



EN5ider Presents:

Cauldron-Born

Part Three

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



Act One, Thread Three: Eschatological Terrorists

IN THIS THREAD, THE PARTY REACTS TO THE SURPRISE attacks by Zubov's group. Zubov's plan is to sow panic amongst the citizens of Flint by perpetrating various attacks throughout the city. By diverting resources away from the peace talks, Zubov hopes to launch a more direct attack on a newly opened subrail station, giving him access to a tunnel that passes near Hotel Aurum. A well-timed explosion will send the building tumbling down.

Long-Term Plans.

The radical eschatologists led here by Grundun Zubov are just one cell of a radical movement whose figurehead is **Grandis Komanov**, a dwarven cult leader who hides in the frozen northern wastes of Drakr. Komanov wields mighty frost magic, and all of her followers eventually develop white hair and markings akin to frostbite.

When members of the sect prepare for death, they shave their facial hair, so they are no longer shielded from the cold of winter.

Epistle from Heid

Exposition. Real-Time.

Philosopher Vlendam Heid contacts the party.

If the party has an eschatologist, or if they befriended dwarven philosopher Vlendam Heid in Adventure Four, *Always on Time*, they receive a letter on the morning of the 9th of Spring. See Player's Handout: Epistle from Heid.



FROM THE PEN OF
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Investigating Zubov

Action/Exploration. Montage. Level 8.

Zubov knows the authorities will come looking for him.

After the first attack by the eschatologists, Stover Delft asks the party if they can spare time to investigate this threat while leading the task force and searching for Ekossigan. He knows they're busy, but they're his best constables, and the only other people he can really spare are the B-Team, which would leave the mediator at risk. It's up to the party whether to give it a shot or pass the buck.

If the PCs did not have enough time to investigate the first attack they can return and look for clues, though clean-up might have removed some of them.

Between Steffan Eberhardt's knowledge of the radical sect, the objects on the bodies of the defeated attackers, and accounts of the dwarves' activities the night before, the party should either know about *Soknik Repairs*, or be able to track the dwarves to there with a few hours' work.

Another lead the party may wish to follow-up with is Kvarti Gorbatiy. The PCs likely met Kvarti in Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, and may have struck up a relationship with the eschatologist gunsmith. Parties without an eschatologist in their ranks may seek out Kvarti to get some insight into the attacks, while eschatologist PCs will likely want to speak with Kvarti as per their letter from Vlendam Heid.

If the party is stuck on how to proceed, a surviving intern who was working at the *Risuri Record* comes into the RHC later in the day and says that they had technicians from *Soknik Repairs* come by the day before the explosion occurred. The intern believes that the repair technician may have been involved in the sabotage. He also asks if there's any reward for him offering this information.

Soknik Repairs.

A front business used to disguise a safe house and planning site for Grundun Zubov's attacks, *Soknik Repairs* caters to only a select clientele. The building is nondescript and contains several businesses, but a wide glass window makes up the entire exterior of the repair shop. Inside there is only a single room storefront, with a bland rug, a few display cases, and a single door leading to the back. The cases are used to show off various technological gadgets like ornate cuckoo clocks and a pedal-cranked sewing machine that the staff has "repaired." In truth these are just imports from Drakr. None of them are for sale.

During the daytime, a single human teenage clerk named **Doug Clapper** operates the counter. Those who come with honest inquiries are all rebuffed by the clerk, who insists that *Soknik Repairs* is full up on clients and all their technicians are scheduled for months ahead. This is of course a fabrication, as the building is nothing more than a front that keeps relations with a small number of key "target clients" such as the *Risuri Record*. The clerk was hired by Zubov to stop people from inquiring too much about the business.

At any point in the morning and afternoon, Kvarti Gorbatiy is set up in a second floor window across the street from the storefront, keeping an eye on those who go in. Zubov did not trust the mercenary enough to involve him in any of his major plans, and so

uses the sniper to protect the storefront. His orders are to watch for law enforcement and if it looks like their cover is blown, to kill any officers if they try to get downstairs. From Kvarti's vantage point he can see through the glass storefront and target anyone inside with ease.

If the PCs arrive with a warrant to search the grounds, the clerk is truly shaken and clearly hiding something. The clerk is unable to stop the PCs and simply hopes that they will not discover the secret passage to the safe house in the backroom. The passage is hidden under a foot-pedal table saw workbench, and the clerk doesn't know where it goes.

Kvarti isn't ready to attack the PCs right away, so he'll wait to see what happens when they leave.

Searching the backroom reveals an amount of paperwork nowhere near appropriately sized for a company that is too busy to take on new customers. A casual inspection of the books reveals that the office has only a handful of small paying customers, and has been operating at a substantial loss since opening.

If the clerk is pressed about the state of the business, he pretends to crack and says there's a trap door in the front office, under the rug – recognizing his deception requires a DC 19 Wisdom (Insight) check. He heads back to the front and snaps his fingers in the direction of the window, a sign to Kvarti that their cover is blown. If Kvarti recognizes the party, he'll fire a warning shot, just trying to give Doug cover to run. Otherwise he'll try to pin the party down and injure but not kill them.

Kvarti Gorbatiy

Medium humanoid (hill dwarf), lawful neutral

Armor Class 19 (+2 studded leather, ring of protection)

Hit Points 82 (11d8+33)

Speed 25 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +4, Dex +8, Con +3, Int +0, Wis +3, Cha +1

Skills Acrobatics +7, Insight +5, Perception +5, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Primordial

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Superb Aim. Kvarti ignores half cover and three-quarters cover when making a ranged weapon attack, and he doesn't have disadvantage when attacking at long range. When Kvarti makes his first ranged weapon attack in a turn, he can choose to take a -5 penalty to his ranged weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to ranged weapon damage.

Superior Ranged Criticals. Kvarti's ranged weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 18–20.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Kvarti attacks twice.

Bayonet. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) magical piercing damage.

Enchanted Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 80/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10+5) magical piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) cold damage.



Tactics.

If Kvarti recognizes the party, he's actually kind of amused, and he shoots at them in good fun, making a big show of shattering the display cases around them but never actually hurting any of them. Then he'll duck behind cover and wait for the party to come across the street and find him. He greets them with his hands over his head and his sniper rifle at his feet.

If he doesn't know them, he'll be more aggressive, trying to heavily wound one or two PCs so the rest of the party will tend to them, giving him an opportunity to run downstairs and slip into an alley.

If the party catches him, see "Kvarti Talks" (page 7) for details of the ensuing interrogation.

Trapped Tunnels.

The trapdoor ladder leads down to a series of complex tunnels, originally dug out two hundred years ago. There are no light sources inside the tunnels or safe house, since dwarves can see in the dark. If the party has light they can see centuries-old graffiti denouncing the witches who once ruled atop Cauldron Hill. The tunnels are strewn with old wooden debris, as if furniture once filled these underground passages. The ground has dozens of cracks, sunken areas, and pools of stagnant water.

If one knows the route, the safe house is about 5 minutes from *Soknik Repairs*. The tunnels leading to the safe house have been trapped by Zubov's men. The dwarven radical ensured that all of his loyal followers were given the correct navigation route through the tunnel, and crafted various traps to kill or debilitate anyone else.

Recent tracks from those using the safe house can be followed with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check. This causes the party to encounter only the traps listed below. If they wander the tunnels without guidance, they stumble upon one or two more traps.

Trapped Puddle.

A puddle conceals a magic rune scribed on the floor. When anyone steps across the rune, the trap activates.

Cold Chill of Death Trap

From the ground rises a chilled mist that freezes you to the bone. You can feel death approach; an inevitable fate for all.

Description This trap is activated when an intruder steps near a hidden magical rune, releasing a magical freezing cold mist. The DC is 20 to spot the rune. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of evocation magic in the area around the rune. The trap activates when a living creature passes

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



within 5 feet of the magical rune without making a specific hand gesture, causing the rune to release freezing cold mist in a 10-foot radius for 3 rounds. Each creature that starts its turn inside of or moves into the mist must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) cold damage on a failed save and gaining 1 level of exhaustion. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and does not suffer any exhaustion. Making a specific hand gesture allows a creature to pass by the trap without activating it, and magically obscured creatures (such as invisible creatures) do not activate it. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 15) cast on the rune destroys the trap.

Fool's Door.

A few twists, turns, and confusing splits beyond the puddle rune, the party reaches an area strewn with more wooden debris than usual, with platforms covering the ground and nailed-together planks leaned against the wall. An adventure that makes a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices one set of planks that conceals what looks like a doorway. However, if the planks are disturbed, they reveal a cold chill of death trap, as above. Additionally, immediately beyond the false door is a pit trap.

Camouflaged Spiked Pit Trap

The wooden planks beneath you snap and drop you toward a distant floor of rusted spikes.

Description This pit has a cover constructed from material identical to the floor around it. A successful DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check discerns an absence of foot traffic over the section of floor that forms the pit's cover. A successful DC 21 Intelligence (Investigation) check is necessary to confirm that the trapped section of floor is actually the cover of a pit.

When a creature steps on the cover, it swings open like a trapdoor, causing the intruder to spill into the pit below. The pit is 30 feet deep. Once the pit trap is detected, an iron spike or similar object can be wedged between the pit's cover and the surrounding floor in such a way as to prevent the cover from opening, thereby making it safe to cross. The cover can also be magically held shut using the *arcane lock* spell or similar magic.

A creature falling into the pit takes 11 (2d10) piercing damage from the spikes, in addition to 10 (3d6) falling damage.

Threshold Trap.

As the tunnels near the safe house, the party sees a large arch of polished white marble along the walls and ceiling. The first such arch is just a normal arch but 20 feet after it the tunnel splits and both paths have arches of their own. (The party wants to go right.) There's another split 20 feet later, and another two arches. (This time, left is the way to go.) The third white arch is trapped, and the stones are each inscribed with small runes in dwarven spotted by anyone that makes a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. They seem jumbled, and include the words: "Arc white the lost world in the heart beyond the serpent shall gyre in the end the coils of ice."

Each rune can be depressed by pressing it once, or reset by pressing it again. The trap is disarmed by pressing, in order, runes to read, "The world shall end in ice." Those entering without doing so are subjected to the trap below.

The End of All Things Trap

Crossing the threshold of the arch without speaking the truth of the universe has dire consequences, as a sharpened iron gate falls from the ceiling.

Description This trap uses a runic cypher to unleash a sharpened iron gate that falls from the ceiling when a creature passes near it without pressing a specific sequence of runes. The DC to spot the triggering rune is 18 and when read without literacy in Dwarven is deciphered with a DC 17 Intelligence check. A successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables gate's dropping mechanisms harmlessly. A character without thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage using any edged weapon or edged tool. On a failed check, the trap triggers. When the trap is triggered, the sharpened iron gate falls down from the ceiling. Any creature in the entrance area must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Any creature damaged by the gate is restrained until it is lifted up with a DC 20 Strength check.

Safe House.

Beyond the threshold trap, the party finds a hallway with clean-picked pork ribs scattered across the ground. Thirty feet beyond the arch is a 30-foot by 20-foot living chamber, and off that is a pair of similarly-sized rooms, a workshop and a meeting room.

The bones help the dwarves keep at bay the army ant swarm that lairs here. A minute after the party arrives in the hallway, the ants pour out of cracks in the wall, drawn by the scent of food.

The dwarves treat their boots with sodium borate, which deters the ants. They also powdered the floor of their living quarters with it, but if the party manages to enter the quarters before the ants show up, they spot several trails of ants snaking across the floor.

Living Chamber.

This simple room contains an assemblage of two dozen cots for members to sleep in. When the PCs arrive, it is likely that two eschatologist radicals are in the living chamber resting.

Four skeletons, animated by dwarven clerics from the old remains of those who once sheltered here from witches, stand in the corners. Their orders are to attack any non-dwarf humanoids who find the hide-out, as well as any creature that harms them. The ant swarm cannot deal any damage to the skeletons, so they ignore it.

Workshop.

Workbenches have been arranged along the walls of this room filled with small mechanical pieces, weapon scopes of different shapes and sizes, and several casks of firedust. This room is where the radicals designed their bombs and crafted several of their other specialty weapons. Another four skeletons stand in the corners.

Meeting Room.

Inside this chamber are several haphazardly arranged tables and chairs. The tables are littered with newsletters, notes, pictures, and maps. Several charts and maps of Flint are also affixed to the walls of this room, and are clearly part of some large plan. Another four skeletons stand in the corners.



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

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

Safe House Mob.

- 1 army ant swarm
- 2 eschatologist radicals
- 12 medium skeletons

Army Ant Swarm

Large swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 49 (11d8)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)

Skills Perception +3

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Cling. When a creature leaves the swarm's space, the swarm takes 1d6 damage as several of the insects continue to cling tenaciously to the victim. A creature with insects clinging to it takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage at the end of each of its turns. As an action, the insects can be removed with a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. High wind or any amount of damage from an area effect destroys all clinging insects.

