you can play through the scene normally, assembling a group of foes from Appendix D: Kell-Guild Stats. The enemy forces are pretty weak compared to the party, so feel free to go back to the brief version if the players are bored with taking out pushovers.

Skill Checks.

Each mission calls for a skill check. If no PCs accompany the officers on a mission, roll 1d20+5 for their skill check. If a PC does come along, they can roll a check with their modifier instead.

The check is made with disadvantage if the number of officers is below Optimal but at least Minimum. If it's below Minimum, there is a -2 penalty as well. Using more officers than Optimal doesn't make things any easier. Particularly clever plans or usage of magic

might add +2 or grant advantage. The results of a successful mission are detailed with each entry.

Each mission calls for a second skill check to avoid a mishap. Mishaps (as well as failures on some missions) lead to officers being incapacitated. They might die, or just be injured enough that they can't help on further missions. A PC present on a mission can choose to take 3d6 damage instead of having an officer be incapacitated.

Task Force Tokens.

Certain missions can earn **Task Force Tokens**. A token can be spent to gain a +2 bonus on a skill check for a mission. This represents things like getting insider information, letting criminals off if they'll rat on their colleagues, or persuading their friends to leave town instead of fighting. Tokens must be spent before making the roll, and they are each single-use.

The *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide* suggests that each PC should have contacts throughout the city. For each contact located in a given district, the party starts with one token that can be spent in that district.

Favors.

The party might use their Risur Prestige to call in favors and get some military additions, or to get some officers to work even longer.

For example, it's a Level 2 favor to get 1 extra officer for a few hours (long enough to send them on another mission), Level 3 for 4 officers, Level 4 for 12 officers, and Level 5 for 50 officers. For military, it's a Level 3 favor to get 1 soldier for a mission, Level 4 for 4 soldiers, and Level 5 for 12 soldiers.

For the purpose of this mission, soldiers just count as normal officers for the missions Case a District and Scout, but count as 4 officers each in other missions.

See the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide* for more information on Prestige.

Progress.

The party realistically just has four days – from the 9th to the 12th – to locate Kell since the peace talks formally begin on the 13th. They want to rack up 8 **strikes** against Kell's guild by then, which will give them an opening to take him down (see Duke of Slaughter, page 12).

On their way to 8, these events occur:

Kell Spooked. Kell starts in his Theater of Scoundrels, which he thinks is unassailable. Realistically the party would be chewed up by dozens of Kell's thugs if they picked a fight here, and even the whole task force would probably be driven back, at least at first.

If the party manages to get three strikes against the guild, Kell gets nervous. He leaves orders and pretends that he's going hunting, but in truth he and his two bodyguards make for a safe house in northwestern Parity Lake. They travel while protected by *invisibility* and *nondetection*, and are only on the road for fifteen minutes.

They settle into the top floor of a four-story tenement, which has a narrow but deep canal running past it (the better to leap into as part of a getaway plan). Kate Glenn uses a *wand of rope trick* so they can hide and fool divination. Three low-level toughs watch



the entrance to the building and to the *rope trick*, and can quickly signal if anything suspicious happens.

Two other men act as messengers, going out at morning and night to pick up or leave messages at a dead drop a few blocks away. One of these men is **Dester Rathnine**, who's actually on the Family's payroll, and who can potentially help the party track Kell down (page 7).

The Family Interested. Additionally, when the party gets to three strikes, the Family sees a chance to actually take out Kell. This triggers the *Enemy of My Enemy is My Family* encounter (page 7).

Betrayal in the Ranks. Once the task force has racked up 6 strikes, Kell's guild starts to get shaky. Enough people try to cut deals with the party that they can easily figure out what safe house Kell is hiding in, though actually getting him is a challenge.

Break and Run. When the task force gets 8 strikes, Kell becomes certain that the noose is closing around him. He sends out the carriage created by his *figurine of wondrous power* as a decoy, then slips away and runs to a spot the Ob told him to go in case of an emergency. If he can evade the task force he gets a free trip to the Bleak Gate, but first he sends a message to the RHC by targeting the B-Team.

Other Options.

If the task force fails, the party might still be able to make a move on Kell with the Family's help (page 7).

Mission Details.

A player-appropriate version of the Task Force mini-game rules appears in Appendix E.

Case a District.

The officers hit up contacts and try to figure out where Kell's guild has operations in a district. Each attempt targets one city district, but the districts where Kell's guild has a larger presence – Parity Lake and The Nettles – are more dangerous. After this mission, it is useful to Scout before sending in officers.

- ◆ **Minimum Officers:** 2.
- ◆ **Optimal Officers:** 6.
- ◆ **Check:** DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) or DC 13 Intelligence.
- ◆ **Success:** The task force uncovers some operations in that district, as detailed in the sidebar this page.
- ◆ **Failure:** The task force learns nothing of value.
- ◆ **Mishap:** Make a Charisma (Deception) check to avoid drawing unwanted attention (DC 15 in Parity Lake or The Nettles; DC 12 in Bosum Strand, Central District, or North Shore). On a failure, ambush! One officer is incapacitated.

Mini-Game Training.

To ease the party into the rules for the Task Force, you might have a group briefing on the morning of the 9th, where Sergeant Macon introduces the party to the task force. Macon explains that she has taken the liberty of sending out two groups of 6 officers on Case a District missions, one to Bosum Strand, the other to North Shore, to see if they can start nibbling at the guild around its edges.

Mark that 12 officers have been deployed today. Then roll the Charisma (Persuasion) checks for those two missions (d20+5 vs. DC 15), and the Charisma (Deception) check to avoid trouble (d20+5 vs. DC 12). Determine the officers' findings.

Afterward, Sergeant Macon suggests sending some scouts to keep an eye on any locations they found, and recommends each group should consist of 3 officers. Mark those down and roll to determine their success (or let the PCs roll on their behalf), and then let the players take the reins from there. Don't have any moles sabotage these initial missions.

Kell's Operations.

The party starts off knowing the location of the Theater of Scoundrels and the three strongholds—The Grand, Casa de Kell, and Machete Hill. The Case a District mission gives the party the location of some of Kell's fronts and hang-outs, as well as the times of illicit transactions.

Bosum Strand, Central District, or North Shore. Success uncovers one operation. Roll on the table below to determine the type, and secretly roll to determine how many hostiles will be present.

1d6 Result

- 1–3 *Front.* 1d4+1 hostiles are present.
- 4–5 *Den of Thieves.* 1d8+1 hostiles are present.
- 6 *Illicit Transaction.* 1d12+4 hostiles are present.

Parity Lake. As above, but success uncovers 1d4+2 operations.

The Nettles. As above, but success uncovers 1d4 operations. Re-roll any fronts, since there's not enough commercial activity in this district to support them.

Scout.

Choose one location and send officers to figure out how dangerous it is. Scouting itself can be dangerous, especially for a stronghold. You cannot scout an illicit transaction.

- ◆ **Minimum Officers:** 1.
- ◆ **Optimal Officers:** 3.
- ◆ **Check:** DC 20 Wisdom (Perception).
- ◆ **Success:** The task force learns how many enemies are at a location, and thus how many officers are required.
- ◆ **Failure:** The task force learns nothing of value.
- ◆ **Mishap:** Make a Dexterity (Stealth) check (DC 13 normally, DC 15 at a Stronghold, DC 18 at the Theater). On a failure, ambush! One officer is incapacitated.



Bust Up a Joint.

Officers target a Front or a Den of Thieves, looking for clues. Fronts are typically less well-guarded, but Dens of Thieves yield better information. Since the task force is likely to hit up multiples of these, be sure to narrate enough details about the locations so they feel distinctive.

- ◆ **Minimum Officers:** Equal to the number of hostiles.
- ◆ **Optimal Officers:** Three times the number of hostiles.
- ◆ **Check:** DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) to get hostiles to surrender.
- ◆ **Success:** The task force arrests or kills all the hostiles, and suffers no casualties.
- ◆ **Failure:** The task force suffers casualties equal to half the number of hostiles, and takes out a number of hostiles equal to the number of officers sent in.
- ◆ **Mishap:** Spice things up by requiring a DC 15 check to avoid some complication – Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Intimidation) to get bystanders out of the way to avoid innocent deaths, Dexterity (thieves' tools) to keep a trap from killing officers, Wisdom (Insight) to avoid piling too many people into an unsteady building in the Nettles, etc. A failure results in 1d8 good guys incapacitated.
- ◆ **Consequence:** Regardless of the result of the skill check, if the task force takes out all the hostiles and has at least one survivor, it earns a Task Force Token. At a Den of Thieves, victory yields two tokens instead.

If all the officers sent are incapacitated without taking out the hostiles, the hostiles execute the officers.

Sting.

Officers target an Illicit Transaction, with the goal of disrupting Kell's business and taking out his men. You cannot scout for a Sting, so there's greater danger of committing the wrong number of officers.

Mechanically, a sting works like "Bust Up a Joint." If the task force takes out all the hostiles and has at least one survivor, it earns a Task Force Token and earns one Strike toward locating Kell.

After the task force has successfully stung three Illicit Transactions, the guild gets skittish and cancels all other big meet-ups for the near future. Thus, Stings can only earn a total of 3 Strikes.

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

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

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



Assault Stronghold.

Officers storm one of the strongholds – the Grand Suites, Casa de Kell, or Machete Hill. Success takes out part of the guild's leadership and seizes a huge chunk of its assets. Mechanically, an assault works like a Sting, but with many more hostiles. Each stronghold that is taken out earns the task force a Strike.

- ◆ **Grand Suites.** 30 hostiles. DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check to force surrender. Gunmen watch from the upper windows of this fancy six-story tower. Underground tunnels let the hostiles flee to the sewers. If a first attack is rebuffed, the 1d6 replacement hostiles arrive per day through the tunnels. Scouting discovers the tunnels. If the task force either blocks the escape or attacks through the tunnels, they have advantage on their Charisma (Intimidation) check. Blocking also prevents reinforcements.
- ◆ **Casa de Kell.** 22 hostiles. DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check to force surrender. Scouting reveals that this old mansion is surrounded by machinery factories and that traps fill the hallways. During an attack, make a DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools check) to avoid an extra 1d8 deaths.
- ◆ **Machete Hill.** Counts as 21 hostiles. If the party didn't take down Rufus Hammerton, he's here, and the effective total is 25 hostiles. DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) forces surrender.

This gated compound has several squat buildings with quaint shuttered windows, laid out at angles so attackers entering the gate have to pass through a crossfire of cannons. Yes, cannons, and they're loaded with small shards of metal as grapeshot, since they're being used at close range.

Scouting discovers the cannons, which can be neutralized with a careful advance behind tower shields, or by attacking through the gates. Otherwise, the task force suffers 2d6 deaths at the start of the mission, before they make the Charisma (Intimidation) check.

Assault Theater of Scoundrels.

The task force takes on the seat of Kell's guild, a tattered theater that has been renovated into a killing gallery, guarded by 100 hostiles in the theater and nearby buildings. A DC 22 Charisma (Intimidation) check forces a surrender, but they definitely refuse to admit defeat as long as Kell is present. As noted above, he goes into hiding after the task force accumulates 3 strikes.

Once Kell leaves, for every other stronghold the task force has taken out, 20 of the hostiles desert because of low morale. At best, the party only has to deal with 30 hostiles.