Consume. The swarm rapidly consumes any creature it swarms over. Against stunned or incapacitated targets, the swarm's attack always deals critical hit damage.

Scent. The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) piercing damage, or 7 (2d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. A creature damaged by the swarm makes a Constitution saving throw against the damage dealt. On a failed save, the creature is poisoned for 1 round.



Eschatologist Radical

Medium humanoid (hill dwarf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 25 (3d8+12)

Speed 25 ft.

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

Saving Throws Dex +3, Int +2

Skills Athletics +2, Deception +0, Insight +3, Religion +2, Perception +5, Stealth +3

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Primordial

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

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

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

ACTIONS

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

Shotgun (20 cartridges). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d8+1) piercing damage.

Medium Skeleton (12)

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (armor scraps)

Hit Points 13 (2d8+4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge ¼ (50 XP)

ACTIONS

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

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

Tactics.

When the dwarf radicals hear the threshold trap go off, they wake up and hide in a hurry, hoping the skeletons can keep the intruders stuck in the hallway long enough for the ants to eat them. They make sure not to catch each other in their shotgun lines of fire. As with everyone else in this sect, the dwarves will try to take their suicide pills if captured.

Putting the Pieces Together.

Once the PCs secure the safe house, they have a treasure trove of information to read over. Once the safe house is compromised (indicated by the clerk's absence) the radicals abandon the site, but continue on with their plans, believing that law enforcement doesn't have the intelligence and time to piece together their operation.

Meeting Room: Most of the valuable information can be found in the meeting room, where an analysis of the documents within (a DC 14 Intelligence check) can reveal that the radicals were awaiting a large shipment by boat from the Drakr border city of Ysfeld. Based off the departing location of the shipment there should be nothing of note in the area, but those familiar with local fauna can make a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check to realize that the site is a hotbed of malice beasts, the misshapen monsters that live in the magically unstable region known as the Malice Lands.

The documents imply the ship would sneak into Flint harbor on the night of Spring 10 and that the dwarves would meet it at Golden Point, the western transfer station between the Red subrail line and Orange line. Due to weather and other factors, the ship might be delayed if you want to give a tardy party a chance to stop it.

A second set of documents seem to be city maps from different decades, each of them traced with the routes of the modern subrail lines. PCs who parse through these with a DC 12 Intelligence check can identify several hidden tunnels leading into the newly constructed subrail station.

There is an envelope, its seal broken, that contains a letter to the news director of the Flint Tribune, inviting him to send a reporter to the opening ceremony of a new subrail stop, Sharon M. Baker Station (Red Line, station 4).

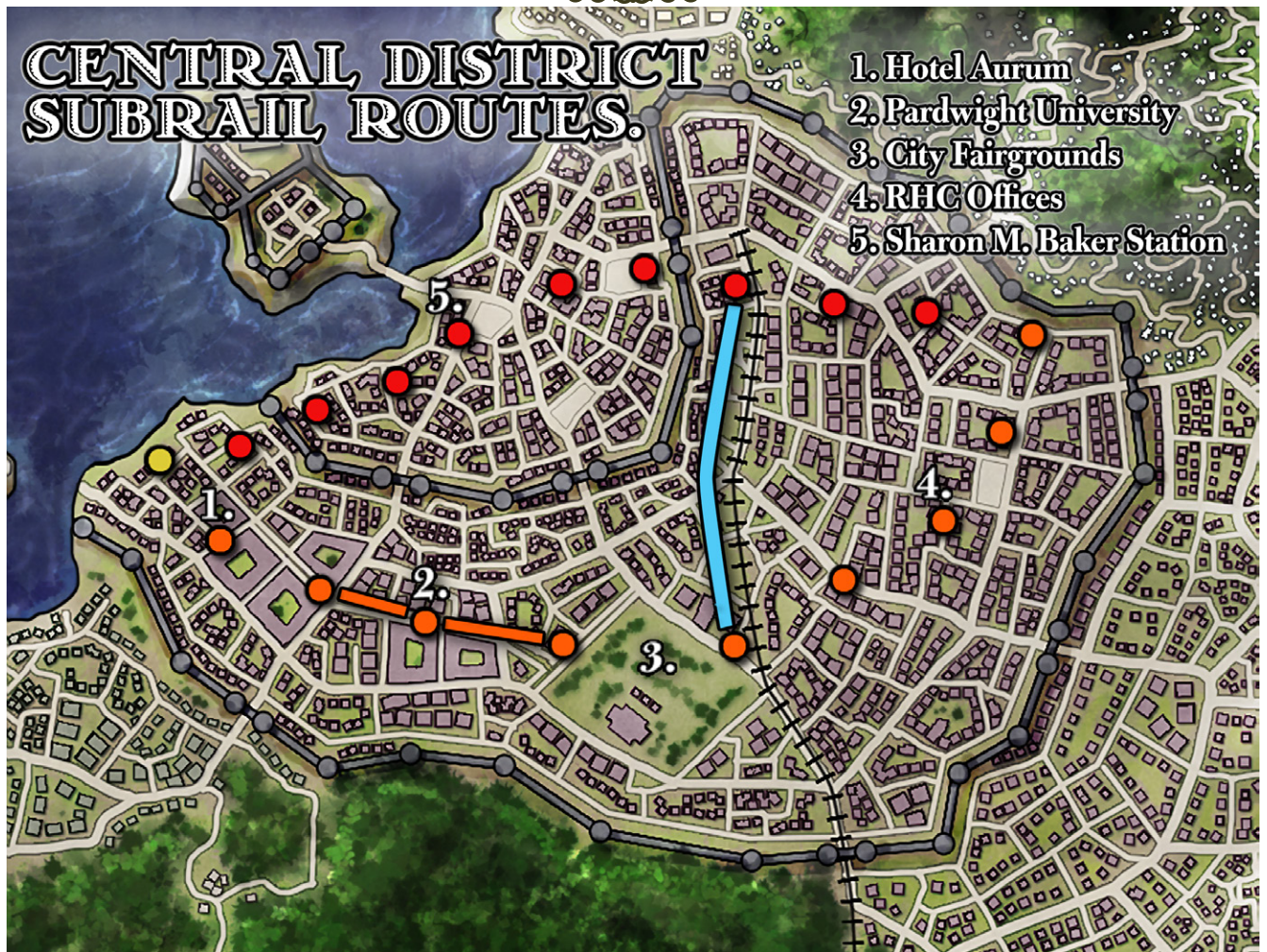
Workshop: A sweep of the construction area and a DC 11 Intelligence check reveals that the radicals were constructing something far larger than their previous firedust explosives.

Spellcasters or those trained in Alchemy can try to make sense of the magical elements of the devices with a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check; if successful, they identify the components used and deduce that the newly constructed "super bomb" would not be triggered as easily as a firedust cask. Instead, such a device would need to be triggered on site and require some kind of countdown to properly time all the necessary alchemical and magical reactions.

A more thorough examination with a result of 23 or higher reveals the exact nature of the explosive (see page 21 in Part One). Based on the amount of materials that seem to have been present here and some of the formulae scribbled on stray papers, a character can determine that once the elements were combined it would take exactly 26 minutes and 18 seconds for it to explode. The force would be enough to level a couple city blocks. It's clear that whatever was being constructed here has already been completed, and these parts are leftovers or prototype test bits that were not cleaned up.

Technologist PCs have advantage on any of the above checks.

The Plot: Don't nudge the players here but if they ask the right questions, let them figure out that – based on the average speed of the subrail train – it travels three stations in 26 minutes, or six stations if it encounters no traffic or makes no stops. That means that from Sharon M. Baker station, it could reach Darvill Station by Hotel Aurum just as the bomb went off.



Kvarti Talks

Social. Real-Time.

The party likely has ways to track down Kvarti's temporary lodgings – a small rented condo in North Shore. The gunsmith is not present during most of the day, spending his time as a hired gun at *Soknik Repairs*, though he can be found here in the later parts of the evening. Either by tracking him down or simply meeting him at *Soknik Repairs*, the party might have a chance to chat with the dwarf.

Kvarti's relationship with Grundun Zubov is cold at best. Zubov made contact with Kvarti by letter several months in advance of the arrival of the radicals. It was Kvarti who found the tunnels, and he helped acquire forged documents to get the radicals into the city without drawing any attention. Kvarti was led to believe these efforts were a lead-up to an assassination attempt – his pet theory was that he'd be hired to kill the reincarnated man, Governor Roland Stanfield.

Once Zubov arrived and they met in person, though, Kvarti realized their views of the eschatologist philosophy were far apart. Zubov would not bring Kvarti in to any of the major plans, but he kept paying the dwarf to keep quiet, and Kvarti was prepared in case his employer double crossed him and tried to kill him.

Only after the bombings at Pardwight did Kvarti start putting the pieces together. Kvarti is now rethinking his contract, not wanting to be associated with mass murdering terrorists. If the Armageddon Beasts are unleashed before the party finds him, Kvarti decides to stop showing up at *Soknik Repairs* and ends his relationship with Zubov. Whether it succeeds or fails, the malice beast attack is the last straw for Kvarti, and if the party hasn't found him yet, he'll find them.

Information and Assistance.

If the party seems amenable, Kvarti might offer to work with them to help stop Zubov. He doesn't know how to reach the sect leader, but he knows they had a meeting planned at the docks for the night of the 10th. He describes the group as a doomsday cult, then corrects himself. "Doomsdays cult. Multiple days of doom."

Rewards of Cooperation.

If Kvarti survives the adventure, he might thank any Gunsmith PC (or simply a gun-wielder) by providing a free +1 magical enhancement bonus along with a frosty special ability to one of their weapons (causing it to deal an extra 1d4 cold damage on hits). If the PCs already have +1 weapons, Kvarti can enchant up to two guns to have the frosty ability.



Beasts of the End Time

Action. Tactical. Level 8.

The terrorists try to sneak aramageddon beasts into the city.

Just after sunset on the 10th of Spring, the Drakr steamship *Cherno Bezna* (Black Abyss) kills its engine three miles from Flint and deploys oars. The dwarven crew rows silently for an hour and a half, enters Flint Harbor, and spends the next four hours slowly approaching freight docks near the Golden Point subrail stop in Central District. The ship carries six Armageddon Beasts – terrifying creatures from the Drakr-Malice Lands border. If the ship makes landfall it will unleash its cargo of monsters on the city, and they will slay hundreds before the sun rises.

Waiting for the ship to land is risky, and the party has a better chance of spotting the approach and catching them if they're on their own ship.

Beasts at Sea.

Spotting a ship under oars on a nearly-moonless night is challenging, and one magically shrouded not to shed light, crewed by dwarves with darkvision, is nearly impossible. If the party is at sea between 8 p.m. and midnight, they have an opportunity to see the ship. Let each PC make a DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice the ship; if they patrol the harbor (and thus have a better chance of being within range of the slow-moving *Cherno Bezna* at any given moment), they can make a check every half hour.

The party might just camp out near Golden Point, which gives them advantage on their Wisdom (Perception) check, but limits them to just making one. Also, the ship will just be a single naval round at full speed from reaching land.

Naval Tactics.

If the *Bezna's* look-out realizes a ship is headed for them, he'll alert the captain, who orders the engine back to life, and the crew back to their stations. In the first round, the dwarven ship's speed is halved (because it can only use its oars), but thereafter it has its normal speed.

Depending on when the party spots them, the *Bezna* might still be miles from their intended drop-off point. If they're close they might try to flee, and just need to move a few stages to reach the

The Cargo.

In this campaign heavily based around investigation and cities there have been relatively few monsters, especially by normal fantasy RPG standards. The nature of the Armageddon Beasts doesn't matter too much, just that they're large and horrible. Use the statistics of existing CR 6 to 8 monsters and reskin them a bit so they are misshapen nightmare-creatures. None of the beasts are intelligent beyond animal level, and none should fly. Otherwise, here's an opportunity to take an interesting critter from a monster book and throw it at the party. Some suggestions include:

- **Giant Ape**
- **Hydra**
- **Mammoth**
- **Tyrannosaurus Rex**

docks, which they'll crash into (but at least reinforcements will be on hand). Otherwise they will try to ram the party's ship, then open the cages of the Armageddon Beasts and try to avoid dying in the mayhem that follows.

Cherno Bezna Crew.

- Captain Tamushin, eschatologist prophet
- 2 eschatologist radicals (see page 6)
- 17 Drakran sailors

Eschatologist Prophet

Medium humanoid (hill dwarf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (half-plate, shield)

Hit Points 37 (5d8+15)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +4

Skills Arcana +3, Insight +5, Perception +5, Religion +3

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Primordial

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Channel Divinity (1/short rest). The Eschatologist Prophet can channel divine energy to fuel one of two magical effects.

Death Wave. As an action, the Eschatologist Prophet presents their unholy symbol and evokes fell energy that roils outwards, dealing 2d8 necrotic damage to all other creatures within 30 feet. A DC 13 Wisdom saving throw halves this damage.

Turn Undead. As an action, the Eschatologist Prophet presents their holy symbol and speaks a prayer censuring the undead. Each undead within 30 feet that can see or hear the Eschatologist Prophet must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. If the creature fails its saving throw, it is turned for 1 minute or until it takes any damage. Undead of CR ½ or less that fail are destroyed. A turned creature must spend its turns trying to move as far away from the Eschatologist Prophet as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of them. It also can't take reactions. For its action, it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature can use the Dodge action.

Spellcasting. The Eschatologist Prophet is a 5th-level spellcaster that uses Wisdom as their spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13; +5 to hit with spell attacks). They have the following spells prepared from the cleric's spell list:

Cantrips: *guidance, resistance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, detect magic, guiding bolt, inflict wounds, protection from evil and good*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, hold person, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (2 slots): *animate dead, spirit guardians*

ACTIONS

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 50/150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6+1) piercing damage.

Drakran Sailor

Medium humanoid (hill dwarf), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)**Hit Points** 13 (2d8+4)**Speed** 25 ft.

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

Saving Throws passive Perception 10**Skills** Athletics +3, Vehicles (water) +3**Damage Resistances** poison**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10**Languages** Common, Dwarvish**Challenge** ¼ (50 XP)**ACTIONS****Warhammer.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.*Hit:* 5 (1d8+1) bludgeoning damage or 6 (1d10+1) if wielded in two hands.**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10+1) piercing damage.**Welcome Party.**

Awaiting the ship is a trio of radicals, here to pick up the caged beasts and deliver them to an empty warehouse. A dozen local dockers have been paid extraordinarily well by the eschatologists for this strange job, but the dockers are hard-pressed (due to an influx of workers from rural areas) that they took the job, no questions asked.

Zubov's men have bribed local authorities to not inspect the cargo, so unless the PCs are present, the offload occurs without a hitch. Once the cages are offloaded, the dockers cart them into a warehouse. The dwarves attach a clockwork device on each cage, set for half an hour, and when it runs down the gates of the beasts' cages will open. By then, the dwarves plan to have killed their docker helpers and gotten safely underground.

If the party approaches, the radicals are unfazed by their presence. If the PCs show their credentials and demand to see what's making all the horrible snarling sounds inside the cages, the dwarves can spend a move action next to a cage to advance the clockwork countdown and unlock the cage immediately. The Armageddon Beasts burst out, and it becomes a desperate scramble to not be the one eaten by the monsters.

Radical Dock Party.

- 1 eschatologist prophet (page 8)
- 2 eschatologist radicals (page 6)
- 12 dockers (noncombatants)

Tactics.

The beasts are crazed by the sudden influx of movement and targets, and move to attack those nearest the cages: the dockers. The dockers reply by trying to flee as best they can, while the eschatologists use their abilities to slow down the PCs so the dwarves can get away. As they say, you don't have to outrun Armageddon, just your friend.

With luck, the party can stop the dwarves from opening all the cages, though in such a situation the extra monsters are liable to just make a run for it rather than tussle with other malice beasts.

Aftermath.

Zubov was counting on the monsters to stretch the city's police thin, so he'd have an easier time at his final attack. If the party stops the Armageddon Beasts, he'll have fewer men in the next scene.

If any of the monsters get away they wreak havoc through the night and kill a dozen people or so apiece before finding a lair in the sewers. The next day the military gets called in from the bayou west of the city to hunt the monsters down. They track them down and slays them, but the streets start to empty because people are afraid. You might have one of these creatures happen upon the party in another encounter to liven things up, but generally you can leave any escaped creatures in the background wreaking havoc.

Hostage Situation**Social. Real-Time.**

Will the party risk Zubov killing his hostages, or give in to his demands?

At 9:00 in the morning on the 12th of Spring, Flint's aasimar city governor Roland Stanfield invites several low-level dignitaries to the opening of the Sharon M. Baker subrail station. As the press, politicians, and business elite watch Stanfield cut the ribbon, Grundun Zubov and his radicals approach through secret passages that lead into the subrail tunnels.

A handful of dwarves wait outside the station, poised to distract law enforcement with a suicidal gun battle. Meanwhile Zubov and twenty more dwarves will burst up from the tunnels, abduct Stanfield, subrail architect **Kevin Wilson**, and several other VIPs, and then take control of the underground platform.

Outside the police find notes on each of the dead radicals with a list of demands the terrorists have. Zubov doesn't particularly care if these are fulfilled, though he does want his message to get out. Mostly he cares about stalling for time while he prepares the alchemical bomb. He expects to have to repel a rescue attempt, but he wants to draw in law enforcement officers, pulling them away from Hotel Aurum. When the time is right – about 15 minutes before noon – he and all but five radicals will set out in a short subrail train. A group of identical size stays behind and attacks the police as a distraction.

If he gets a chance, his route takes him from Baker Station (Red Line, station 4) to the Golden Point switchpoint, and finally to Darvill Station (Orange Line, station 2) a stone's throw from Hotel Aurum. If he's not stopped, the bomb will explode, annihilating several city blocks and causing Hotel Aurum to tumble, killing everyone within. Harkover Lee smashes a hole in the building's wall and teleports the king to safety, but hundreds more will die.

Clearing the Tracks.

The red line was already being shut down this morning so VIPs could enjoy a trip on a train without having to deal with any unpleasant company (that is to say, people who aren't rich and snooty, like them). The bomb at Orange Line, station 4 shut down the Orange Line entirely, so the tunnels are basically clear of any kind of traffic this morning.



Demands.

"I am Grundun Zubov, speaker for this clan of eschatologists. We follow the word of our philosopher Grandis Komanov, and we were responsible for the attacks this week. Do not trifle with us, and you will not have to suffer more deaths. My men have been active in your city for weeks, and if any harm befalls me or my men here, your city will reel from the devastation.

"Herein follow our demands.

"My men are going to need ale. Let's start with that.

"Then bring us that Price fellow, the one who runs the RHC in Slate. We know you can get him here with magic, and you will if you don't want to go searching for your governor's next incarnation. Nigel Price-Hill will pay for the death of our necromancer comrades.

"I want to speak to one of your skyseers. You no longer listen to them, but they could see the future. You threw smoke into the skies and blinded yourself to the truth: the world will end in ice. Once you hand over Price, and once I have spoken with a skyseer, I will inform you of my further demands."

An Ounce of Prevention.

The party might figure out Zubov's target and lay a trap for him in the tunnels. They can easily get a dozen police officers to back them. The fight will be less dynamic than the one outlined below, so you might throw a curveball by having dwarven reinforcements arrive by rail car.

We Don't Negotiate with Terrorists!

Within minutes of the attack, the local police precincts expend their limited-use magical communication to contact the military and the RHC. Likely by the time the PCs get on scene, the situation is being overseen by **Colonel Aden Tucker**.

Tucker brings the PCs up to speed on the situation, and explains that he's in charge and he doesn't want the RHC getting in his way. These dwarves have some qualms with the current leader of the RHC, and they're liable to overreact if they see RHC constables.

Tucker's initial plan is to stall until about noon, giving the terrorists a few snippets of what they have demanded. At noon he intends to send a large force into the subrail tunnels from the sewers to launch a rescue mission. Unfortunately, by that point the dwarves will already have launched their bomb-filled train.

Therefore, Tucker waits for his task force (forty soldiers) to arrive, smugly confident that because the dwarves are stuck in a hole, he has plenty of time to summon overwhelming force. If the party reminds Tucker that the dwarves have access to a train and can move, the embarrassed colonel pretends that changes nothing. Despite the risk to the hostages, Tucker thinks his men will make the victory clean. He assumes the dwarves won't move, and prefers to wait.

Though Colonel Tucker may seem at first brush to be the cliché of a proud military man too confident to realize that he's been outwitted, he's actually a sympathizer to the Duchess and traditional Risuri values. He really wouldn't mind if the governor got a black eye by having his metal machine road get negative press, and figures that even if the mission is a failure, the governor will just reincarnate anyway.

Only if the party has shown strong anti-Danoran sentiments will he listen to their advice. In that case they might be able to get four Allied Soldiers (page 31) who arrived early on their side. Otherwise, the party might have to move on their own.

Subrail Assault

Action. Tactical. Level II.

Trying to rescue the hostages is just playing into Zubov's trap.

Zubov lost a few radicals in the first rush, but he still has plenty guarding the subrail station.

Zubov's Subrail Team

- Grundun Zubov
- 1 eschatologist prophet (see page 8)
- 12 eschatologist radicals (see page 6)
- 4 eschatologist snipers

Stopping the Armageddon Beasts means that there were more police at the subrail station, able to cause more casualties among the dwarves. For every 2 of the 6 beasts that the party kept from getting loose in the city, subtract one radical from Zubov's group.

Eschatologist Sniper

Medium humanoid (hill dwarf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 37 (5d8+15)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +2, Con +3

Skills Religion +2, Perception +3

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

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

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

ACTIONS

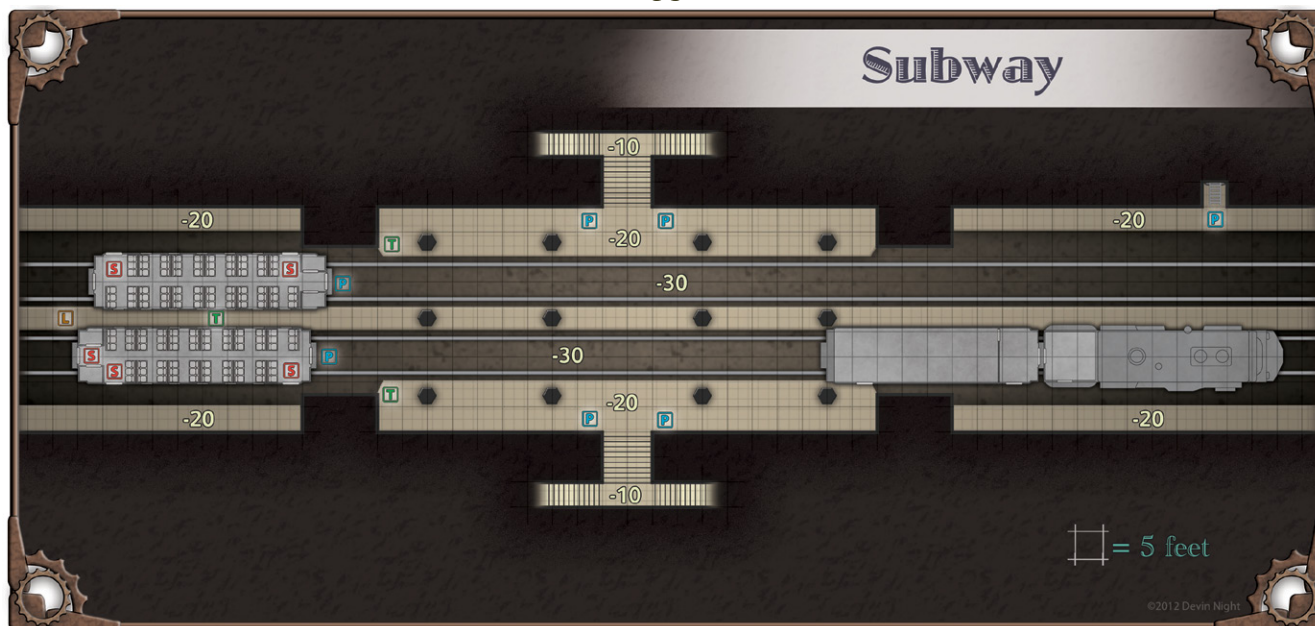
Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage or 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage if wielded in two hands.

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

Upper Level.

The grand architecture of the subrail station's upper level is empty and bullet-pocked, with a few bloodstains where people fell. The place is deserted, its two exits covered by dozens of police officers. Wicket gates stand open, though normally they'd require a copper penny to enter. In the center of the eerily-quiet hall are two pairs of staircases, one set leading to the eastbound platform, the other to the westbound platform.



Tunnel Approach.

The secret tunnels Zubov's men used to enter the subrail open out two hundred feet west of the platform. The subrail route can also be accessed via sewers or access shafts, but the nearest shaft (shown on the map) is trapped. If the party goes to the next access shaft to the east or west, they can get onto the rails a hundred feet from the edge of the map.

Platform Level.

Grundun's men have rigged this area with traps, and tossed burlap sacks all across the ground to conceal some nasty surprises. They decoupled some of the train cars and moved them to the west to provide a bottleneck. The locomotive of the subrail train is "idling" but makes enough noise to cover the sound of footsteps.