A success here counts as 3 Strikes, though the party would be wise to acquire Task Force Tokens first. Smart, callous players will just burn this place down with all the criminals inside. Maybe pull the arson brothers Eberardo and Valando out of prison for the job. Doing so still requires getting close enough, though, and the hostiles aren't just in the theater, but in all the surrounding buildings.

Capture Quentin Augst.

This is a bit more involved than a simple task force mission. See Attorney of Scoundrels, below. But if successful it counts as 2 Strikes against Kell's guild.



Enemy of My Enemy Is My Family

Social. Real-Time.

The Family can help get Kell.

A few hours after the task force reaches three strikes against Kell, a letter is dropped off at the RHC headquarters, or might be delivered to the party by a courier if the PCs are too busy to stop by base.

I have men in your organization that tell me Lorcan Kell is priority one. I have men in Kell's organization who can deliver him to you. Meet me at the Brave Hall fashion show, corner of Yearling and Healers in Central this afternoon, and we can make a deal.

—Morgan Cippiano

The fashion show is going on all week, every evening. Alternately, the party might think to approach the Family themselves, in which case Morgan will meet them wherever they suggest, confident they won't betray him.

Dressed to Kill.

Brave Hall is a stodgy gentleman's club intended for men from aristocratic families, though they have started allowing men and women with newly acquired fortunes in on a provisional basis. Everyone is in coats and top hats, drinking brandy and smoking cigars as they watch handsome young men and waifish women parade about in unorthodox fashion like seersucker suits, denim pants, and a huge variety of sashes which, Morgan is confident, will just be a passing trend.

Morgan has no great reason for meeting here, other than that he'd already scheduled it and figured it might motivate the party to dress nicer. He asks them out to a balcony for fresh air, and talks business while looking at the sunset across Flint Bay.

You Actually *Can* Refuse This Offer.

His offer is simple. He will have his man who has infiltrated Kell's guild give the crime boss an excuse to leave his hiding spot – most likely a fake meeting with Kell's contact to the Obscurati, a man who goes by the name **Norm**. Yes, Morgan says, he's got some inkling about Kell's involvement with the group, though he hopes the party knows more about them than he does, because he can't find out much of anything.

Morgan's man will report back with the route Kell will take, and it will be up to the party to take him down. Morgan recommends enlisting some of the locals to be ready to protest or riot in order to cut off certain roads and funnel Kell where they want him. Morgan's suggestion is one of the bridges along Stanfield Canal, where Kell won't be able to slip down alleys to escape.

What does he want in exchange?

First, a moratorium on murder investigations in Parity Lake, at least for a few weeks. It's dirty business, but this city deserves a better class of criminal. If his people don't cull the ranks of Kell's thugs, there'll just be another round of street wars in a few years. He'll practically be doing the city a favor, and he doesn't want his

people getting locked up for it.

Second, a prisoner release. Morgan reminds them that his 'family' originates in Crisillyir. Though he doesn't like to get involved in politics, he promised a relative that he'd help out a family friend if he could. That friend is one **Giovanni Algardi**.

The party remember him as an aged sculptor nicknamed "The Carver" provided they succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence (History) check. It eventually was discovered that he could animate his statues to assassinate people inside their own exquisitely-carved homes. Algardi confessed to the murders of several Risuri nobles, but international politics has kept him from the gallows for three years.

Morgan wants him released and teleported tomorrow to Alais Primos, capital of Crisillyir. Family members there will contact Morgan via *sending* to verify the delivery.

Finally (and you can skip this if it doesn't apply to the party), Morgan asks what Ashima-Shimtu told them. The party likely met with the imprisoned demoness several months ago, in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*. Morgan wants to know whether they made a deal with her. If pressed on how he knows about this, he just says that word travels fast when people land on islands that have been cursed for centuries.

Good Faith.

To show he is well-intentioned, Morgan offers them a free bit of information. The man in charge of the Obscurati facility here in Flint is Leone Quital, known as the "Steelslayer." Morgan reiterates that he doesn't know much about the actual group, but word has gotten around of the man making an appearance in The Nettles a few months ago, and he's distinctive enough that Morgan was able to find out who he is.

Morgan says that Leone is supposed to be able to control metal with his mind, to bend, break, or levitate it with ease. He doesn't know if it will be of much help in the current mission, but he can also give the party the location of the Quital family estate, north-east of Vendricce.

Making a Deal.

On their own, the party cannot hope to get either the moratorium or the prisoner release, but if they ask the king he'll back their decision. He has misgivings about releasing the Carver, though. It's a judgment call for the party whether they'll be able to nab Kell on their own, or if they need to accept Morgan's offer.

As for Morgan's third request, if the party shares the details of their encounter with Ashima-Shimtu he doesn't seem fazed at all.



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



He'll thank them for doing business, then go back to the show. After it's over, he'll pass it along via *sending* to his contacts in the clergy back in Crisillyir.

Man on the Inside.

If the party agrees, a few hours after Morgan gets word that Giovanni made it home safely, the RHC is visited by Morgan's man on the inside, **Dester Rathtine**. Scruffy, dressed like a common pickpocket but packing a pair of finely-crafted concealed daggers, Dester is cheeky, chatty, and a little arrogant. He's been a low-level street enforcer for Kell for years, but was recruited a few months ago by the Family as a double agent. Now he's one of the trusted runners who deliver information between Kell and his guild while he's in hiding.

Dester tells the party where Kell is hiding, about his bodyguards, and that he has mentioned a few times his "escape plan," which Dester thinks will let him teleport, but that he can only use once. If the RHC tries to assault him, he'll almost certainly be able to get away. He'd have used his ace in the hole, but it might take days to find him again.

What Dester thinks will work better is if he tells Kell that "the other guys" (by which he means the Obscurati) have agreed to get him to safety, and want to meet him. Dester suggests a bar on the south side of the Nida Street Bridge, along the Stanfield Canal, at 3 in the morning. The RHC could then whip up some sort of ritual to block Kell's get-away plan, and place it on the bridge, which would be deserted at that time of night.

The party can call upon Principal Minister Harkover Lee to perform a ritual akin to *dimensional shackles* on the bridge, blanketing a 100-foot radius in magic that prevents all methods of extradimensional movement (including teleportation or travel to a different plane of existence). See *Duke of Slaughter* (page 12) for how Kell reacts.

Sunset Bench*

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

The B-Team escorts Brakken and some dignitaries to one of Kell's fronts.

On the evening of the 10th of Spring, Brakken decides to take dignitaries from both Risur and Danor out for a night on the town, hoping that some fun will form bonds. The B-Team escorts the group from Hotel Aurum to a fancy club in North Shore, the *Sunset Bench*.

The outing consists of Brakken, **Geoff Massarde** (Risur-allied tiefling engineer), and **Captain Rosalyn Taylor** (representative from Danor's navy). The B-Team acts as bodyguards for all of them. Brakken leaves Feroz at the consulate, saying, "In Ber, you never bring your bear to a bar."

These NPCs reappear at the banquet in Part Two (included in *Cauldron Born* Part 3), but this scene and a few others with the B-Team gives the GM an opportunity to introduce them to the players, so a half-dozen new NPCs don't need to be presented all at once at the banquet. The short version goes like this:

- ✦ **Geoff Massarde.** Tiefling lush who helped build the Risuri flagship *Coaltongue*. Strong advocate for technology and reconciliation. Drinks too much and hits on women. Has a wand that can chill things with a touch, which he uses to make ice.
- ✦ **Captain Rosalyn Taylor.** One-eyed redheaded captain of *Freux Rouge*, Danor's last sail-powered warship. Old-fashioned, high-spirited, and responsible.

A Very Important Mission.

When Brakken brings up the outing with the B-Team, he claims he needs their help for what might be the most important part of the peace talks: making sure everyone has a good time at a club. Depending on your party's enthusiasm for the B-Team, you might breeze through this scene, or let them treat it as a mission to get the two sides to be friendly.

Busy Night.

Sunset Bench is a truly fine establishment, on the ground floor of a five-level building with apartments for two dozen wealthy occupants. Every hall and room is gently lit by colored glass sculptures that have *light* spells active within. Beyond the foyer and its coat/sword check, the main room of the club is circular, two hundred feet across, with a sunken central area and small private cubbies dotting the outer walls. At the far of the sunken area, spot lights illuminate the stage, behind which a curtain leads to the kitchens, dressing rooms, and storage. On the near side by the entrance, glass shelves loaded with various alcohols line the wall behind the bar.

The club is hosting the last night of a week-long tour starring local celebrity **Rock Rackus**. A band backs him up as he sings, narrates, and jokes about his many exploits across the world. He might even have a bit about the main PCs, if they interacted with him before. Brakken reads Rock's thoughts and is enthralled that the man's wild claims are actually true.

Also present tonight but keeping a low profile is Quentin Augst, who is meeting a representative of the Obscurati – a non-descript Risuri man who goes by Norm (actual name: Sylyx). Augst is trying to bargain for help from the conspiracy, and the desperation in his voice is slowly convincing Norm that they'll need to kill the lawyer before he can talk to the authorities.

When the B-Team enters the club, with a DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check they might recognize Augst in a corner of the crowded club, which could give them a chance to eavesdrop or make a move on the man, though he does have bodyguards lingering nearby in the crowd. If the constables succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check can get close enough without attracting attention, they hear the Ob rep offer an escape route to the Bleak Gate for Kell and a few of his lieutenants, but he can't send any forces.

Tip Your Servers.

Unless the constables suggest otherwise, Brakken takes a table near the stage, psychically nudging the current occupants to leave and make room.

After half an hour, Rack takes a break to let his band get some drinks, and he makes a point to remind everyone that this is his more casual show, put on by the greatest venue in the city, *Sunset*

Bench. But if you want to slum it a bit, he'll be headlining the Navras Opera House tomorrow night. After that he hops off the stage to hobnob with the crowd.

Wishing to hear more of Rock's tales, Brakken enlists Geoff and Rosalyn to go with him to meet the man. Shortly after they get up, the discussion between Augst and Norm gets heated, with Augst snapping at a waitress who comes by to offer them drinks, then yelling, "We're not running. That's just *throwing money away!* We need firepower, not a damn escape route! And because you couldn't just shut up and agree, *now* I've missed half the show!"

Norm tells Augst to calm down, but instead Augst gestures to his bodyguards and storms out. If Augst leaves unaccommodated, Norm finishes his drink and follows a minute later.

Making a Move.

If Augst realizes the constables are onto him, he'll leave in a hurry. If confronted, he looks at his men meaningfully, and suggests the two groups take things outside so no innocents get hurt. Then, just as he nears the exit, he says, "Do it, please." One of his bodyguards pulls out a flask of alchemist fire and chucks it at the shelves of liquor behind the bar. Flame bursts across the wall, and the crowd begins to panic.

AUGST AND THE OB REP

- Quentin Augst
- Norm, Obscurati liaison
- 3 Kell-guild pistoleers
- 4 Kell-guild scoundrels

Quentin Augst

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)

Hit Points 36 (8d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	15 (+1)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws WIS +3

Skills Deception +6, History +5, Insight +5, Intimidation +4, Investigation +5, Persuasion +4

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Giant, Primordial

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Eyes of Charming (3 charges). Augst can expend 1 charge as an action to cast the *charm person* spell (save DC 13) on a humanoid within 30 feet of him, provided that he and the target can see each other. The lenses regain all expended charges daily at dawn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Augst attacks twice.

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

Alchemist's Fire (3). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) fire damage, and the target takes 2 (1d4) fire damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature can end this damage by using its action to make a DC 10 Dexterity check to extinguish the flames.