L - Lantern. Not actually a trap, but since the dwarves can see in the dark, they keep everything dark except this one lantern. It's easy for them to notice if anyone moves in front of the lantern from that direction.

S - Shotgun. Anyone opening the doors of the parked rail cars will get blasted with a trio of shotguns. This deters sneaking up, and works as an alarm.

T - Tripwire. Walking between the rail cars, or trying to climb up stealthily by the western pillars likely sets off a small mine attached to the tripwire.

P - Piercing Clamp. The burlap bags conceal bear-trap like clamps. When stepped on, the clamp tears through the sack and pierces the target's leg. The rest of the bag is weighted to keep the target from moving away.

Shotgun Trap

As you slide the door open, a wire snaps and a trio of shotguns discharge in your face.

Description This trap uses a trip wire to trigger shotguns arrayed around the entryway. The trip wire is 3 inches off the ground and

stretches across the doorway. The DC to spot the trip wire is 17. A successful DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables the trip wire harmlessly. A character without thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage using any edged weapon or edged tool. On a failed check, the trap triggers. Each of the three shotguns makes a ranged attack with a +12 bonus against every target within 30 feet of the entryway (vision is irrelevant to this attack roll). (If there are no targets in the area, the shotguns don't hit anything.) A target that is hit takes 13 (3d8) piercing damage.

Tripwire Mine Trap

Your foot snags something, and then you're hurled back by an explosion.

Description This trap uses a trip wire to trigger a cunningly hidden mine. The trip wire is 3 inches off the ground and stretches across a small crevice or handhold. The DC to spot the trip wire is 22. A successful DC 22 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables the trip wire harmlessly. A character without thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage using any edged weapon or edged tool. On a failed check, the trap triggers, causing the mine to explode in a 5-foot radius. Each creature in the area makes a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage and knocked prone on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one (and not knocked prone).

Piercing Clamp Trap

You step on what looks like a discarded burlap sack, but there's a click, and your leg feels like it's been bitten by a dragon.

Description This saw-toothed steel trap blends in with its surroundings. The DC to spot the contraption is 18. A creature that steps in the same 5-foot square as the trap must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (2d4) piercing damage and be restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 20 Strength check or DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success. Each failed check deals 5 (2d4) piercing damage to the trapped creature.



Grundun Zubov

Medium humanoid (hill dwarf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 22 (plate mail, shield, aura of darkness)

Hit Points 66 (7d10+28)

Speed 25 ft.

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

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +6, Intimidation +6, Religion +5; disguise kit +5

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Giant, Primordial

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Aura of Darkness. Grundun and friendly creatures within 10 feet of him benefit as though they have half cover (+2 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws).

Channel Divinity (1/short rest). Grundun can channel divine energy to fuel one of two magical effects.

Ensnarling Heresy. As an action, Grundun presents his holy symbol, turning his heretical words into tangible dark coils. Grundun can focus the force of his blasphemy on a creature within 10 feet of him that he can see. The creature must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be restrained. While restrained by the tendrils, the creature repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. On a success, it frees itself and the coils disappear.

Putrefying Strike. As a bonus action, Grundun touches one weapon or piece of ammunition and coats it with an oily film. This substance lasts for 1 minute. The next time he hits a target with an attack using that weapon or ammunition the target takes an extra 18 (2d10+7) necrotic damage.

Divine Sense (4/long rest). As an action, Grundun opens his awareness to the forces of good and evil. Until the end of his next turn, he knows the location of any celestial, fiend, or undead within 60 feet of him that is not behind total cover. He knows the type (celestial, fiend, or undead) of each such being he senses, but not its identity. Within the same radius, he also detects the presence of any place or object that has been consecrated or desecrated, as with the *hallow* spell.

Evil Smite. When Grundun hits a creature with a melee weapon attack, he can expend one spell slot to deal radiant damage to it, in addition to the weapon's damage. The extra damage is 2d8 for a 1st-level spell slot, plus 1d8 for each spell level higher than 1st, to a maximum of 3d8. The damage increases by 1d8 if the target is a celestial.

Fouling Hands (35 points). As an action, Grundun can make a melee spell attack to touch a creature and deal an amount of damage to it, up to the maximum amount remaining in this pool. Alternatively, he can expend 5 points to give a target the poisoned condition for 1 hour per 5 points spent this way.

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

Mid-Route Attack.

The party might let Zubov start the train, then have some sort of blockade in the tunnel at Golden Point to stop them. The train would be packed with dwarves—Zubov, the prophet, 7 radicals, and 4 snipers—and if the party managed to defeat them they'd only have about 10 minutes to disarm the bomb.

Spellcasting. Grundun is a 7th-level spellcaster who uses Charisma as his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14; +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following spells prepared from the paladin spell list:

1st-level (4 slots): *command*, *divine favor*, *inflict wounds*, *protection from evil and good*

2nd-level (3 slots): *aid*, *ray of enfeeblement*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Grundun attacks twice.

Magic Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) magical bludgeoning damage or 9 (1d10+4) magical bludgeoning damage if wielded in two hands. On a hit, Grundun's warhammer deals an extra 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 50/150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6+1) piercing damage.

Hostages.

The dwarves have eight hostages – Kevin Wilson the architect, Governor Roland Stanfield, and six other dignitaries. They have placed two generic hostages, bound, gagged, and blind-folded, in inner window seats of the two parked train cars, expecting their presence to distract and slow down any attackers.

The other six hostages are bound and forced to sit on the floor of the second car in the short train. All are gagged except Stanfield, who engages Zubov in a philosophical discussion, arguing that reincarnation renders the Heid Eschatol philosophy a fool's platitude.

Stanfield is not worried. He is actually a masterful warrior with effectively centuries of experience, but he does not want this information known by the public. He doesn't care enough about the people around him to risk that secret for their lives. Only if he is stuck on the train when it is about to explode will he make a move; he breaks his hand to slip his bonds, stuns any foes with a few punches, then leaps free. He won't bother to rescue anyone, especially not PCs who he knows are trying to defeat the Obscurati. Of course, if there are witnesses to his escape, he'll do what is socially expected and try to save a few innocents in the process.

Tactics.

Two snipers lie prone, one each on the north and south platforms on the right, their rifles trained on the spot between the two parked rail cars. A third sniper stands on the central divider, keeping watch on the other direction. The fourth sniper stands in the back of the short train, having already smashed out a window on the back door so he can fire from cover.

Eight radicals with shotguns hide in the trench where the rails run, ready to pop up and shoot soldiers coming down the stairs. Three stand in the train watching the hostages, while one waits crouched on the walkway at the front of the train, on the look-out of sneaky intruders.

Zubov works in the locomotive, watching the chemicals as they mix. He has the train primed and ready to go at a moment's notice. The eschatologist prophet waits beside Zubov; his main mission is to extinguish attackers' light sources of and heal injured dwarves.

If attacked, the dwarves unleash a barrage of gunfire, staggering their shots (half shoot while the others reload). The snipers can fire each round. Wounded dwarves fall back to the train to be healed. Zubov does not expose himself to combat. If he thinks his side is going to lose, he starts the train (move action) and activates the alchemical explosive (standard action). From that moment, the party has twenty-six minutes and eighteen seconds before it explodes.

When the train starts it travels 15 feet the first round, 30 the next, then 45, and so on until it reaches a speed of 90 feet per round. If the party jumps on, Zubov and any of his remaining radicals fight to the last, smiling the whole time at the thought of a glorious death. There's a good chance the party defeats him but are stuck traveling at 10 miles per hour with a bomb.

Someone Set Us Up the Bomb.

The Eschatologists bomb is a complex device that requires several steps to defuse.

Open the Case.

The first step requires the PCs to gently open the casing of the device. This can be accomplished by sliding the metallic sheeting off the outside shell, a DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Alternatively a PC can quickly re-arrange some of the plates for easier access to the internals with a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Each attempt takes a minute. Failure here does not detonate the bomb, but will eat up time on the clock.

Examine the Internals.

Inside the case, 29 rune-inscribed steel wires criss-cross an amberglass drum that holds 40 gallons of alchemicals. The drum is divided into eight sections, each filled with a different substance. The eight substances are:

- ◆ **Fire humor.** Refined trait in sentient beings that motivates activity and emotion. Acts as trigger.
- ◆ **Aether.** That which fills vacuum. Massively expands size of explosion.
- ◆ **Phlogiston.** Pure elemental fire in liquid form. The actual destructive agent of the explosion.
- ◆ **Frayed Chronosomia.** Fluid time which, when poured, extrudes in the shape of woven threads. This unstable version makes the explosion difficult to detect with foresight and divination.
- ◆ **Witchoil.** Black essence of the barrier between this world and the Bleak Gate. An accelerant that starts the reaction.
- ◆ **Blood infused with ambergris.** The calming agent that prevents premature detonation.
- ◆ **Serpent's Loop.** Scales of snakes that have devoured themselves, boiled in venom. Makes the fire burn any substance, even stone.
- ◆ **Frostburn.** Phlogiston that freezes instead of burns. Will coat everything burnt by the explosion with a layer of ice.

The runes on each wire are in Dwarven, and describe the connection, such as "Frayed Chronosomia to Phlogiston." One wire, engraved simply "Black," runs from the top of the barrel to the floor.

Every few seconds one of the 29 wires starts to glow, and then the two chambers it connects admit some of their contents. The wires glow in no discernible pattern over the course of four minutes, and touching one of the wires while it is live deals 1d6 lightning damage to the character. The wire labeled "Black" never glows. It acts as a magical ground, and a character holding it can touch any of the wires without concern for taking damage.

Disable the Mixture.

The mixing can be stopped simply by cutting all the wires. However if you cut a wire while a chamber on either end has any of *its* wires active, the whole thing detonates. For instance, if you want to cut a wire that leads from Witchoil to Aether, and while you're cutting it any other wire that connects with either Witchoil or Aether activates, you'll set off the bomb.

Figuring this out requires a minute of examination and a successful DC 24 Intelligence (Arcana or thieves' tools) check. Technologist PCs have advantage on this check. Examination at the safe house might have previously determined this.

Actually pulling off the feat requires seven consecutive Dexterity (thieves' tools) checks (DC 15 + 1 per previous check; maximum 21), each progressively harder with fewer safe windows. Being able to *detect magic* grants a +2 bonus to these checks because of the warning of which wire is about to activate. Technologist PCs have advantage on these checks.

An early detonation is less destructive, perhaps only collapsing the subrail tunnel, but it certainly kills any PCs nearby. The danger gets progressively worse, and by the time the train reaches Golden Point the bomb is primed enough that a detonation would create a 30-foot wide crater. If the adventurers manage to successfully cut all seven wires to phlogiston, they can keep the bomb from getting any *more* dangerous, but it will eventually go off unless they can deactivate the whole thing. The choice is up to the party.

Aftermath.

If the party succeeds, the bomb can eventually be disposed of safely. If the bomb goes off at full power, thousands die. In between, the PCs might decide they can't deactivate the bomb, so they have to choose where to let it go off. The safest spot is probably Golden Point, which only has wharfs and warehouses, but no residences. It's the easiest to evacuate.

Between the police and marines, any eschatologists who escape are soon rounded up. Colonel Tucker grudgingly gives the PCs his thanks for their assistance, but remains unimpressed if they disobeyed his orders.

The press is, of course, ecstatic at any acts of heroics that occurred in their vicinity, especially if the party (or B-Team) previously took down the terrorists responsible for destroying the Flint Tribune. They want interviews, but Governor Stanfield orders the police to clear the area so clean-up can begin. He convincingly congratulates the party, thanks them for their services, and tells them he'll see them at the peace summit banquet.

Part Two: The Etiquette of Gustatory Interrogation

DIGNITARIES FROM THE NATION OF RISUR SIT down to dinner with its enemies.

Invitation and Welcoming

Social Montage.

The PCs are invited to the banquet and are asked to attend the delegates' arrival.

On the morning of the 13th, Stover Delft tracks the party down and hand-delivers their invitations to the opening dinner of the peace summit. He tries not to make a fuss about the fact that he was not invited. He does, however, tap a finger meaningfully at the "Guest of" entry. The party was invited by Lya Jierre.

The five-course dinner starts at 8:00 PM, but tailors are standing by at the RHC headquarters to get the group properly presentable before 5:00 PM. The Danorans arrive at 6:00 PM, and the king wants the party present when they disembark their ship. The dinner will also give the party an opportunity to observe the Danoran delegation for clues to why they're still here when they have to know that the RHC knows Lya Jierre is involved with the Obscurati.

If your group is the sort that needs the reminder, Delft can point out that insulting or god forbid *attacking* the Danorans might start a war, so the party should be on their best behavior. On the up-side, if the party *is* rude, technically Lya Jierre's responsible since she invited them.

Meeting at the Royal Docks.

On the 9th, the *Freux Rouge*, captained by Rosalyn Taylor, parked at the Royal Docks. It bore a small party of dignitaries and a security detachment protecting the Danoran side of Hotel Aurum. At 6 p.m. on the 13th, a second ship arrives.

Lux Profectusque cruises into Flint Bay and makes a grand impression. Two hundred Danoran sailors in crisp white uniforms line the edge of its main deck, helping the ship seem to glow in the afternoon sun. The vessel swings about and closes with the Royal Docks, and with measured precision it cuts its engine and glides on momentum to stop not ten feet from the prow of Risur's own flagship, *Coaltongue*.

A company of Risuri marines flank the welcoming party in Fleet Square, while across the bridge in Royal Square, several hundred Flinters strain to watch. The king is not in attendance, having sent Governor Stanfield in his stead.

A ramp is deployed, and the line of crew parts to reveal, first, a small string and woodwind orchestra that strikes up the Danoran national anthem; and second, the head of state, Sovereign Han Jierre. He starts down the ramp as the elegant overture of the anthem begins. Beside him walks his niece Lya Jierre, and behind him follows the Danoran Minister of War Eloise Duffet, several

The Guest List.

The party has a list of the attendees in the dossier they received at the start of the adventure, but here is a refresher for you. The NPCs who don't merit a full character bio get brief descriptions.

Risur Delegation.

- **King Aodhan.**
- **Principal Minister Harkover Lee.**
- **Royal Engineer 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.
- **Minister of Agriculture 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.
- **City Governor Roland Stanfield.** Aasimar who has reincarnated for centuries, always returning to lead Flint. Calm, polite, and blandly political. Has a very long view on problem-solving, which is what drew him to the Obscurati. He secretly heads Colossus Cell, but keeps his distance from the daily affairs.

Danoran Delegation.

- **Sovereign Han Jierre.**
- **Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.**
- **Minster of War Eloise Duffet.** Broad, tall, dark-haired tiefling woman, bearing scars from the Fourth Yerasol War. Deeply bitter against Risur because she was orphaned in the Third Yerasol War. Dismisses any non-warriors as not having valuable opinions. Has a mechanical left arm with a spring-mounted blade.
- **Minister of Magic 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.
- **Naval Representative Rosalyn Taylor.** Human, one-eyed redheaded captain of *Freux Rouge*, Danor's last sail-powered warship. Old-fashioned, high-spirited, and responsible.

Observers.

- **Mediator Brakken of Heffanita.**
- **Drakran Observer Steffan Eberhardt.** Old thin dwarf with sickly white skin, who supports himself on a skull-tipped ebony cane. Eberhardt represents weapons manufacturers who have a financial stake in the continued conflict between Risur and Danor, but he's a principled fellow and would never consider trying to disrupt the talks.

Danoran Bodyguards.

In addition to the usual riflemen who would escort any Danoran dignitary, Lya travels with a pair of unique bodyguards, **Rush** and **Merton**.

Rush, a snide half-elf, carries a pair of elaborately decorated platinum rods, slotted into holsters at his hips, which function as extensible *immovable rods*. Merton, a hulking half-deaf half-orc, wears a steel helmet with unusually thick protection over his ears, which protects him from the staff-like object he carries: an arcanoscientific sonic weapon shaped vaguely like a tuning fork, but wrapped in cashmere to avoid attracting attention.

bodyguards, and attendants bearing gifts. As they step off the ramp onto the dock, the strings and woodwinds rise and are joined by previously unseen brass instruments. Then, just as the sovereign reaches Governor Stanfield, the anthem crescendos and is joined by a blast of the steamship's horn.

The sound fades out, and Governor Stanfield formally welcomes the Danorans. He starts to introduce the party, but Lya Jierre slips in first and describes the PCs as “the good people I crossed swords with in Vendricce, and who helped us at Axis Island.” She explains that she asked for them to come to the dinner to show her commitment to clearing up any misunderstandings. This moment could play out a lot of different ways depending on how the party has previously interacted with Lya, but try to portray her as genuinely concerned that nothing gets in the way of peace between the two countries.

After some brief pleasantries, everyone loads up into royal carriages – windows shuttered so no rabble in the crowd are tempted to make a move on the Danorans – and they set out for Hotel Aurum.

Lya's Explanation.

If the party encountered Lya Jierre at the end of Adventure Four, they'll no doubt be curious why she's here when it seems obvious she's involved in a hostile conspiracy. In this case, the Obscurati is going for the big lie, and is counting on the compartmentalization of their conspiracy to pull it off.

A key aspect here is that even the heads of Obscurati cells don't know what's going on in other cells. Lya is head of Golden Cell, so she knows the conspiracy's ultimate goal, and she has been informed that, yes, the Ob do have a project in Flint, and that Reed Macbannin was involved. But she doesn't know what is being built here. She just knows her mission is to protect the peace summit and if possible delay Risuri efforts to disrupt the cell in Flint.

Lya claims that her brother Luc was indeed working on an experimental device, and that the lantern is intended to solve the “Magic Problem,” as she puts it. Danor lies in a mostly dead magic zone, yet despite there being no access to elemental planes, the world still functions by following physical and chemical processes. Her brother's lamp, she claims, is a science experiment to help probe the nature of how such processes function in regions of different magic. She admits there are some niche military applications, but the primary purpose is scientific and technological inquiry.

Why then was Caius Bergeron – whom the party has clear evidence was part of a conspiracy called the Obscurati – supposed to



Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.

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

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

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



Sovereign Han Jierre.

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

him to become one of the conspiracy's three leaders.

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

be on the train with Luc? Lya states here that Danor's intelligence community investigated the events on the Avery Coast railroad and learned that Caius recruited bodyguards. But as far as anyone in Danor knew, Caius was just a philanthropist with a penchant for archaeology. It seems now that he was collaborating with Reed Macbannin, trying to steal Luc's lantern for himself. Lya says her theory is that Caius was obsessed with ancient magic tied to other worlds, and that he thought the lantern would help him.

She claims that if there's any assistance she can offer to help ensure the threat from this group is squelched, the party need only ask. But she assures them that she was simply in Vendricce to meet her brother and support him as he tested his invention. Any combat that might have happened after that she chalks up to fear for her brother's safety.

And if asked why the gathering was hidden in the Bleak Gate, she explains that the Clergy in Crisillyir have long crafted personal domains in that realm, and they were simply making use of their host's



generosity. Indeed, she points out that Danor is relatively inexperienced at using magic, and that if the party is looking for people who might have been working with Reed Macbannin and hiding in the Bleak Gate, it makes far more sense to look at Crisillyir.

Now, this lie is almost certainly not going to convince the party, but since the proof mostly comes down to the party's word versus hers, it's believable enough to keep the peace summit going. Plus there's a slim chance the PCs might think they've been tricked, and that between Morgan Cippiano and Leone the Steelshaper, perhaps the conspiracy actually *is* based out of Crisillyir.

The Banquet

Social. Montage.

Everyone is trying to be nice to each other, except one woman.

The banquet takes two hours in total, and generally is a polite diplomatic affair where no one wants to do anything contentious. But interspersed are moments where the party has a chance to define their positions and influence the opinions various NPCs have of them and of Risur.

The key with this encounter is to make the PCs feel involved in the politicking going on, and to give them a chance to flex their diplomatic and investigative muscle. Certain parties will not enjoy this type of gaming, so you'll need to decide whether to give your players time to hold full conversations with NPCs, or to gloss over everything but the key moments.

Running the Banquet.

To help the party keep track of who's talking, you might want to make props for the different characters. You can point to each NPC as they talk, and heavily combat-oriented parties might pay more attention if they see minis and think combat is possible.

Event 1: Seating and the Toast.

Being members of the head table, the PCs await their declared entrance to the banquet in an adjacent chamber alongside the other members of the table. The PCs are kept in the back of the line, away from King Aodhan and Han Jierre, with the Risuri Head of Agriculture, Kian Doherty, one spot in front of them.

The group is announced, and each of the PCs is named. The line moves into the banquet hall, and the PCs and the rest of the table take their seats. The tables are setup with empty plates, but the wine glasses have been filled in anticipation of the delegation's arrival.

King Aodhan is the first to rise, addressing the attendees in a loud voice, bidding them his deepest thanks and blessings for attending. He bids Han Jierre to rise and give the first toast of the evening. The Sovereign of Danor rises and takes the opportunity to toast the cessation of hostilities between the two nations, proclaiming, "Our long conflict is finally at an end, and we can begin looking forward to a shining future."

After Han Jierre gives his toast, the king of Risur rises once again and gives his toast. The king thanks Sovereign Jierre before giving his toast in honor of his soon-to-be wife "the lovely and talented Lya Jierre. For without her, none of this would be possible."

Conversation rumbles around the various tables as King Aodhan sits. At this point etiquette permits one more person from each side to make a toast before the first course arrives.

Give the PCs a chance to go first, and either in the silence or in response to them, Danoran Minister of War Eloise Duffet proposes a toast:

"Let us remember the fallen sailors and orphaned children, and do them honor in these coming talks."

Then she gives a frigid glare to the king. A DC 22 Intelligence (History) check recalls a bit of Danoran propaganda from the Third Yerasol War claiming Aodhan, before he was king, fired upon the Danoran capital of Cherage and struck an orphanage.

Event 2: Salad Fork, Soup Spoon.

Following the toasts, chefs come to deliver the first round of food. Have each PC make a DC 6 Charisma (Diplomacy) check to maintain the proper etiquette as they eat.

The first course consists of a specially made Risuri soup imported from distant Shale. The soup is made using local spices and select fish that can only be found near the Yerasol Archipelago. As people finish their soup, a second course of specially made Danoran salad and Beran breads are brought to the table. A server notes that the Danoran Minister of War Eloise Duffet has not touched her soup, to which Duffet responds that the soup's origin seems rather political. Shale was the seat of power of Duchess Ethelyn, the king's sister who led an attack on Danor.

Lya Jierre steps in and says that if a cow rancher murdered her father, she would not stop eating beef. The table chuckles, but Han Jierre seems intrigued by the topic. He brings up the PCs' exploits at Axis Island, thanks them for aiding his niece in handling the matter, and then asks the party for their opinions on what the Duchess did and what punishment she deserved.

Duchess Ethelyn's betrayal of her brother King Aodhan played out in Adventure One. Let the PCs extemporize here. If your players are not the extemporizing type, let them off the hook by having Lya or King Aodhan brush off the question as one that is too serious for this gathering.

Event 3: Intermission.

The attendees continue conversing for a bit, but then the first intermission of the event is called. Guests are invited to view a gallery of fine art that has been set up in one of the skywalks. During the intermission the PCs have time to meet with other members of the crowd. If the B-Team perished, the party gets three separate visits by Geoff Massarde, Kian Doherty, and Rosalyn Taylor, all of whom express condolences and recall their brief time with the other constables.

Once a sufficient length of time has passed (use your discretion, but the intermission is not likely to last more than twenty minutes or so), the attendees are called back to their tables for the next part of the meal.



Event 4: Let's Talk Peace.

The third course of the banquet consists of renowned meat samplings brought to Flint via magical transportation from the Risuri capital of Slate. Three plates are put on the table, each of them filled with a selection of finely spiced and thinly sliced meat meant as a preparatory appetizer for the guests.

When the attendees begin to eat, the topic of conversation changes to a discussion about the start of the peace talks. Sovereign Jierre and King Aodhan have an ongoing conversation about specifics of the talks, giving one another hints on how to handle some of their more difficult advisors and councilors. The tone of the conversation is open and friendly, and PCs should get a sense that both rulers are generally looking forward to the talks and bear no ill will towards one another.

Eventually Brakken, Lya Jierre, and Principal Minister Lee begin a conversation about the hardest hurdle to overcome in the peace talks. Harkover Lee believes that many in Risur are against the talks because of the fear of industrialization, while Lya Jierre believes her people cannot forgive past transgressions from the last Yerasol war. Brakken tries to include the PCs in the conversation, interested in hearing their opinions, since they're more in touch with the people on the streets.

Event 5: Agitation.

The fourth course consists of a haunch of specially bred boar from distant Ber, a personal gift from Vairday Bruse, King of Ber. The meat is accompanied by a selection of varied fruits from Elfaivar, sliced into bite-sized chunks, and everything is glazed with a sweet honey-based sauce.

The topic of conversation switches again as Roland Stanfield begins to talk about the several changes that have come to Flint as a result of Risur's new industrial revolution. The governor feathers his own nest by mentioning prominent construction, including the finished subrail system, the various factories of the Parity Lake district, and the Hotel Aurum.