Norm, Obscurati Liaison

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil sorcerer (shadow) 6

Armor Class 14 (*mage armor*)

Hit Points 33 (6d6+12)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws CON +5, CHA +6

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +6, Insight +4, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Obscurati Wand. Norm keeps a special wand stashed in his apartment that he can use to complete transition to the Bleak Gate after using the canal path (see below).

Sorcery Points (6/long rest). Norm can use sorcery points to gain additional spell slots, or sacrifice spell slots to gain additional sorcery points.

Creating Spell Slots & Sorcery Points. As a bonus action on his turn, Norm can expend one spell slot and either gain a number of sorcerer points equal to the slot's level or create a spell slot by expending sorcery points (1st-level—2 points, 2nd-level—3 points, 3rd-level—5 points).

Metamagic: Subtle Spell. When Norm casts a spell, he can spend 1 sorcery point to cast it without any somatic or verbal components.

Metamagic: Twinned Spell. When Norm casts a spell that targets only one creature and doesn't have a range of self, he can spend a number of sorcery points equal to the spell's level to target a second creature in range with the same spell (1 sorcery point if the spell is a cantrip). To be eligible for Twinned Spell, a spell must be incapable of targeting more than one creature at the spell's current level.

Shadow Eyes. Norm can spend 2 sorcery points as an action to cast *darkness* and he is able to see through it. He can also use a spell slot to cast *darkness* but when doing so it functions normally (and he is unable to see through it).

Shadow Hound. Norm can spend 3 sorcery points as a bonus action to conjure a shadow hound. The shadow hound targets one creature he can see within 120 feet and it uses the statistics of a **dire wolf** with the following changes:

- The shadow hound is Medium sized and has 3 temporary hit points when conjured.
- The hound treats other creatures and objects as difficult terrain but takes 5 force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.
- The hound innately knows the location of its target at the start of its turn (a hidden target ceases to be hidden to the hound).

Norm conjures the shadow hound in an unoccupied space within 30 feet of the target and it rolls its own initiative. The shadow hound always uses its turn to move in the most direct route towards its target and uses its action to attack the target, only taking opportunity attacks against the target and no other creatures.

In addition, the target has disadvantage when making saving throws against Norm's spells if the shadow hound is within 5 feet of it.

When 5 minutes have passed, it is reduced to 0 hit points, or its target is reduced to 0 hit points, the shadow hound disappears.



Spellcasting. Norm is a 6th-level spellcaster that uses Charisma as his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14; +6 to hit with spell attacks). Norm has the following spells prepared from the sorcerer's spell list: Cantrips: acid splash, mage hand, ray of frost, shocking grasp, true strike

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, disguise self, mage armor*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkvision, invisibility, suggestion, web*

3rd level (3 slots): none

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or thrown 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage.

Kell-Guild Pistoleer

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)

Hit Points 33 (6d8+6)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +4, Dex +4

Skills Athletics +6, Acrobatics +4, Deception +3, Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Grappler. The Kell-Guild Pistoleer has advantage on attack rolls against a creature they are grappling and they can use an action to try to pin a creature they've grappled. To do so, the Kell-Guild Pistoleer makes another grapple check. If they succeed, the Kell-Guild Pistoleer and the creature are both restrained until the grapple ends.

Strangler. When the Kell-Guild Pistoleer starts their turn grappling a creature, the creature they are grappling takes Sneak Attack.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). The Kell-Guild Pistoleer deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when they hit a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the Kell-Guild Pistoleer that isn't incapacitated and the Kell-Guild Pistoleer doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

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

Broken Pistol (10 bullets). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage.

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

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



Kell-Guild Scoundrels

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather, dual wielder)

Hit Points 33 (6d8+6)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +4, Dex +4

Skills Acrobatics +4, Animal Handling +3, Deception +3, Intimidation +3, Perception +1, Stealth +6

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/turn). The Kell-Guild Scoundrel deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when they hit a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the Kell-Guild Scoundrel that isn't incapacitated and the Kell-Guild Scoundrel doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Extra Attack. The Kell-Guild Scoundrel attacks twice.

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

Alchemist's Fire (2). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) fire damage, and the target takes 2 (1d4) fire damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature can end this damage by using its action to make a DC 10 Dexterity check to extinguish the flames.

Tanglefoot Bag (2). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target becomes covered in hardening sap and must succeed a DC 10 Strength check or gain the grappled condition. At the start of each of its turns, the target receives another check to remove the grappled condition. The sap can also be destroyed (AC 13, 6 hp).

Tactics.

The pistoleers grapple anyone who gets adjacent to their boss, but otherwise shoot to keep the constables at bay. Any shots that miss almost certainly strike someone in the club. The scoundrels gang up on vulnerable PCs to take them down, and shout at the constables to back off if they don't want anyone to die. The B-Team is likely outmatched here, and if given a chance, Augst and his men make a run for it.

If that's not feasible, such as if the constables called in back-up, Augst chucks his own alchemist fire, then pulls out his *wand of charm person*.

Norm silently casts *disguise self* then hides in the crowd and watches, but if it looks like Augst is about to be captured he might get involved (he'll be relying on the fact that onlookers will be too focused on the ruckus with Augst to notice Norm standing there and wiggling his fingers casting spells). Once Augst is down, Norm will shock him again to make sure the man is dead. This won't stop the party from speaking with his corpse or spirit, but it should reduce what they can get out of him.

If Augst and his crew successfully get away, Norm will suggest to his superiors that the lawyer needs to be silenced.



Follow-Up.

If captured, Augst tries to cut a deal: a reduced sentence in exchange for information. This provides ten Task Force Tokens for the main party's efforts against the guild, and also counts as 2 Strikes.

Additionally, Augst knows the five arcane signs that are required to activate the rusted ring gates along Stanfield Canal. When the guild smuggled materials to "the guys on the other side," as he puts it, they would mark crates or objects as they were loaded onto barges going down the canal in the real world. Though the Ob were secretive, Augst figured out that each bridge had ring of rusted metal worked into its stone on the underside, and the sigils were linked to each gate. As the barge went under the bridges one by one, each gate would draw the marked item more fully into the Bleak Gate. Eventually the item would shift fully over, disappear from the barge, and plunge into the canal, where he assumes it would be recovered by the other side's men.

One time he did a test, marking an empty box with the five signs, and sending it on a barge when the Ob were not expecting a delivery. The box did disappear from the barge briefly, but the crew spotted it floating in the water behind the ship and recovered it. Augst isn't sure if somehow the Ob can turn their gates on and off, or if there's some extra process at the end that's required to make the transition permanent.

It's the latter, by the way. When the Ob expect a shipment, a team waits at the end of the Bleak Gate analogue of the canal, then casts a minor spell from a wand on each object (or person) coming through. If they don't cast the spell, the object slips back to reality after a few minutes. Norm has one of these wands, which he uses to slip back and forth on his missions, but he keeps it stashed in his apartment in North Shore.

Augst can share these signs, which can get the party mostly to the Bleak Gate. Capturing Norm gives them a chance to get his wand (he also knows the arcane sigils), which would complete the deal. See Canal Route (see Pick Your Team in Act Three, Expedition to the Bleak Gate) if they try this method.

Dead Lawyer.

If Augst dies, it only counts as a single Strike, plus maybe one token if the party can use magic to interrogate his corpse and asks the right questions.

Escaped Lawyer.

If Augst gets away, Brakken comes to the constables and tells them that he overheard someone muttering, "We'll have to kill him before he talks." He actually just noted it telepathically, since it was one of the strongest thoughts in the room.

Norm will follow Augst, waiting for him to leave himself exposed without his bodyguards. Augst, though, is loath to run when he thinks he can salvage things. He holes up in his home and keeps sending runners out to try to coordinate with the guild.

After a few hours, Norm comes up with a plan. He knows Augst's fondness for opera, and recalls Rock Rackus mentioning that he'd be performing the next evening (Spring 11). So he purchases box seats for Augst and his children, enchants the tickets with a subtle suggestion, and has them delivered to Augst's house in the morning, with a fake note from Rock Rackus asking him to come.

Augst obeys the suggestion and attends, along with his children. He travels in a pair of carriages, never far from his bodyguards. But once he's at the opera house he asks his guards to wait outside the box. Norm has tickets for the next box over, discreet enough that no one will see him casting, and close enough to kill the lawyer with his favorite spell, *shocking grasp*.

Of course, if the B-Team or the party or their task force put in much effort, they can probably get enough manpower to swoop in and capture Augst before Norm gets a chance to assassinate him (treat this as an Assault or Sting against 8 hostiles), but smart parties might wait for the Ob to make their move, in order to get more information. Indeed, if the party does capture Augst, they might use him as bait to draw out the Obscurati.



Duke of Slaughter

Action. Tactical. Level II.

The party tries to capture Lorcan Kell.

There are a couple of ways this can go down. Note that stats for Kell-guild foes appear in Appendix D.

KELL'S TEAM

- Lorcan Kell
- Kate Glenn
- Nick Reder
- 3 Kell-guild veteran pistolers

Task Force Failure.

If the party gets five or fewer strikes against Kell's guild, they're unable to put enough pressure on Kell to leave his hiding spot, and they don't gather enough intelligence to figure out where he is. On the afternoon of the 12th, a representative of the Ob informs Kell via *sending* that they'll get him out if he's willing to work for them. Kell agrees, but wants to send a message before he leaves behind his guild.

Kell and his bodyguards leave the safe house at 3:00 AM on the 13th, track down the B-Team, and kill them. See Massacre below. He and his bodyguards show up later in the Cauldron Hill complex.

Task Force Partial Victory.

If the party gets six strikes against Kell's guild, they're able to figure out where he's holed up. The party has a chance to catch him, but he has a massive advantage because of his *gatecrasher charm*. See Safe House Raid, below.

The Ob still have agents in the RHC and police, and so if Kell manages to escape the party here, the Ob track him down and bring him to the Cauldron Hill complex. As above, he likely goes after the B-Team first, unless he's been substantially injured.

Task Force Victory.

With eight strikes, Kell sees his empire destroyed, his allies falling or turning against him. The Ob don't want to be dragged into the conflict, though they will help him if he can get to safety.

The party learns where Kell is hiding and have time to make some sort of plan. Enough members of his guild turn on him that the party should be aware of his *gatecrasher charm*, and they likely concoct a plan to let him run and then ambush him at a spot that blocks all methods of extradimensional movement (including teleportation or travel to a different plane of existence). Most likely is that he's tricked into fleeing at 3:00 AM on the 13th, and his route will lead him into an ambush. See Road Ambush (page 13).

Family Assistance?

If the party takes Morgan Cippiano's offer for help, things look similar to the Road Ambush scenario. However, if there are still moles in the task force, the moles warn Kell that Dester Rathnine is a turncoat. Kell turns the party's ambush against them. See Cruel Variant (page 13).

Massacre.

There are several scenarios where Kell avoids being caught. He might trick them into chasing his carriage (with a thug inside dressed like him as a decoy), or he might use his *gatecrasher charm* to outrun the task force, or they might simply never get close enough to him. In these scenarios, Kell will try to spitefully kill some RHC constables – the B-Team – before he links up with the Ob and goes to the Bleak Gate.

The tone here might be pure spite, or it could be to show that Kell outwitted them and is taunting them. It might even be retaliation if the B-Team captured Augst. Most likely, Kell and his bodyguards attack the B-Team as they're nearing the Beran consulate at dawn on the 13th. Narratively, the purpose of this scene is to give the players a sense of Kell's capabilities before their main PCs deal with him.