The Governor is quickly confronted by the Danoran Minister of War, Eloise Duffet. She brings up several problems that have confronted Flint recently; including the corruption and suicide of Mayor Reed MacBannin, arsonist attacks, and the events of the past few days - which she only learned of *after* they landed in the city today. Duffet wishes to hear the governor's thoughts on these matters, but Stanfield just offers a stock political answer:

"Every society has to find its balance after a transition, but we are committed to ensuring the safety of our citizens and our guests. You have my promise that if you had been in any danger neither I nor the king would have kept that information from you."

Duffet then asks the PCs what they've done to maintain the security in the city. She points out that the Danoran capital of Cherage has been peaceful for a generation, and claims the only violence in her

homeland is what Risur brings to its shores. She neglects to mention that Cherage has had a strict curfew since its last riots.

Event 6: No Dessert.

A second intermission is called. This one includes a performance by a string quartet, with one violinist using the famous Hurricane Violin, enchanted in the Navras Opera House. Lya Jierre is trying to get Eloise to step aside for a private conversation when a Risuri guard comes running in, finds Harkover Lee, and explains that Asrabey Varal is on his way up.

Less than a minute later, Asrabey strides into the gathering. No NPC will try to bar him as he makes his way to King Aodhan, where he intends to kneel as he speaks. If the party helped him with Ekossigan he will show them respect and not try to force past them.

At no point does the dreadnought make eye contact with any of the Danoran delegation, seeing them as unworthy of his attention. He says:

"King Aodhan, I apologize for my disruption. The Unseen Court wishes to know more of the danger Ekossigan saw, and so I request permission to investigate further, passing into the Bleak Gate to explore Cauldron Hill. Your nation owes me nothing, and so I ask this as a favor. If you would deny my request, you need only say so."

Varal is shading the truth a bit, though he is not directly lying to the king; the Court has no direct knowledge of what's happening in Cauldron Hill. But he sees couching his request in such terms as his best chance to find Kasvarina.

With a successful DC 22 Wisdom (Insight or Perception) check the party might glimpse a slight twitch of anxiety from Brakken. This is because the mediator is hearing the surface thoughts of Han Jierre. (Roland Stanfield is immune to mind-reading.) The Danoran sovereign is far better at keeping up a poker face than Brakken, and gives no indication of being perturbed by the specifics of Asrabey's request, though he demonstrates an appropriate level of displeasure at his breach of protocol.

King Aodhan berates Asrabey for choosing this moment of all times, and demands the high elf leave at once. That said, he does not explicitly deny Asrabey's request; this sort of nuance is common in Risur-fey relations, but the Danorans, for their part, don't really pick up on the subtlety. Asrabey inclines his head in acceptance of the king's statements and departs with a flourish.

Around the hall, there is a general letting out of breaths as the high elf departs. King Aodhan says, with a smile, that enough time has now elapsed for dessert to be ready. Han Jierre declines politely, saying he will take his leave so Risur can deal with its fey allies. He nods to Brakken, and with that the Danoran delegation leaves with as much dignity as they can muster, which is quite a lot, considering.

King Aodhan gets the party's attention and requests that they come and speak with him and Harkover Lee in private. Brakken follows, with promises that he has information of import, but Harkover Lee closes the door in the minotaur's face then casts a spell to sound-proof the room.



Final Preparation

Social. Real-Time.

The king tells the party to prepare for their mission to the Bleak Gate, and Brakken provides some key information.

King Aodhan is furious. He doesn't buy the Jierres' story that the evidence of their involvement is just a coincidence, but he wanted them to think he did. Now any element of surprise they might have had is blown because Asrabey likes making a dramatic entrance. Nevertheless, he recognizes that the party could use the high elf's help in a fight, so if they don't have any objections, he'll grant Asrabey's request.

Telepathic Revelation.

Brakken, with no other recourse to get the king to listen, psionically sends a message to the party:

"I'm a telepath, and I've read the Jierres' minds. Let me in."

When Asrabey Varal made his request, Brakken casually read the surface thoughts of all those in attendance. Han Jierre's reaction was the most shocking, and Brakken could tell he was quite worried of what Varal may unearth during his expedition to the hill. The Sovereign was also concerned that the knowledge might endanger his niece Lya. As for Lya's thoughts, Brakken sensed that she suddenly grew wary of her uncle, as if Asrabey's arrival had confirmed some suspicion she had about her uncle's activities.

Brakken has gotten a sense all night that everyone has been hiding things from each other, and that it all revolves around Lya's involvement in something far greater than he can read. But he knows that Cauldron Hill is at the center of it, because the last thought he overheard before the Danorans left was Han thinking, "I'll have to send a messenger to Cauldron Hill."

If the party doesn't figure it out, King Aodhan explains for them. If Han's sending a messenger to warn the Obscurati, that means they didn't already know an attack was imminent. And if the party can stop the messenger, they can maintain the element of surprise.

Harkover quickly calls in a few of his aides and gives them directions to watch for any way Han Jierre might pass along a message.

If the party is ready to act, a few minutes later Harkover gets word of a Danoran guard heading downstairs toward the lobby; it might be worth following him and detaining him once he's out of the hotel. The man is unfamiliar with Flint, relying on a map to navigate to Stanfield Canal. He should be fairly easy to catch.

Meanwhile...

Han and Lya Jierre hold a quick meeting after the banquet, where Lya is incensed at how close Risur is to finding real proof of the conspiracy. The Danoran sovereign agrees that an intrusion to Cauldron Hill will be a setback, but he tells her not to worry. He knows things she doesn't, and there are contingency plans in place.

The best-case scenario for them is that the RHC and Asrabey are killed in the Bleak Gate and can bring back no information. If that fails, though, they'll have to be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

Han calls in one of his guards and gives the man the complicated instructions of how to deliver a message. He scribes five sigils on a sheet of paper, as well as a brief warning that the RHC and Asrabey are coming. He tucks the note into the man's pocket, then tells him to go as discreetly as possible along the Canal Route.

The man departs, and Han relaxes. Lya asks whether he thinks everything is fine now, and Han smiles. He explains that he expects the messenger to be captured. Sending him out will just lull Risur into a false sense of security, when indeed a message has already been sent that no bold hero could ever run down and catch.

Han knows that Roland Stanfield is part of Colossus Cell, and will pass along the news magically. Lya is unaware of Stanfield's involvement in the conspiracy.

Lya asks, and not for the first time, what is going on in Cauldron Hill, or at least when she'll have proved herself enough that he can trust her with the information. Han says later, certainly not until they leave Risur. He encourages his niece not to worry.

When, later, the colossus does rip free and cause a panic, Han resigns himself to giving up on peace with Risur. In the confusion he and Lya will withdraw to *Lux Profectusque*, which flees back to Danor at full speed. The ship will fight its way out if necessary, but if the party has a foolproof plan to halt the ship, the two can also make use of teleportation magic once they're out of the Hotel. They likely disappear when the party is too distracted to bother stopping them.

Part Three: Expedition to the Bleak Gate

THE PARTY ATTACKS OR SNEAKS INTO THE OBSCURATI'S complex.

Pick Your Team

Social. Real-Time.

If the party goes the Canal Route, they can bring along perhaps a handful of allies – if they're using amulets, there are only enough for the PCs, Asrabey, Alexander Grappa (in his fully reassembled golem body), and perhaps one or two other prominent NPCs like Kvarti or Gale, though the party need to be persuasive to convince them to step into the Bleak Gate. If they're relying on Obscurati wands to complete the transition, there are only a limited number of charges available, at GM's discretion. We know tagalong NPCs can be annoying. Asrabey and Grappa, though, have important plot roles.

If the party travels with Ekossigan, they'll have the fey lord and his hundreds of lesser fey minions, plus Asrabey. They might be able to convince Ekossigan to wait long enough to get Alexander Grappa, but he won't let them bring along military or police.

If the party uses the king's Ritual of Transposition, the expedition can include up to thirty-one people, which should include Asrabey and Grappa. The party might even convince Kvarti Gorbatiy to tag along. Sixty Allied Soldiers (see page 31) gather to travel with them, but not all of them make it through the portal before it closes.

Grappa and Asrabey.

If the party has these two with them, Asrabey mentions Kasvarina's name, and Grappa explains what he did to her. Because of his *geas*, all he can explain is that he learned about her history, and he thought that if she had another chance to experience her life she might make different choices. She was once a great person who did much good, but eventually the conspiracy corrupted her.

So when Grappa fled, he took pity on her and decided to steal her memories. More accurately, he locked them away. She'll regain her memories at a rate of a year every few days, but since she's over five centuries old she'll just have the memories of herself as young woman for some time. Certainly she'll also recall what the Ob have told her since then, but she won't have her own full memories for months or years. Being exposed to her original life can bring memories back faster, but they'll be spotty.

Asrabey is unsure what to make of this, but he promises he will find her and keep her safe. If she really is part of this conspiracy, perhaps he'll be able to help her recall something of use for defeating it. If any PC is a Vekeshi Mystic, Asrabey asks for his help, and if other PCs offer he won't refuse them.

Canal Route.

This route involves passing beneath five bridges that cross Stanfield Canal, which runs between Bosum Strand and Parity Lake. The route can be traveled by barge or steamboat (the bridges aren't tall enough for most sailing ships), or you can walk along a foot path parallel the canal. The route to enter the Bleak Gate goes west to east, and to exit is east to west.

Each bridge is keyed to a different magical sigil, and a person or object must be marked with or carrying something marked with that sigil. Each bridge you pass under with the right sigil pulls you further into the Bleak Gate, and over the course of a few miles the real world fades out. The effect of each bridge only lasts about ten minutes unless you pass beneath the next in the line.

At the east exit, a detachment of watchmen wait beneath the last bridge. They have wands that finalize the transition. Without the wand's magic, a person can remain in the Bleak Gate only for a few minutes before snapping back to reality. Normally the watchmen just let through couriers or pick up crates that fall into the canal since the ship they're on isn't in the same plane as them. They've never had to deal with a hostile incursion. See "Toll Bridge" (page 20).

The party might take this path if they manage to get the five sigils from Quentin Augst, but then they'd have to know to seize the Obscurati wand from the watchmen in order to complete the transition. If they got a wand from Norm, or if they got amulets from Lorcan Kell and had them repaired by Harkover Lee, they can get in on their own.

Mass Murder with Ekossigan.

Ekossigan, fully unhinged after sacrificing thirty-one children, marches with three dozen gremlins and numerous other fey – satyrs, nymphs, pixies, and the like. These are presented as generic Allied Fey (see page 31).

The small army cavorts and dances from the bleak analogue of Cloudwood to the Nettles. The music starts boisterous but turns eerie as more and more fey start cackling maniacally. Ekossigan deploys scouts, and after a few hours they find the front entrance.

Ritual of Transposition.

After the banquet, the king and party take a carriage from Hotel Aurum to a wooded grove at the foot of Cauldron Hill. Sixty soldiers wait, having already assembled – but not lit – a bonfire. Stover Delft is also there to wish the party off, and has brought along Alexander Grappa. Asrabey arrives on his own.

Harkover Lee helps draw a ritual circle with powdered rust, and then hands out thimble-sized charm bags woven with pieces of the Risuri flag. The king stands aside, concentrating and gathering power. A flicker of weakness passes through the crowd, and everyone present somehow knows that the king is drawing upon his people to perform the ritual.



At midnight, with no moon in the sky and no city lights visible through the trees, the king explains that once they appear in the Bleak Gate, they will be stuck there at least until the sun rises, though its light will be barely noticeable on that plane. After sunrise, if they want to return they can tear open the charm bags, which will end the spell's effect on them. He warns them that when the spell ends, they'll appear in the equivalent spot in this world – the terrain is the same, but structures might be very different, so be careful.

If they don't open the bags by sunset, which will be in about 18 hours, they'll be trapped there.

Stover Delft is unusually polite to the PCs during this time, knowing that this mission could prove to be fatal. He tells them to come back alive so he can take credit for training them.

When everyone is ready, the king begins the ritual.

Into the Gate

Exploration. Montage. Level 8.

The party navigates the Bleak Gate to reach Cauldron Hill.

Sounds do not echo in the Bleak Gate, but neither is there ambient noise to muffle them. The water is still, the sky black, cloudless, starless. Wherever the party appears, they smell an everpresent stench of burnt engine oil and hear a dull hiss coming from the direction of Cauldron Hill: the faint exhalations of dozens of steam boilers.

The city exists just as in the real world, the same buildings, the same trees, but wholly unoccupied. A single flicker of could can be seen for miles, but there's not a single sliver of light to be seen.

There are five possible entrances the party can find to the Cauldron Hill complex: three "front doors," the entrance from Parity Lake, and the utility access from atop the hill.

Front Doors.

The front doors are three heavily-guarded mechanically-operated doors built into the side of Cauldron Hill. One faces Stanfield Canal, another is in the western Nettles, and one in the south Nettles. All three have similar defenses and open onto long passages that lead to the interior checkpoint.

Each of these also has a nearby U-shaped tunnel carved into the hillside, lined with rusted ring gates. These passageways, magically concealed, let Ob operatives step out of one of the front entrances, then immediately go through a short loop to transition four-fifths of the way into the real world. These gates have different sigils than the Stanfield Canal gates, and only have 4 gates, not enough to fully transition between the planes.

Parity Lake Entrance.

In the unlikely event the party explores the southern shore of Parity Lake, they can find another entrance with a channel to let small boats deliver materials directly into the complex. A large hydraulic elevator (Area 3 on the complex map) carries material up to the main level.

Utility Access.

On the surface of the mountain directly above the underground complex are five utility shafts, their exits surrounded by rocks or trees to making stumbling across them unlikely. However if a character gets within a hundred feet he can pinpoint the location by sound and eventually by the smoke and steam billowing out.

A grated cover is trapped with *explosive runes* (5d6 fire damage), but if it is removed the 20-foot wide shaft provides access to the complex, a hundred feet down (Area 4 on the complex map). Each minute a character spends in the shaft they must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 1d6 fire damage from the heat.

Toll Bridge

Action. Tactical. Level 8.

At the end of the canal route, Obscurati watchmen bar the way.

Depending on their resources, the party might simply need to avoid or kill these foes, or capture them and get them to explain where they keep the Obscurati wand that will complete the party's trip into this plane. The guards at this bridge have one wand between them.

Obscurati Watchmen.

- 2 Obscurati guards
- 2 shadow trolls

Obscurati Guard

Male humanoid (dark folk), lawful neutral

Armor Class 20 (plate mail, shield)

Hit Points 45 (6d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +5

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

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

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

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

ACTIONS

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

Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 50/150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage.

Shadow Troll

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 84 (8d10+40)**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	7 (-2)	9 (-1)	7 (-2)

Skills Athletics +7, Perception +5, Stealth +7**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15**Languages** Primordial**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)**Keen Smell.** The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.**Regeneration.** The troll regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the troll takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the troll's next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.**Sapping Strikes.** When the troll scores a critical hit with one of its attacks, its target makes a Strength saving throw against a DC equal to the damage dealt or gains one level of exhaustion.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The troll makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6+4) piercing damage.**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10+4) slashing damage.**Terrain.**

The final bridge in the canal has a 10-foot wide walkway that passes beneath it, with a short drop into the still water on one side, and a gentle grassy slope on the other. The bottom of the bridge is 20 feet up and has various trusses and decorations that let the shadow trolls hide from the party.

Tactics.

The two Obscurati guards are posted at the top of the bridge with a dim shielded lantern. They can easily see the party approaching if they have any light sources, and likely have enough time to move to the walkway and hide just out of sight up the hill. They drink *potions of darkvision* so they can attack from the shadows.

When the party approaches, the shadow trolls wait and then attack the last person in line. One likely grabs and pulls the victim off the ground, while the other rends it.

When the trolls attack, the guards shoot anyone at close range, then charge into melee. With the trolls on their side they think there's no one they can't beat. If things turn sour, a guard might run, but he's slow. If he manages to get back to the top of the bridge he'll light a flare that alerts the guards at the front door that faces the canal.

Aftermath.

The watchmen know only about the parts of the Cauldron Hill complex in areas 1, 2, and 3. They seem almost relieved that they were attacked, since it means things are going to change. Morale has

Recruitment.

How does one end up working in the Bleak Gate for a mysterious conspiracy? Most of the people here are patriotic soldiers and engineers, recruited with the promise of a chance to serve their country. In the aftermath of the adventure, the party might track down the head recruiter, one **Colonel Greg Masterson**, at the Battalion military academy. As soon as he gets word of the catastrophe at Cauldron Hill, though, he goes out into the bayou and blows his brains out. He reported to Roland Stanfield, and does not want anyone to discover Stanfield's involvement, not even by interrogating his corpse.

Total Number of Defenders.

Unless you need to make the challenge tougher, assume the complex as a whole has the following occupants. There used to be more, but the party has killed a fair number who were sent on missions over the past year.

- **100 engineers.** 100 in the barracks.
- **60 Obscurati guards.** 2 at the canal bridge, 4 on patrol, 2 each at the three front entrances, 2 at the Parity Lake entrance, 6 at Checkpoint One, and 40 in the barracks who are off duty but tend to the kitchen and various menial tasks. The off-duty ones aren't in armor but do carry weapons.
- **18 Obscurati dark creepers.** 2 each at the three front entrances, 12 who sleep outside on the mountain, staking territory so local monsters don't invade.
- **12 Obscurati dark slayers.** These work in the VIP suites (areas 10 to 26).
- **6 elite researchers.** They reside in the VIP suites.
- **3 golems.** 2 Borne prototype and 1 greater Borne prototype, usually at the Golem Guardpost (area 5).
- **3 unique characters.** Leone Quital and the fairly helpless Kasvarina, plus possibly Norm, the Obscurati liaison to the Kell guild.

been terrible, and after a bit of reflection a surviving guard might decide he'd be happier back in the real world.

Cauldron Hill Entrance**Action. Tactical. Level 6+.**

The party fights or sneaks their way into the Obscurati's fortress.

The Obscurati don't like solicitors. Getting into their complex will require clever planning. Luckily, the early paranoia that helped create the base's defenses has faded, so the more expensive and tedious protections, like magic *alarms* on every entrance, are no longer active.

Layout.

The interior of the Cauldron Hill Facility is primarily made up of steel walls, specially shaped by Leone Quital. As most Obscurati operatives working in the facility lack darkvision, gas lamps dot the walls at intervals of about every 10 feet. Unless indicated, every



room is considered to be fully illuminated by lights, though PCs can attack them if desired (treat as a lantern).

A pervasive smell of oil can almost be tasted throughout the facility. Recent activation attempts with Borne have resulted in pools of leaked witchoil. The smell lingers even though they were cleaned up.

Front Doors.

Each of the three main entrances is a highly defensible structure, with steel doors (20 feet wide, 12 feet tall, 4 inches thick) built into the stone sides of the hill. Thin lines of gold crisscross the frame on the inside, barring any sort of teleportation effects.

Beyond the doors is a simple foyer with a room for the guards on the right and the hydraulic-powered mechanism on the left that operates the doors. Though not separately mapped, they all resemble Checkpoint One (Area 1 on the complex map).

Beyond the foyer, a 10-foot wide tunnel continues a half mile or more to Checkpoint One. Two sets of light rail tracks run the length, and small hand-cranked vehicles make it easier to ferry men and supplies, allowing travel at up to 15 miles per hour. There are currently two such vehicles stationed near the entrance.

The front doors remain closed most of the time, but a slot can be opened to communicate with visitors. When shut, the doors lock into the floor and ceiling with steel bars, making forcing them open nearly impossible (DC 25 Strength check). Gremlins with the party can make the bars jostle loose, so the doors simply have to be pushed apart (a DC 22 Strength check).

In addition to the group of watchmen at the end of the canal, two other groups roam the area around the mountain, maintaining wards that keep evil spirits at bay. Therefore, every two hours the front doors open to allow people to cycle in and out. Each door has a daily passcode – today’s are “outdoor,” “gathering,” and “yawning,” and the guards are actually quite cautious because they’ve had to deal with a handful of incursions by possessed guards and evil shadow doppelgangers.

Defenders.

If the party comes by a route other than the Ritual of Transposition, there are only two Ob guards and two dark creepers here, but the door is closed.

If the party waits for the gate to open to let a group in or out, add those two extra guards to the hostile forces.

If the party waits until the 14th, the defenders are on alert. In addition to the normal guards inside the gate, an ambush contingent waits hidden on the hill, looking for light sources that approach any of the entrances. They then rush to the exterior of that entrance and hide a hundred feet away in the darkness. The ambush squad has several Bleak Gate monsters working for them, and they will try to attack from opposite sides to pin the party against the cliff face.

By themselves, the ambush squad is a difficult encounter, and combined with the normal guards are a truly challenging encounter. However, the party should have a lot of soldiers at their side, giving them the advantage, and making it feel like they really have to fight to get into the Ob complex.

Ambush Squad.

- 8 Obscurati dark slayers
- 2 cackling crawler
- 2 serpent-maned lions

Normal Front Door Guards.

- 2 Obscurati guards (page 20)
- 2 Obscurati dark creepers

Obscurati Dark Slayer

Medium humanoid (dark folk), neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 44 (8d8+8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +3

Skills Athletics +2, Perception +2, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 120 ft. (sees in magical darkness), passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Cunning Action (1/turn). The dark slayer can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Death Throes. When the dark slayer is slain, the magic keeping it in this world ruptures in a crack of thunder that booms in a 10-foot radius. Creatures in the area make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) thunder damage and are deafened for 1 minute (or half as much and not deafened on a successful save). The dark slayer’s gear, treasure, and body are pulled into the Bleak Gate.

Light Sensitivity. While in bright light, the dark slayer has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Innate Spellcasting. The dark slayer’s spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, spell attack bonus +4). The dark slayer can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:

At will: chill touch, detect magic

3/day: darkness, inflict wounds, spiritual weapon

Sneak Attack (1/turn, 2d6). The dark slayer deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the dark slayer that isn’t incapacitated and the dark slayer doesn’t have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Soul Harvest. When the dark slayer has advantage on an attack roll and successfully hits or deals sneak attack damage, it deals 1d6 additional damage and gains a number of temporary hit points equal to the additional damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dark stalker attacks twice.

Kukri. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4+4) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

Cackling Crawler

Medium undead, neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8+4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Int +0, Cha +0

Skills Stealth +7

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

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Abyssal

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

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

Legless Laughter. The cackling crawler is always considered prone and cannot stand. The crawler does not take any penalty for attacking while prone, but ranged attacks against it still have disadvantage.

ACTIONS
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage and the target makes a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or is paralyzed for 1d4 rounds as its soul locks gazes with the cackling crawler.

Dance of Death. The cackling crawler entrances opponents by swaying back and forth. All hostile creatures within 30 feet who can see the cackling crawler must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of its next turn. The cackling crawler can extend the duration of the effect by using its action. On the end of a stunned creature's turn, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Serpent-Maned Lion

Large undead, neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d10+4)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Perception +5, Stealth +4

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

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Abyssal

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

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

Keen Smell. The serpent-maned lion has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

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

Pounce. If the serpent-maned lion 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 serpent-maned lion can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Running Leap. With a 10-foot running start, the serpent-maned lion can long jump up to 25 feet.

ACTIONS
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

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

Obscurati Dark Creeper

Small humanoid (dark folk), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d6+8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +5

Skills Athletics +2, Perception +4, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 120 ft. (sees in magical darkness), passive Perception 14

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Cunning Action (1/turn). The dark creeper can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Innate Spellcasting. The dark creeper's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 10; spell attack +2). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