Tactics.

The pistolers likely strike first, trying to rush from hiding and grapple weak constables. Kell stalks into melee after them. If anyone seems to be legitimately a threat against Kell, Nick grabs them and pulls them away. Kate hangs back and readies to counterspell any takedown magic like *hold person*.

The constables should be horribly out-matched, and unless they run, Kell should slaughter them. Play up the smug enjoyment he gets from sticking knives in people or gouging out eyes, and leaving foes debilitated with bleeding wounds. If he deals enough damage to outright kill someone, the killing blow likely involves a limb coming off or throat being slit.

If he can blind someone, he'll dump that person to the ground and leave them as a witness. Otherwise, whenever he has only one foe left, he'll use nonlethal damage to knock them out, then will carve out their eyes and have Kate stabilize them so they can live to tell the tale.

Kell is under orders not to kill Brakken, but if the minotaur (or his bear) are present, he'll gladly cut them up and leave them barely alive. If the constables miraculously overpower him, he'll try to flee when reduced to 20 hit points. Otherwise, he cuts down the B-Team then slips away. Any witnesses are too horrified to even consider getting involved.

Safe House Raid.

Kell's safe house is the fourth floor of a tenement, and his group hides inside a *rope trick* to avoid divination. One thug watches the roof, another waits at the base of the *rope trick* with a bell tied to a rope around his ankle. If he isn't careful to remove the rope, any movement will ring out a warning to those inside the rope trick. The third thug rests in the rope trick, so the trio can work in shifts.

There is a clockwork time bomb next to the window, and another next to the door (the same type the Kell-guild technologists had in the first encounter). They are primed so a move action can activate a four-round fuse. The countdown can be stopped with a DC 22 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check, or the bomb can be pried loose from the wall with a DC 17 Strength check.

If either bomb explodes it blows up the whole roof, dealing 35 (10d6) fire damage to everyone on the fourth floor (DC 14 Dexterity saving throw halves damage), and 7 (2d6) fire damage to everyone on the third floor (DC 12 Dexterity saving throw negates damage).

The party can deploy any officers from the task force who haven't already gone on missions today. This would be a deadly fight for a party of 7th level characters, but backed up by two dozen officers, they have a good shot. The trick is keeping Kell from getting away.

Tactics.

If attackers are spotted, Kell and his people try to take up defensive positions away from windows. If he has at least a minute before the task force breaches the building, Kell gets one of his thugs to don a disguise – a top hat and coat – and be a decoy. The man heads down to the ground floor, goes to a rear entrance, and activates the *figurine of wondrous power* to conjure the mechanical carriage. Then he jumps in and speeds off as fast as a horse. Depending on who chases the decoy, Kell might be able to slip away.

If forced to fight, he and his team do so brutally, hoping to break the assault. If Kate goes down, or if Kell is reduced below 40 hit points, he decides to run for it. He triggers the fuse on the time bomb, then jumps out a window and plummets to a canal thirty feet below. Four rounds later, the top floor explodes.

If he thinks he's still not clear, Kell activates his *gatecrasher charm*. That gives him about a five minute head start, and he runs for The Nettles, where he can leave a few signs that will draw the Ob's attention. If the party doesn't manage to track him down within two hours, the Ob scoop him up and deliver him to the Bleak Gate. Of course, clever parties might tail him and then steal the Ob's equipment so they can head into the Bleak Gate themselves.

Road Ambush.

Kell can be tricked into thinking he's meeting with the Ob, and convinced to head to a rendezvous on the south side of the Nida Street Bridge. Though Principal Minister Harkover Lee is not a warmage and won't join the fight, he can prepare a ritual to blanket a 100-foot radius of the bridge with an effect that blocks all methods of extradimensional movement (including teleportation or travel to a different plane of existence) for several hours.

Kell travels to the fake meeting in his mechanical carriage, and likely the party can rig something to block his path. The bridge is 60 feet wide, 400 feet long, stone with metal railings and street lamps spaced widely enough that the party could hide. Also, at each of the pilings supporting the bridge, broad stairwells lead down to landings and small docks, 30 feet below. A few boats moor at these pilings, and so dozens of officers could hide just down the stairs.

Tactics.

If the party manages to block the carriage, Kell sends out a thug to see what the problem is, but he stays inside. The carriage is bullet proof and its doors can be locked for security (much like in the first encounter; see what we did there?). Kell refuses to surrender, and will try to activate his *gatecrasher charm* when he realizes he's

trapped. When that fails, he'll try to fight his way to the edge of the bridge and dive off (at a spot that doesn't have a dock below). He'll still have to swim at least 70 feet to get beyond the dimensionally locked area.

If he does manage to avoid being filled with bullets and gets away, he links up with the Ob in the Nettles, as above.

Cruel Variant.

If the party relies on Morgan's man on the inside, Dester Rathnine, before they manage to get rid of all three moles in the task force, Kell lays a trap of his own for the party. He sends out his carriage, but when it stops on the bridge, no one gets out. If anyone opens it, they pull a cord that triggers the fuses for four clockwork time bombs stuck to the inside walls. And sitting right in the middle, bound, gagged, and panicked, is Dester Rathnine. Iron manacles around his feet loop through an iron ring on the floor of the carriage.

Kell uses the distraction to track down the B-Team to massacre them before joining up with the Ob, but he'll listen carefully for the distant sound of a massive explosion.

Interrogation

Social. Real-Time.

If the party takes Kell alive, or at least recovers a body...

So, the party has captured Kell. What have they won?

You can let the party interrogate the crime boss, or leave it to "professionals." Kell resists normal threats, intimidation, and even torture, but he can't resist magical compulsion. A quick *dominate person* by Harkover Lee gets Kell to share everything he knows about the Obscurati. It's mostly about the local cell's operations in the real world and how they get back and forth between the worlds. He's never been to the Bleak Gate facility, and hasn't even met Leone.

Like Quentin Augst, though, he knows the five sigils used to send crates down the Stanfield Canal. Also, he has a stash of amulets (just enough for the party and maybe a few other key NPCs) various Ob agents used when they shifted partially into the Bleak Gate. The magic of the amulets has faded out so Kell could never use them, but with Harkover's aid the party can reactivate enough to get the party equipped.

Finally, he managed to recover a broken wand of the sort the Ob use to finalize the transition. Like the amulets, Harkover can figure out what magic the wand had and reverse engineer it. With all these elements combined, the party can now undertake the Canal Route (see Pick Your Team in Act Three, Expedition to the Bleak Gate).

If they killed Kell, it takes a day to arrange for a powerful cleric from Crisillyir, **Archmissionary Cornelius Eboracum**, to teleport in. He performs frankly evil magic to drag Kell's soul out of the afterlife and compel it to provide the information above.

If Kell is defeated or dead, the Ob aren't going to go to the effort to rescue or resurrect him. Unless, that is, you get to the battle in the Obscurati complex, and the party is having too easy a time. Then...who knows? Ghost Kell? Golem Kell? Cyborg ghost?

Act One, Thread Two: One Season Slain

IN THIS THREAD, THE PARTY AIDS ASRABEY IN stopping Ekossigan.

Following Fey

Exploration. Montage. Level 15.

The party keeps tabs on Asrabey or looks for Ekossigan themselves.

Following Varal's brief meeting with the king, the dreadnought spends the next day gathering information from various contacts in Flint. The party is likely occupied on the first day with setting up the task force and looking for the dwarven radicals, giving Varal free leave to meet with sympathizers to the Unseen Court, all of whom he asks to keep an eye out for Ekossigan.

His contacts include members of the Vekeshi Mystics, like **Rear Admiral Morris Dawkins** (known as the **Old Stag**) in North Shore, and possibly a Vekeshi PC. Many gnomes and elves grant him hospitality, including **The Alderman**, a gnome beadle who lives in an alder tree in Pine Island, and **Valentina Yorke**, an elvish druid working in Central District to ensure their subrail construction does not anger the local spirits.

He also speaks with numerous fey throughout the city, including a pixie named **Mugwort** who has been hiding in the rafters at the RHC offices in Central District as a spy, and **The Trash Heap**, a filthy hag-like entity who lives beneath the city's dump northeast of the Nettles and has a penchant for giving out strange cast-off objects with prophetic usefulness.

One person he is unable to reach is **Gale**, the fey terrorist.

Following Asrabey.

Keeping an eye on the high elf is tough, and doesn't earn the party much, except perhaps for political ammunition that goes beyond the scope of this adventure.

Tailing him to each of his meetings requires a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check but also a DC 20 Dexterity (Stealth) check to keep from being noticed. The tail can make the Wisdom (Perception) check with disadvantage by hanging back farther in order to make the Dexterity (Stealth) check with advantage.

If Asrabey spots his tail he will demand once that the character leave him be or else be cut down. He actually draws a weapon and will give the PC a minute to run away. The second time he spots his tail, he immediately attacks, though he will not intentionally kill. Remember how we said Asrabey is ridiculously stubborn? He also really doesn't like being followed.

Frosty Relations.

Varal shows up at the RHC office (or wherever the party is) on the morning of the 10th, as he promised. He explains that he has met with people around the city, none of whom have seen Ekossigan.

A Powerful Ally.

Asrabey's stats are presented in Appendix B, but generally you should try to avoid involving him in combat. He's dramatically more powerful than any of the PCs, and his assistance would make fights too easy and take the spotlight away from the party. We suggest things for him to do in each combat encounter that involve him in the action without having him face the same foes as the party.

Where's Ekossigan?

To open a portal to the Bleak Gate, Ekossigan needs to sacrifice thirty-one children on the branches of a century old tree. He has found the Gallo's School for Boys, an orphanage founded a century ago in 401 A.O.V. by druids. It eventually faded into obscurity, but it has continued to raise children quietly. The orphanage sits in the boughs of a massive tree, a hundred feet high, about 7 miles east of the city, in the southern Cloudwood.

But he had trouble finding several of his contacts in the Cloudwood, and he suspects that Ekossigan, as a powerful fey lord, is gathering the local fey in the forest under his banner.

Cloudwood Tension.

The party just needs to read the newspaper to see that the Cloudwood has been a hotbed of unexplained phenomena for the past few days. If they check with police reports and civilian complaints, they also learn that yesterday morning (the 9th) the body of a young boy was found strangled, lying in a stream, partially gnawed on by cats. No one in the district has reported any missing children, but people in the district are begging the police to protect their children.

On the 11th, the Flint Tribune (if it still exists) will break the story, and also accuse the RHC of endangering children by wasting police manpower on a violent and pointless crackdown in Parity Lake.

Where to Look.

Asrabey knows the party has had previous contact with Gale, and he wants them to arrange a meeting. He believes that even if she is sympathetic to the fey cause, she is nevertheless an elf, not a true fey. She might be persuaded to help, whereas the true fey are compelled to serve Ekossigan.

(If the party did not meet Gale in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, Asrabey still asks them for help. Perhaps the party can find her by working through a journalist she gave an interview to, or pulling police files to figure out where she's most often sighted.)

If the party still has the *messenger wind* Gale offered in *The Dying Skyseer*, they can easily arrange a meeting for as soon as the same morning. Otherwise they can head into the Cloudwood to speak with the local druids, who can get a message to her. Any Vekeshi Mystic PC would know how to reach her as well, through a relay of contacts.

Tell Me About Ekossigan.

Varal does not go into much detail about the affairs of the Unseen Court, but he has had some dealings with Ekossigan in the past. The rebel fey has a nature that changes with the seasons, and sometimes when an event really affects him, his change in mood will change the seasons, leading to freak snowstorms in summer or trees blossoming in the middle of winter.

As for Ekossigan's combat abilities, Asrabey relates that the fey has shown little in the way of offense. He has great sway over true fey, though, so his minions may be a greater threat than he is. Indeed, if any members of the party are actual fey, Asrabey gives them a small charm to wear – a ring with gear teeth on the inside, within which a pair of other gears can spin – that will protect them from Ekossigan's influence.

Being part of the Unseen Court makes Ekossigan almost completely immune to divination that try to find him. Like many fey he can step from here to there without stepping in the space between, and around him arrows never hit what they're aimed at.

His skin is treebark, making him hard to harm. Varal then goes on to smile and mention that trees burn – while lightly igniting his sword for effect.

Casing the Cloudwood

Exploration. Montage. Level 7.

Ekossigan is hiding somewhere in the Cloudwood.

There are three major groups in the Cloudwood that the RHC have easy access to speak with. The local populace can be spoken with by wandering the streets, stopping at street cafes, and the like. The other two groups are conveniently located in the same office – the local police force, and the district Mayor, Doyle Idylls.

The Mayor.

Doyle Idylls is spooked about recent events happening in his district, but he officially blames them on local hooligans rather than actual fey intruders. Still, he's having his building's exterior painted with a coat of crushed mulberry and powdered chicken bone – a supposed ward against fey intrusion.

Idylls knows the party is heading up the task force against Kell; some of his police were pulled away for it, and he's getting yelled at by the locals who are afraid for their children. He won't readily meet with the party, though they can just barge in on him, or try to convince his secretary. Forcing the issue will make the mayor and his police uncooperative.

The Police.

The main police office is built on the backside of the mayor's mansion. Led by a boisterous second-generation immigrant from Danor, **Sergeant Langlois**, the police won't talk to the party unless they get approval from the mayor. If a chat is approved, the sergeant and his men can bring the PCs up to speed on a rash of vandalism that's overtaken many public offices in the district. During their visit to the station, the officers complain about oddities: rotten bird eggs keep falling on the sidewalk, gophers chew through his basement,

and every book in the building mysteriously lost its last page.

They can also provide detailed maps of the forest, which is a nightmare to patrol. The police just set up guard posts along key trails to try to protect the district borders, and leave the deep woods alone. There are dozens of square miles of forest within a day's walk of the city where Ekossigan could be hiding, so just roaming and looking is pointless without some sort of lead.

Sergeant Langlois and his men can be requisitioned to help search the forest for fey. He really can't spare the officers, since too many of his people are already on the task force, but if the party pulls strings he'll go along with it. Another option is just to use the task force men, if the party thinks they can spare them.

The Kid.

If the party asks to look at the body of the child found in the woods, it's a grisly sight. He was found naked, covered with patterns of green paint, which a DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies as old fey ritual markings from the time when men regularly fought the fey, nearly two thousand years ago. In-depth research, or a DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check, can pinpoint the ritual: a curse on the child's family to cause paranoia and in-fighting.

The fingers and toes have been gnawed at by cats, and the throat is crushed. Closer examination with a DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the child wasn't strangled, but hung by a rope. Also, he has dozens of thin lacerations across his body, like you'd get running through trees and brush naked. That, combined with numerous small fractures scattered throughout his body, might clue the party to the fact that he fell through tree branches.

What happened was the boy, one of the orphans at the Gallo school, was too old for Ekossigan to use in the ritual. He instead hung the boy from the tree the orphanage sits in, then cut him loose and sent some of his gremlins down to place the body where it would be found, several miles from the orphanage. Since the child was an orphan and he was being "raised by the state," the curse is spreading distrust through the whole district.

A *remove curse* cast on the body will relieve the whole district, and lets the party call in one free favor with the locals, which doesn't count against their normal limit per day. If the curse persists, though, tempers will soon flare.

The Locals.

Locals don't want to talk, and if they realize the party is law enforcement, they'll be unfriendly and angry, blaming them for leaving their children without proper protection.

Aside from a few blocks that make up the business part of the district, the Cloudwood is very rural, with farmland dominating the north and woodlands on the low mountains and further south. The place barely qualifies as part of the city. Your nearest neighbor might be over a rocky hill a half mile away. Nevertheless, people have been getting into fights, devolving into little tribes that are edging closer to a fight.

If the party can convince people to talk, they'll explain that local nighttime offerings of milk and sliced fruit to the fey have all been disappearing – normally only a few offerings disappear overnight (generally this is thought to be the work of starving homeless folk).



A DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check suggests that the offerings are taken in greater quantities when the fey themselves feel the need to pay tribute to something greater.

People used to give these offerings out of respect for the fey, but since Doyle Idylls became mayor here and began trying to convince locals that the fey are a threat, the offerings have become more protective, a measure to prevent bad luck. If the party's clever, they might try to follow the fey who snag the offerings.

Fey Sympathizers.

In the deep woods, a handful of lumberjacks, farmers, and hunters are upset with Doyle Idylls's anti-fey sentiment. Though unfriendly to outsiders, if the party can earn their trust or feign having similar beliefs, they can learn that the group knows there's a major fey in the forest, and they're trying to meet him. Their goal is to force the mayor out. They have no idea what Ekossigan's real plan might be, but if the party seems stuck you can have these people guide them to the orphanage at the last minute.

Fey Contacts.

Any characters who have pre-established fey contacts with the forest cannot find their contacts. The intent here is not to punish the player or take away a lead, but rather to show what powerful influence Ekossigan has.

Her Majesty, Princess Fairy Dust

Social. Real-Time. Level 8.

The fey terrorist Gale might know how to find Ekossigan.

Gale has contact with a creepy gremlin named Ellik, who acted as a courier for the Unseen Court. When Ekossigan arrived in Cloudwood, Ellik sought Gale and asked for her help. She met with Ekossigan, and he played to her desires of being accepted by the fey, sweeping her up in a narrative of making a grand difference to the world.

Before she realized the danger, she had agreed to help him, and the binding power of a pact to a fey lord now compels her into his service. To make her a more useful tool, he imbued her with a sliver of the power of summer, giving her destructive weather magic that she never possessed before.

Gale hates Danor and theoretically should agree with Ekossigan, but as she sees the rapid pace of the fey gathering and preparing, she grows nervous. She wants to help the party, and struggles against her master's will so as not to betray them outright. He has ordered her to warn him of any threats, and to kill anyone who is trying to stop him, but that leaves her enough wiggle room of interpretation that she can spare a few minutes of conversation.

When the party approaches her, she asks to meet them at a switchback trail in the forest (if you still have the map from *Dying Skyseer*, that works). She keeps her distance, hiding in the trees – a DC 28 Wisdom (Perception) check for range and the concealment of trees – and speaks to them via *message*.

She warns them that Ekossigan is powerful, and asks that they leave. She knows Ekossigan plans to go into the Bleak Gate, and lead a small army of fey to Cauldron Hill. Though she's afraid of him, she thinks it will be best if the party just lets him go. If they insist, she confesses her mistake in promising to help the fey lord, and how she will have to fight the party if they continue.

The party has a chance to finagle around the legalese of Gale's bond to Ekossigan, such as if they convincingly claim they have no desire to stop Ekossigan. They can also break her free with a *remove curse* or *dispel magic*, and *protection from evil* temporarily blocks the compulsion.

Gale doesn't know where Ekossigan is; she communicates with *message*. But if she's freed from Ekossigan's bond, she can lead the party to Ellik, the gremlin who is his lead henchman. Ellik has been to the Bleak Gate several times over his long life, and a year ago he took Gale, but the same route won't be available for years. If Ekossigan intends to get there, it will involve powerful magic, and she worries what the price will be.

Tactics

If the party insists on confronting Ekossigan, Gale attacks them, taking the horribly unfair advantage of being a flying spellcaster. She already has cast *mage armor*, *mirror image*, and *nondetection* (included in her stats above). She casts *storm shield* and uses her control winds ability to subject the PCs to strong winds, with the result that she's constantly upwind from them, and ranged weapon attacks against her are made with disadvantage.

Then she hovers 100 feet away, flies up to launch *lightning bolts* and *magic missiles*, then takes cover behind the treetops, 60 feet above the ground. If any PCs start to approach she drops a *fog cloud* on them to slow them down, then changes position. If she runs low on spells she'll flee.

Throughout the fight she shouts that she's sorry, and that she's trying to resist. If Asrabey is with the party he hesitates to join a battle. High elf women are exceedingly precious and rare, and he doesn't want to risk her being harmed. If the party can convince him they can break Gale free from her compulsion he'll help, but will grow wrathful against any PC who does lethal damage to her.

The party will likely have to use cover and stealth to defeat Gale, or else simply outlast her. *Fireball* works pretty well too, but might kill her. If she's knocked out, she descends safely to the ground, as with *feather fall*.

Aftermath.

If Gale manages to defeat the party, she contacts Ekossigan, who sends gremlins to recover them and bring them to him. He cannot use them as part of his ritual to reach the Bleak Gate, but he'll gladly hang them from the orphanage's branches as a warning to those who oppose the Unseen Court.

If the party defeats Gale, she rambles semi-consciously about Ellik's location, the Nutgarden, an abandoned beer house that is infamous in the district for burning down and claiming the lives of forty people a few years ago. This information lets them skip the "Finding a Gremlin" part of the challenge in *It Takes a Gremlin*, and gives them a chance to go after the gremlin during daylight.

Hana “Gale” Soliogn

Medium humanoid (high elf), chaotic neutral sorcerer 9

Armor Class 14 (*mage armor*)**Hit Points** 31 (9d6)**Speed** 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws CON +4, CHA +8**Skills** Arcana +6, Deception +8, Insight +5, Nature +6, Perception +5, Persuasion +8, Stealth +5, Survival +5**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15**Languages** Common, Elvish, Primordial, Sylvan**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)**Air Affinity.** Gale can innately control winds, and is immune to the effects of strong wind. She can fly at will and can speak with flying animals, which usually are friendly to her.**Control Winds (9/long rest).** Gale can control winds in a 360-foot radius. Each time she uses this ability it lasts for 1 minute. Activating or controlling it is an action, and as long as she is not incapacitated it continues for the duration. She can increase winds by up to three steps (enough to turn a still day into a severe storm of 50 miles per hour, or a strong breeze into a small hurricane). Any creature other than her in the area must make a DC 16 Strength saving throw at the start of its turn to resist the winds or is knocked prone.**Fey Ancestry.** Gale has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.**Sorcery Points (9/long rest).** Gale can use sorcery points to gain additional spell slots, or sacrifice spell slots to gain additional sorcery points.**Creating Spell Slots & Sorcery Points.** As a bonus action on her turn, Gale can expend one spell slot and either gain a number of sorcerer points equal to the slot's level or create a spell slot by expending sorcery points (1st level—2 points, 2nd level—3 points, 3rd level—5 points, 4th level—7 points).**Metamagic: Subtle Spell.** When Gale casts a spell, she can spend 1 sorcery point to cast it without any somatic or verbal components.**Metamagic: Quickened Spell.** When Gale casts a spell that has a casting time of 1 action, she can spend 2 sorcery points to change the casting time to 1 bonus action for this casting.**Spellcasting.** Gale is a 9th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). Gale knows the following spells from the sorcerer spell list:**Cantrips (at will):** *mage hand, minor illusion, mending, message, prestidigitation, shocking grasp***1st level (4 slots):** *detect magic, feather fall, fog cloud, mage armor, magic missile***2nd level (3 slots):** *mirror image, shatter***3rd level (3 slots):** *clairvoyance, lightning bolt, nondetection***4th level (1 slot):** *storm shield* (as *fire shield* but grants immunity to and deals lightning damage)**ACTIONS****Wild Swing.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 bludgeoning damage.**Torches and Pitchforks*****Social. Real-Time. Level 4.***An angry mob disrupts Brakken's visit to the Cloudwood.*

At dawn on the 11th, the B-Team meets Brakken at the Beran consulate, picks up a dignitary from each side, and sets out for the Cloudwood on another bid to create some unity between the two groups.

Today's outing involves **Kian Doherty** (Risur's Minister of Agriculture) and **Pierre Riquier** (Danoran Minister of Magic), and Brakken hopes taking them out to the city district famous for its fey-friendly woodlands will be a bonding experience. Unfortunately, as the trio is enjoying some light brunch while hummingbirds flit about and a monkey snags their scraps, an angry mob is gathering just down the street, incited to paranoia by Ekossigan's curse.

(If the party already removed the curse, this scene is very short and pleasant, *sans* angry mob.)

- ♦ **Kian Doherty.** Well-groomed 40-something who values Risur's druidic traditions and hates being in Flint. Sullen, but trying to keep an open mind.
- ♦ **Pierre Riquier.** A rare Danoran half-elf, Pierre came from a rich family that could afford magic lessons for him. Heavy spectacles, messy hair, full of trivia about magic. Weak-willed and obsequious, he isn't that interested in magic, honestly, but he's one of the few people qualified for his position.

A Wee Squabble.

The restaurant is next to a creek that weaves under several small bridges on the street. Other small shops line the road, and the mayor's mansion is just two blocks away. A few minutes into the meal, a young girl runs into view from between the buildings on the other side of the creek. She hops the creek, scampers past Brakken and the B-Team, and starts yelling for people to help.

A few seconds behind her, a woman in a sun dress holding a rolling pin runs to the creek, then stops when she sees the girl calling for help. After a moment's panic she turns and runs.

All that happened was that the girl, **Circe**, was taking a shortcut, and she went past the house of the woman, **Relle**. Relle didn't recognize the girl and yelled at her to get away from her house. Then, for no reason either of them rationally understands, Circe threw a rock at the house, and Relle gave chase. Nudged by Ekossigan's curse, the tiny distrust of a stranger turned into a chase.

Within a minute, Circe gets a dozen people to come out and meet her in the street, where she explains that she was chased, and she thinks the woman was going to kill her. The crowd starts getting weapons from their houses and shops, and over the next ten minutes

Timing.

This scene takes place the morning after Brakken's visit to the *Sunset Bench*, detailed in Thread One. We apologize for the timeline being split this way, we hope this arrangement creates a good pace. Also, if you want to shuffle things a bit (such as to fill out a session that has run short), you might move this up to the morning of the 10th, or even the afternoon of the 9th, but no sooner.



the group grows to thirty people. Then they're ready, and they start to follow Circe back to the house so they can drag Relle out, search the house for signs of witchcraft, and burn the building down.

While the crowd is gathering, the constables that make a DC 8 Wisdom (Perception) check notice another kid, dressed in long sleeves and with a hood hiding his face, watching from the creek bed. He has a bundle in his arms. None of the locals care about *this* stranger, because it is actually a gremlin disguised as a kid. He was out collecting the neighborhood's offerings and got drunk on some stolen wine, so he just now woke up.

Preventing a Riot.

Brakken can sense that the crowd won't respond to reason, and Pierre is too feeble to want to get involved, but Kian doesn't like how things are looking. When the mob is just forming, Kian gets up and asks what's going on. The crowd shoves him away and tells him to stop sticking his nose into things. A few minutes later, when it's obvious things are about to get violent, Brakken tries to leave, but Kian again tries to calm the group down, and they attack him, shoving him and knocking him down and eventually throwing him into the creek, where they pelt him with rocks – nothing big enough to kill him, but he eventually curls into a ball and yells for mercy.

A show of force from the constables – incapacitating at least four of the crowd – can get the mob to break up. Killing anyone, though, leads to a riot. If the group doesn't get involved, the mob leaves Kian cowering in the stream and goes to burn down Relle's house.

If the party goes after the gremlin, it runs. The constables can try to pursue the goblin (see *It Takes a Gremlin* below), and have a decent shot because they're chasing the critter during daylight. They might not know what to do with it if they catch it, though.

Further Trouble.

A few other small mobs attack people during the day. One albino cow is lynched.

Later that afternoon, people start frantically chopping down trees as a rumor spreads that "someone" is going to set fires tonight. The fires never occur.

The next morning, a small crowd chases down a police officer and beats him to death, on the rationale that if the police aren't going to protect the children, maybe they actually are the ones killing children. (No other children have been killed yet, but rumors are rampant.) Any Cloudwood police helping the party at this point return to their station to protect it.

Finally, at sunset on the 12th, if the curse hasn't been broken, the wave of paranoia reaches its peak. A huge mob of a hundred townfolk rally around Circe, who is convinced that Mayor Idylls is a witch. The mob storms his house and a dozen people die before the police give up and flee. The mob then drags the mayor to a dairy and drown him in a huge tub of milk, then leave him out as an offering to the fey, in hopes the madness will end.

And ironically it does. Since the curse was tied to "the state" raising the sacrificed child, killing the local head of state ends the curse. Still, the district never quite returns to normal.

It Takes a Gremlin

Action. Montage. Level 7.

Ellik or another gremlin might lead the party to Ekossigan.

Chasing gremlins is a tough proposition in the middle of the night, especially if the PCs don't possess darkvision or a quickly activated light source. Given these conditions, successfully chasing down a gremlin and subduing it is broken down into a Skill Encounter as follows. This is meant to be a challenging pursuit, and it might take the party a few tries to get it right.

- ◆ **Key Skills:** Deception, Intimidation, Nature, Perception, Persuasion, Stealth, Survival.
- ◆ **Difficulty:** Unless otherwise noted, all skill checks are DC 21.
- ◆ **Goals:** The party must first find a gremlin (of the nuglub variety; page 21). Then they can either grab it and interrogate it, or chase it and follow it back to Ekossigan.

Finding a Gremlin.

Ekossigan's gremlin servants operate in the later hours of the night, typically between 2:00 and 4:00 AM. The tiny creatures move from house to house, ignoring those with any visible light sources and using their diminutive height to sneak under windows to stealthily claim the offerings, which they carelessly shove into a large sack. The actual quality of the offering is not important, merely the latent spiritual power invested in them. The gremlins actively hide and stick to the darkness when retrieving offerings.

Recommended Tactics.

The party can spot gremlins only after midnight, up until about 6:00 AM. On the night of the 12th, the gremlins are active instead from 8:00 PM until 11:00 PM, at which point they all rush to the orphanage for the ritual.

Checks made between 2:00 and 4:00 AM, when the gremlins are most active, are made with a +2 bonus to the required skill check. On the other hand, if the party decides to wait until the night of the 12th, increase the DCs by +2 because of the frantic activity of the locals.

A well-described action or a clever idea can grant advantage, and a fool-proof plan counts as a success.

To find a gremlin, the party needs to succeed on two of the following skill checks (or do something similar and effective). Each PC can make one attempt every half hour or so.

- ◆ **Dexterity (thieves' tools).** A character might rig up some sort of trap near offerings, like a noose and a wire that rings bells to alert the party.
- ◆ **Wisdom (Perception).** A character can camp a particular house or roam about in a likely area. Anyone with darkvision has advantage on their check.
- ◆ **Dexterity (Stealth).** A character can aid the party in being stealthy and hidden, which makes it easier to lure the gremlins in.
- ◆ **Wisdom (Survival).** It is also possible to track down a roaming gremlin by searching for tracks.

Police Force.

Bringing at least a dozen police officers negates the need for checks, as the officers automatically discover several gremlins. Over a half hour of coordinated searching, the officers find a gremlin and alert the party to come by where they found it. The NPC officers won't be much use in chasing it down, though.

Gale's Help.

If the party gets Gale's help or defeats her in combat, they can automatically locate the gremlin Ellik at the burnt out bar *The Nutgarden*. Even better, they can find him during daylight, making him much easier to chase down. If they give chase to him and fail, though, they'll need to start over and try to find another gremlin.

Catch a Gremlin.

After discovering one of Ekossigan's gremlins, the tricky part is capturing it. These creatures are fast and easily spooked if they so much as sense another living being approach. Once the party gets within 100 feet, they must use normal concealment and hiding rules (against the gremlin's darkvision and passive Perception) to get close enough to grab it, knock it out, or otherwise disable it. A captured gremlin can be interrogated.

If it spots another creature, a gremlin madly dashes in an attempt to escape a potential captor. If the gremlin manages to get more than 100 feet away from the party, proceed to the Chase section below.

Chase a Gremlin.

The party might have to chase a gremlin if they want to catch and interrogate it. Gremlins are wily, and fey in the Cloudwood have a tendency to teleport short distances, making pursuit erratic.

The PCs and gremlin starts 100 feet apart, but keep track of each PC's distance separately, since the party might get split up. The gremlin leads them on a merry chase, and each minute each pursuing PC can make a skill check to try to close the gap. A success gets 25 feet closer. Success by 5 or more gets 50 feet closer. Failure keeps the status quo, and failure by 5 or more means the PC falls back 25 feet.

Because the terrain doesn't lend itself to flat-out sprinting, having a faster or slower base speed is not a deal-breaker. Anyone with a speed less than 30 feet takes a -1 penalty for every 5 feet under 30 feet, and anyone with a speed higher than 30 feet gains a +1 bonus for every 5 feet over 30 feet.

Below are a series of suggested actions the gremlin can take, and how the PCs can respond. The normal DC 21 applies to a night chase when the party has light sources or darkvision. If a PC has neither, they have disadvantage. If the chase happens during the day, the PCs have advantage.

- ◆ **Gap in the Wall.** The gremlin wiggles through a narrow gap – a tall fence, hedge, wall of brush, or perhaps a fox burrow. Characters must use Dexterity (Acrobatics) to follow.
- ◆ **Through a Pond.** The gremlin dives underwater and tries to lose the party. Characters must make a DC 7 Strength (Athletics) check to keep up, plus a DC 21 Wisdom (Perception) check to see where the gremlin is under the water.

- ◆ **Up a Wall.** A PC can use Climb to follow as the little bugger is climbing up a cliff wall!
- ◆ **Crumbling Bridge.** The gremlin scampers across an old wooden bridge seeing its last days, forcing a DC 21 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to keep up.

Chasers' Options.

A character can make a DC 21 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check to try a shortcut. Success brings the PC 50 feet closer. Failure causes the character to fall 50 feet behind.

A character can try to make a ranged attack against the gremlin or cast a spell, but doing so means the character isn't moving as fast. He falls behind 25 feet. Usually the gremlin will have cover and concealment from the terrain.

Ending the Chase.

Once a character gets adjacent to the gremlin, they can make a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to tackle the critter. Other attacks can take the gremlin out. If the gremlin manages to get 200 feet away from all the PCs, it loses them. The party can follow its tracks with three successful DC 21 Wisdom (Survival) checks.

Tailing the Gremlin.

The party might want to just follow the gremlin all the way to Ekossigan. To do this, one PC must manage to keep the gremlin in sight (within 200 feet during the day, or range of their light source at night) for at least 5 minutes. Then they must make three DC 5 Constitution checks and succeed at least twice to keep pace with the gremlin during the rest of the pursuit. The whole chase covers an erratic path some 10 miles long, and likely takes 3 hours.

Interrogation.

With a captured gremlin in custody, the party can extract information from the creature. Gremlins are impulsive in nature, and those loyal to Ekossigan are borderline psychotic. Dealing with such creatures should test the PCs' patience, as keeping the creatures on task is difficult.

Only exceptionally skilled characters could hope to negotiate with such creatures by succeeding on a DC 25 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, and even the promise of release, riches, or any other wild offering would be a hard sell and requires a DC 23 Charisma (Deception) check. During such talks, the gremlins constantly switch topics, taking note of simple things like the color of the PC's clothing, or the current temperature in the room. The party gains a bonus to these interrogation checks equal to twice their Prestige with the Unseen Court.

Magical compulsion effects or divination magic might pull the necessary information out of the gremlin.

If successfully negotiated with, the gremlin reveals that Ekossigan is staying in the orphanage. However, its sense of direction doesn't rely on normal human landmarks, so finding the orphanage requires either a DC 16 Intelligence check, DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check, or some sort of magical guidance. If the district hasn't gone crazy yet, the party can also find the orphanage on a map in the mayor's office after about an hour of research.



Unless the party asks and succeeds a second round of interrogation, the gremlin does not mention that the children of the orphanage are set to be ritually sacrificed. The creature simply forgets this point – not thinking it important – and does not withhold it as an act of slight towards the party.

Asrabey Varal's presence in the interrogation grants the party an effective Prestige of 5 with the Unseen Court, and the dreadnought's reputation is worth another +5 bonus (for a total of +15).

Once the gremlin has talked, Varal quickly dispatches the creature with a cold iron stake through the head – an act of mercy for the fey's betrayal of the Unseen Court.

Gallo's School for Boys

Exploration/Social. Real-Time. Level 7.

Dzens of children are imperiled. The party must approach Ekossigan carefully.

A light drizzle falls regularly on the area within a half mile of Ekossigan, marking his dour mood. It also helps discourage explorers from finding his hiding spot.

Ekossigan has set up a small court for himself in an orphanage in the southeast of the Cloudwood district. He and his fey minions killed the headmaster, teachers, and attendants, but have kept the children here. Miles away from the nearest settlement, no one has any idea anything is amiss.

If the party guesses from the dead child that he might have disappeared from an orphanage, the locals do know about the place, but it's not prominent enough for any NPCs to suggest it. Similarly, if they figure out what ritual Ekossigan is planning, tracking down a "century-old" tree is hard, but with some asking around the party could learn about the orphanage, which was founded one hundred years ago, and whose logo is a tree with a book in place of its boughs.

The party has until midnight of the 12th of Spring to stop Ekossigan. At that point he hangs the children at the orphanage, creates a portal to the Bleak Gate, and leads a small army of fey through.

Unless the party has tried to keep Asrabey Varal from following them, he will accompany them to the orphanage.

Gremlin Presence.

Most of the gremlins sleep during the day, except for those on the balcony. At night they head out to gather offerings, though they make sure to all be back at the orphanage by 11:45 PM on the 12th, in preparation for the ritual.

If they detect intruders, the gremlins will fling rocks or shoot arrows down at people advancing up the staircase. Once the party gets onto the orphanage level, the fey try to slip through the holes in the walls to avoid being cornered in melee.

There are other fey around – pixies, brownies, satyrs, a couple redcaps, and even a nymph – but they stay away from the gremlins and won't join the fight. Not yet, at least.

Layout.

Gallo's School for Boys has a few activity buildings on the ground level, but it is mostly one hundred feet above the ground in the

Ekossigan vs. the Obscurati.

The act of sacrificing the children and entering the Bleak Gate will drive Ekossigan from a little crazy to completely. He takes three dozen gremlins and numerous other fey with him, all of whom are driven a little mad as well. Indeed they do find the Cauldron Hill complex and attack it, and the gremlins set to work causing all the technology and machinery within to go haywire.

Ekossigan tries to attack within, but the defenders overwhelm him. Kept barely alive he's brought up to the arcanoscience lab (area 14 of the Colossus map in Act Three) for experimentation. By the time the PCs arrive (likely on the 14th), the complex is in disarray, but most of the fey are scattered and unable to put up a unified front.

If left to their own devices the battalion of fey will start to become twisted and monstrous, slowly shifting into blind grues and wraith-like monsters that wander away into the hollow city surrounding the mountain. Ekossigan, trapped and helpless, cackles himself to death. Alternately, if the party has already killed Lorcan Kell, you could have the Obscurati implant machinery in Ekossigan to turn him into a puppet for them, making him the headline foe in the Ob complex.

Should the party actually side with Ekossigan for the assault, their presence can keep him a bit more grounded, but he still shrieks at the sight of technology, making stealth fairly useless. See "Mass Murder with Ekossigan" in Act Three, Expedition to the Bleak Gate.

boughs of a massive tree, centuries-old. A sturdy but vertigo-inducing staircase spirals around the tree's trunk up to the entrance. A rancid stench drifts on the breeze.

The orphanage sits in the boughs of a tree, and areas of leaves on the map represent terrain with enough branches to support a person. Moving through the branches requires a DC 8 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, and they count as difficult terrain. A character can make this check with disadvantage to move at full speed. Failure means the character makes no progress, and a failure by 5 or more and, well, I hope you prepared *feather fall*.

The outside of the structure is made up of wood, given a recent cost of green paint. In places the slats and beams appear to have started sprouting short leafy branches, like the dead wood has come back to life. All the windows are shuttered, and now they've grown enough that they cannot be opened, though they still let in dim light during the day.

The walls have warped enough that Medium creatures can usually find a spot to try to squeeze through with a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Small creatures can easily move through (counts as difficult terrain), and Tiny creatures aren't even slowed down. The "walls" just provide partial cover, not total cover.

Stench.

Inside the orphanage, the new life is offset by the stench of rotten fruit, pools of spoiled milk, and piles of refuse. Inside areas 7, 8, and 9 the stench is overpowering. Creatures must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw when they enter or be sickened for the remainder of their stay inside the structure. Only one such save needs to be made for a 24-hour period.

Nooses.

The balcony around each dorm has seven or eight rope nooses tied to the railing, waiting for children's heads to be slipped through.

1. Balcony.

The walkway has a good view of the ground below. Railings, sized for children, make it hard to accidentally fall off. A pair of tiny gremlins hide – seeing them from the ground requires a DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check – and watch out for intruders, their miniscule bows always in hand.

- 2 pugwampi gremlins

Pugwampi Gremlin

Tiny fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 10 (3d4+3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Primordial (very limited), Sylvan

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Gunshy. Firearms aimed at a gremlin will not fire on first pull. If a character holds his aim on the gremlin for a round, the shot will go off at the start of the shooter's next turn. Otherwise the gun fires the moment the shooter stops aiming.

Innate Spellcasting. The gremlin's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *prestidigitation*, *speak with animals*
1/day: *shatter*

Magic Resistance. The gremlin has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Quick. The gremlin has advantage on initiative checks.

Unluck Aura. The gremlin radiates an aura of unluck in a 20-foot radius. Creatures in this area have disadvantage on all d20 rolls. This is a mind-affecting effect that does not work on animals, gremlins, or gnolls. Any character who gains any sort of luck bonus (such as that granted by a *stone of good luck* or *divine favor*) is immune to the gremlin's Unluck Aura.

ACTIONS

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

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

2. Lobby.

The desk chairs act as beds for some gremlins, while others doze in the desks' drawers. They've taken stacks of paper and clumped them into crude shapes of animals. If alerted, the tiny pugwampi gremlins take cover behind the desk so they can shoot intruders. The larger nuglub gremlins crawl through holes in the ceiling and try to sneak and ambush the intruders from above.

- 4 pugwampi gremlins (see above)
- 2 nuglub gremlins

Nuglub Gremlin

Small fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d6+12)

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Intimidation +3, Perception +3, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from weapons not made of cold iron

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Primordial (very limited), Sylvan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Gunshy. Firearms aimed at a gremlin will not fire on first pull. If a character holds his aim on the gremlin for a round, the shot will go off at the start of the shooter's next turn. Otherwise the gun fires the moment the shooter stops aiming.

Innate Spellcasting. The gremlin's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 11). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*
1/day: *heat metal*

Magic Resistance. The gremlin has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The gremlin attacks once with a bite and twice with claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 11).

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) slashing damage and the target makes a DC 11 Strength saving throw or falls prone.

3. Office.

Characters who are interested in keeping the orphans from being abandoned in the aftermath might want to look here for financial documents of the orphanage. There's enough resources to at least pay for a bit of lodging before the kids are left homeless.

4. Common Room.

This room is full of discarded toys, balls, and piles of clothes the gremlins can put on when they need a disguise.

5. Library.

Ekossigan, not without pity for the children, has moved all the books from the library to the various dorms. With no hope for escape, the children read to avoid thinking about their suffering.

6. Classroom.

The fey used mud, beeswax, leaves, and twigs to assemble remarkably life-like sculptures of adults sitting awkwardly in the classroom's chairs. One woman even has her arm raised like she wants to ask a question. The statues crumble if touched.



7. Dining Room.

Four wooden tables with an array of broken chairs litter this room, all of them sprouting recent growth. During the day, a group of gremlins lounge in this room, eating leftover morsels from the previous night's offerings. They attack any intruders viciously, hoping to swarm them.

- 8 pugwampi gremlins (see above)

8. Kitchen.

A large crockpot and various old metal eating implements are scattered throughout this room. During the day a duo of larger gremlins works here, preparing food offerings for Ekossigan in the attic. If interrupted the gremlins attempt to flee and get reinforcements from other fey in the building.

- 2 nuglub gremlins (see above)

9. Storage Room.

This is the source of the stench. Nothing much useful is here.

10. Dorms.

Unsteady walkways lead down tree limbs to the dorms, each of which holds 8 children who sleep in bunk-beds, except the southeast dorm, which only has 7 children. The doors' wood has grown so they

won't open except at the touch of a fey, or with a heavy shove (DC 20 Strength check from outside, made with disadvantage from within).

11. Headmaster's Office.

If the party didn't defeat or free Gale, Ekossigan summoned her here when he sensed the party was coming. She sits on the roof of this small building, undeterred by the light drizzle. Upon seeing the PCs, she puts a finger to her lips and tries to discourage them from going inside using hand gestures. If Gale fled before, she won't fight now, but she will cast *feather fall* on any PC who falls. If the party hasn't faced Gale, she'll reluctantly fight beside Ekossigan.

Inside the office the furniture has been shattered, leaving a cracked desk atop a tattered rug. There's a hole in the wall to the east. The fey have stashed a sizable treasure trove of offerings underneath the bed (1,000 gp value total), though mixed in with coins and jewelry are plates of half-chewed offerings and more than a few squirrel carcasses.

There's no sign of Ekossigan, but if anyone steps onto the balcony around the office, or if any outsider speaks within earshot of the building, Ekossigan addresses them. A fey lord like Ekossigan can easily step between this world and the Dreaming, and so he remains hidden in the parallel version of the office, speaking via a limited form of telepathy until he's ready.



Spring Returns to Winter

Action. Tactical. Level 10.

Ekossigan will kill those who are against him.

When the PCs enter the chamber, read the following. Though Ekossigan wants to say his piece to Asrabey, make sure he also speaks with the PCs. He's unlikely to stand down unless the party agrees to let him sacrifice all the children, in which case he'll invite them along. If the party attacks before he manifests fully into the real world, he just laughs.

A wooden mask appears in the air in front of you, antlers sweeping back from its jaw. Its eyes are hollow, but it tilts slightly, as if it's considering your appearance. Slowly a hood fades in behind the mask, giving the impression of an unseen head, and then a mantle of leaves over the shoulders of this invisible man.

"Greetings. I am Ekossigan of Spring, devoted servant of the Unseen Court and protector of the ever-turning seasons. It is with much remorse that I come to your dull and colorless world, but I shall rid this garden of the dark seeds being wrought in your midst."

The fey's mask turns to look you over, then stops at Asrabey.

"Ah, the guard dog of the Court. I had hoped that you would lend me aid in my quest to find the truth in this polluted city, but you intend to be the fire that destroys the weeds and renews the field. Yet you cannot harm me, so the guard dog brings pups of his own.

"Do you know what is inside Cauldron Hill, little pups? In the gate between this life and the afterlife, in your world's shadow, a foul seed has been planted. And Asrabey, you know the gardener. Do you remember your dear wife, Kasvarina? I'm afraid she doesn't remember you."

Asrabey says, "How do you know—" but he stops mid-sentence because the ground is trembling.

You hear a noise over the constant drone of the rain. Movement, dozens of creatures down below, wings fluttering, wet hair slashing tree branches, hooves tramping the grass. From the dorms on the other branches you hear nervous cries of children.

Ekossigan's mask seems to grow more solid. "To uproot the seed, I must enter the gate, and the gate requires the death of innocents. Spring's new growth must return to winter's grasp."

More of his form begins to appear and a chill blue light beams from every surface of his wooden skin. The temperature begins to drop, and the fey lord cackles once.

Asrabey says to you, "You stop Ekossigan. I'll keep his army at bay. But keep him alive. I need answers."

Then he's out the door, sprinting toward the staircase, and you see the rain has turned to driving sleet. Ekossigan's light flares to almost blinding, and then he stands before you, fully and physically in this world.

"Greetings," he says. "I am Ekossigan of Winter."

Killing Winter.

The mad fey seeks to slay the party so that he can complete his ritual sacrifice. While the party battles Ekossigan, Asrabey holds the staircase against an oncoming tide of hundreds of fey. The party has very little chance of being able to run, but once they defeat the fey lord his sway over his minions will be broken.

A pair of fey snow leopards, the Sentries of Winter, manifest with Ekossigan and harry the party.

Winter Storm.

Ekossigan's change in nature has killed the tree the orphanage sits in. Its leaves begin to blow away quickly, its branches creak, and its bark cracks to the touch. Simultaneously, the drizzle of rain has turned to driving sleet. Surfaces across the tree are slowly coated in ice, and if Ekossigan is not stopped, whole sections of the tree will collapse under the weight of the storm.

Unprotected flames are automatically put out. Protected fires like lanterns have a 75% chance of being put out. Ranged weapon attacks and Wisdom (Perception) checks are made with disadvantage.

Treefall.

In the first round, frosty surfaces begin to get slick. Outdoor areas are treated as difficult terrain.

In the second round, everything is coated in ice. In addition to being difficult terrain, the ice forces a DC 8 Dexterity saving throw to move. Failing by 5 or more means the creature falls prone.

In the third round, the larger branches begin to creak, and the southwest dorm shudders as the branch supporting it splits down its length. Creatures on that branch must make a DC 8 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

In the fourth round, the southwest branch cracks nearly through, dangling downward at a precarious 45° angle. Creatures on that branch must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

At the end of the fifth round, the southwest branch snaps off. Anyone inside the dorm plummets; with *feather fall*, Gale can save at most 5 creatures, who must be within 60 feet of her and not inside the dorm building. With the branch gone, a large chunk of the foliage disappears too, shrinking the battlefield.

In the sixth round, the northwest and northeast branches have their first crack. They'll dangle on the seventh round, and plummet away on the eighth. The southeast and due south branches also crack on the eighth, and they fall away on the tenth.

In the twelfth round, the whole tree teeters; at the end of the thirteenth round it topples to the ground.

On the Ground.

A creature who survives a fall to the ground takes 5 damage per round from the onslaught of a horde of fey, barring some sort of trick to keep them at bay. There's no feasible way to defeat the whole horde, but the fey ignore anyone that runs away.

Gale Assist.

If the party seems to be in trouble, and especially if one of the PCs dies, Gale frees herself from Ekossigan's control (breaking the fey pact because she promised to aid "Ekossigan of Spring"). She can aid the party by casting protective spells on them and using her power to control wind, but she still can't bring herself to actually attack the fey lord.

- Ekossigan of Winter
- 2 Sentries of Winter



Ekossigan of Winter

Medium fey (cold), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (14d8+42)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws DEX +9, CON +7, WIS +6

Skills Acrobatics +9, Animal Handling +6, Acrobatics +9, Nature +6, Perception +6, Stealth +9, Survival +6

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from weapons not made of iron

Damage Immunities cold

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Elvish, Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Arrowwist. Any arrowed fired at a creature within 30 feet of Ekossigan (including the fey lord himself) swerves toward the next nearest creature instead. If multiple targets are equally close, randomly determine whom the arrow targets. If there is no creature other than Ekossigan within that range, the arrow simply thuds to the ground near his feet. Yes, the party is encouraged to shoot at their allies.

This effect applies to any ranged attack—arrows, bolts, bullets, slings, axes, rays, even *magic missiles*. Area-effect attacks like *fireballs* work normally, unless the attacker tries to peg a target with a projectile. A flask of alchemist fire thrown at the ground at Ekossigan's feet will deal splash damage normally, but one thrown directly at him swerves.

Cold Skin. Creatures attacking Ekossigan with unarmed strikes or natural weapons take 7 (2d6) cold damage each time one of their attacks hits.

Innate Spellcasting. Ekossigan's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

3/day each: *chill metal, confusion, sleep*

1/day each: *entangle, geas*

Quick. Ekossigan has advantage on initiative checks.

Walk of Nature. Ekossigan can teleport through nature with ease. He can use a bonus action to begin his transition. He begins to glow, and chooses a destination within 60 feet that must be in or adjacent to a tree. That spot also begins to glow. At the start of his next turn, he can use 5 feet of movement to teleport to the chosen destination. If he cannot, he takes 7 (2d6) damage.

His feet hover slightly above the ground, so his movement is unimpeded by snow or ice. Additionally, he can choose to hover in midair as long as he is within 5 feet of a solid surface he could stand on.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ekossigan attacks twice with his claws.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) cold damage.

Cold Breath (Recharge 5–6). Ekossigan exhales freezing cold in a 20-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Sentry of Winter

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural)

Hit Points 39 (6d8+12)

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	2 (–4)	12 (+1)	6 (–2)

Saving Throws CON +4, INT –2, CHA +0

Damage Resistances cold

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The Sentry of Winter has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pounce. If the Sentry of Winter 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 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the Sentry of Winter can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Rake. When the Sentry of Winter hits a creature in the same turn with two or more attacks, that creature takes an extra 3 (1d6) damage.

Snow Move. Because of its large, fur-covered paws, the Sentry of Winter ignores difficult terrain that is covered in snow.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Sentry of Winter attacks once with its bite and twice with its claws.

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

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

Tactics.

Ekossigan starts by using his breath weapon, then prepares to teleport to a spot in the tree's branches. He tries to distance himself from the party while using his various spell-like abilities to turn them against each other. He'll seek to imperil someone on a branch about to fall by putting them to sleep or *entangling* them with dry, dying branches.

If Ekossigan's spells begin to fail him, he instead switches to using his claws up close, trying to tear down weaker PCs in melee and relying on his high armor and damage reduction.

The Sentries of Winter move to protect Ekossigan, attacking PCs that engage him, trying to give their master time to reposition. If a Sentry is low on health, it charges into the thick of battle, hoping to deal as much damage as possible to enemy PCs when it is destroyed.

During combat, Ekossigan will shout out the following quotes which you can use to embellish the battle:

- ◆ “You do not understand what manner of child sleeps in the mountain. Your nation's womb will birth a monster! He shall not be awakened. HE MUST NOT BE AWAKENED!”
- ◆ “So many screams! How many have been sacrificed to fuel this thing? How many souls have died to create this abomination? What are a few more to stop it? You would do the same if you could hear it.”

- ◆ “Why do you persist? The cold of winter takes all things – and even if it does not take you, *that thing* will.”
- ◆ “You have seen him and he knows you, but you do not know him. The old man wishes to make amends, but he needs a body.”
- ◆ “She waits in the hill Asrabey Varal, but for how long? Kasvarina, your lover is coming. Why do you hide?”
- ◆ (After a tree branch falls.) “You know, I was going to simply hang the children, but this works just as well!”

Ekossigan’s Demise.

Once Ekossigan is defeated, the storm ends, the tree creaks but does not collapse, and the fey who were trying to fight through Asrabey stop and then flee. If Ekossigan was merely knocked out or otherwise disabled, Asrabey thanks the party, then presses a cold iron spike to the fey lord’s heart and slaps him to consciousness.

He demands to know about Kasvarina, and Ekossigan, still deranged, whispers that he has seen her held prisoner in a steel cage lined with tapestries, beneath Cauldron Hill in the Bleak Gate. He doesn’t know anything else.

Unless the party stops him, Asrabey proclaims the Ekossigan is guilty of betraying the Unseen Court. Rather than impale him with the spike, though, he presses a dagger into Ekossigan’s hand, and guides him to slit his own throat.

When Ekossigan dies (even if the party just takes him out in combat), his body begins to crumble away into a mass of dead leaves which are carried away on the wind. A “life bloom” overtakes the area, as plants begin to sprout and smaller trees begin emerging across the ground beneath the tree. The orphanage stops falling away, and each PC is returned to full health.

Skyseer Vision

Any character with the Skyseer theme feels his gaze drawn to watch the leaves as they’re blown skyward, and he receives a vision. It is simple: A bird made of black steel, weeping blood, lands at the peak of Cauldron Hill. Then it flies away toward the harbor, but there is no city beneath it. Instead its shadow falls across a verdant forest.



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

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

This invokes part of Nevard’s prophecy from Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, warning that a second doom would come from Cauldron Hill. It can also suggest to the party that when the colossus Borne heads for the harbor, they should try to drive him to the Dreaming.

Asrabey’s Departure.

The high elf dreadnought, saddened from having killed many fey who tried to assault the tree, perfunctorily thanks the party for their aid if they simply killed Ekossigan. If they kept him alive long enough for Asrabey to ask about Kasvarina he shows a bit more sincerity. Either way he says he intends to ask their king for permission to enter the Bleak Gate and explore Cauldron Hill, to search for Kasvarina. He warns them not to trust the Danorans, then leaves.

Aftermath.

The Cloudwood slowly returns to normal as Varal and Gale deal with the remaining troublemaking fey. Doyle Idylls (if alive) is thrilled at the turn of events, and if he knows of the party’s involvement, he mails each of them a gift package containing two *potions of superior healing*, a *potion of heroism*, and an *oil of magic weapon*. 📬