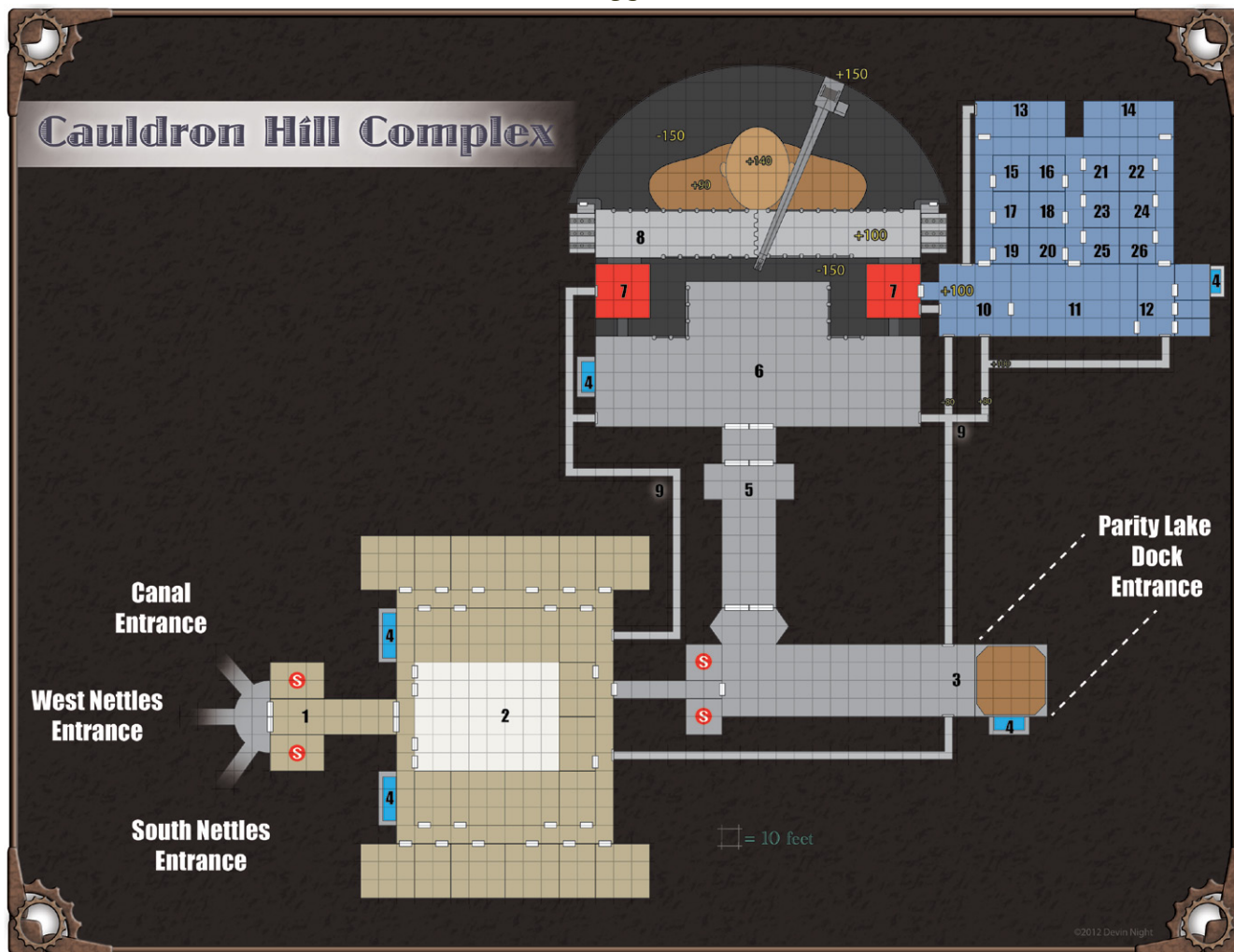
At will: *darkness, detect magic*
Light Sensitivity. While in bright light, the dark creeper has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

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

Snuff Light. As an action, a dark creeper can snuff any one nonmagical light within 50 feet. Magical lights affected by this ability are extinguished for 2d6 rounds.

ACTIONS
Multiattack. The dark creeper attacks twice.

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



Shadows of Cauldron Hill.

From a mechanical standpoint, as shadow-beings, the monsters working for the Obscurati share many abilities commonly attributed to the undead. They are treated as undead for purposes of channel energy and immunities, but share no other similarities to undead creatures. Creatures of this type are indicated with the Shade subtype.

Tactics.

If the normal guards are attacked, they send one of the dark creepers to hop onto the push cart. The little critter cranks his way toward Checkpoint One, which takes a minute. This raises the alert within the compound, but no reinforcements come.

If the ambush party can attack from ambush, the cackling crawlers and serpent-maned lions attack first, causing a panic. The slayers then move in pairs to strike whoever is most vulnerable at the edge of the group.

Parity Lake Entrance.

This entrance is accessible by a 30-foot wide lightless tunnel with 10-foot deep water. A much larger version of the front entrance

doors, powered by a similarly large machine, allows this entrance to be locked. The entrance only opens for scheduled deliveries of materiel. It only takes a skeleton crew to make sure the doors stay closed, so should the party trick their way through here, there are only two Obscurati guards.

Utility Access.

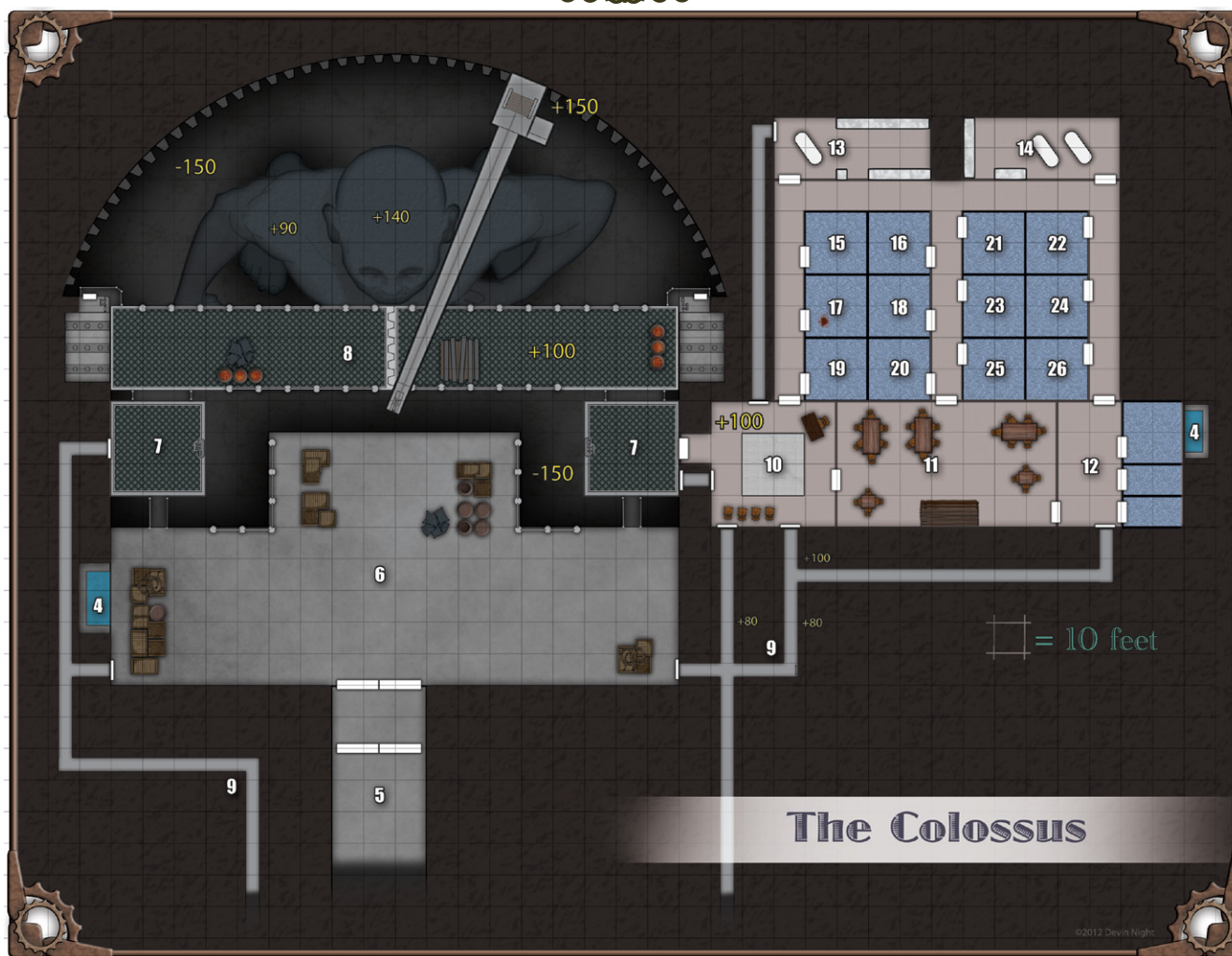
A party that enters from above must basically guess which of the five service shafts to go down. They're 200 feet or more apart, so splitting up is a very bad idea. After a bit of shoving or unscrewing, the party can exit the service areas, though they need to make Dexterity (Stealth) checks with disadvantage to avoid attracting the attention of those nearby.

Lower Facility

This section of the facility has strong security, not ridiculous security.

1. Checkpoint One (Level 8 Encounter).

Much like the front entrance guard houses, this defensive station has a pair of mechanically-operated steel doors at the front of a hallway, and another pair at the end. Two secret doors – found with DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) checks and opened with DC 22 Dexterity



(thieves' tools) checks – lead to the side chambers, where a small guard force can observe the area outside with a complex series of mirrors and lenses that run through the ceiling.

The main tunnel is a killing field, equipped with oil sprayers and firestarters. At the command of the guards in either side chamber, the oil room can be sprayed with oil, which takes 3 rounds. On the fourth round, several sparks ignite the whole room, burning people inside alive. The fire deals 3d6 damage per round, and if somehow they survive that, it consumes all breathable oxygen after 1 minute.

Checkpoint One Defenders.

- 6 Obscurati guards (three on each side, page 20)

2. Barracks.

The rooms around the outer edges are occupied by about 100 engineers who won't get into battle. They try to pass the time with games, reading, and writing theoretical papers, since their work on the colossus is complete. These rooms also house 20 Obscurati guards who are out of their armor and don't have their weapons handy if caught by surprise.

The interior area consists of well-stocked supply rooms, offices for handling logistics, a large kitchen, and a commissary – 20 more unarmored Obscurati guards work here.

Two sets of service passages (Area 9) can be accessed via riveted (DC 24 Strength check) hatches enchanted with the *alarm* spell. The alarms notify Leone if anyone opens the hatch. One leads to Area 3, another to the Upper Facility. These passages have pipes for natural gas, fresh water, waste water, hydraulic pump pressure, and air circulation. Each passage is just less than 5 feet wide and unlit. Their exits are also under the effects of the *alarm* spell.

3. Checkpoint Two.

This huge hall was once a staging area for colossus construction, storing all the massive components needed. Now the space is empty, with vaulted ceilings and a floor that has huge gouges from several years of industrial work.

On the east end, a massive hydraulic elevator descends 300 feet to the Parity Lake entrance. A pair of service passages, riveted and covered by *alarm* like those in Area 2, lead off near the elevator.

A small checkpoint lies on the west end, this one is simply intended to keep curious engineers from roaming. The secret doors that lead to the side chambers are accessed from inside Area 3. There is no deadly oil-fire trap here.

The double doors to the north are huge, each 15 feet wide and 30 feet tall. Controls are located in the two alcoves just south of the doors, but the doors stand open when the party arrives.



4. Utility Access.

These areas contain steam engines that power fans to circulate air, and operate pumps for the hydraulic doors, as well as sewage and fresh water pumps. Large vertical shafts lead to the surface.

5. Golem Guardpost.

This area functions like an airlock. The doors that lead to Checkpoint Two can't open if the doors that lead to the Colossus Chamber are open, and vice versa. The south doors can be controlled from the alcove outside the south side, and the north doors can be controlled from the alcove at the north end of this area.

However, once you're inside, you can be trapped, because controls next to the doors in the Colossus Chamber can operate and lock both ends of this area. As a final defense before the conspiracy's masterpiece, this chamber is enchanted to let the master of the facility – in this case Leone Quita – see what happens and communicate with anyone inside.

Welcome to My Parlor

Action. Tactical. Level 12.

Quita toys with the PCs, using prototype golems to try and kill them.

When the party arrives, unless the party has been completely stealthy and no one has had a chance to run and raise an alarm, Leone waits until he gets as much of the party as he thinks possible inside this area. Then he manipulates the controls to close and lock the south doors. He addresses the party, who should recognize his voice if they encountered him in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*.

The doors slam shut, and the gas lights along the walls flicker off. A disembodied voice echoes in the dark, speaking with an aristocratic Crisillyir accent.

"I don't know whether to be impressed with you getting past my security, or disappointed in the men who were supposed to stop you. But men, after all, are weak. That's why we build machines, why we have progress! All we're good for is thinking. That, and enjoying the pleasures in life."

You hear a soft sip, as if from a wine glass, then a contented sigh.

"Best to leave the violence and physical labor to the steam and steel. Now I leave it to you to decide whether to go the easy way or the hard way. Throw down your weapons and have a drink with me, and I'll explain what it is we're doing here. Would you believe the engineers we had working on it thought this was a Risuri military project? They were fools, and I'd like to hold out hope that you're not fools.

"So yes, throw down your weapons and we can think, and talk, and enjoy life. Or be foolish, and see which breaks first: your flesh, or my steel."

If the party refuses to throw down their weapons, the doors to the north open, revealing two man-sized and one 12-foot tall golem that march in and attack. The northern doorway has two sets of doors, and the second set that actually would lead to the colossus construction chamber remain closed and locked.

If the party does throw down their weapons, the exact same thing happens. Leone is a liar.

Golem Greeting.

- Leone Quita, master of magnetism (absent)
- 2 Borne prototypes
- 1 greater Borne prototype

Leone Quita, Master of Magnetism

Magnetism from Afar. Leone Quita is not present in this battle; instead, he uses his steelshaping abilities to modify the Borne Prototypes (but not the greater prototype). He uses this magic through a scrying sensor, which can be dispelled. If it is dispelled, he cannot reactivate the sensor for a day. Every round, Quita acts at the beginning of the initiative order with one of the following abilities:

- **Faster, Faster, Faster.** One Borne Prototype counts as being under the effects of a *haste* spell for this round.
- **A Gentle Push.** Quita can move one of the Borne Prototypes in the room up to 15 feet. This does not count as the Prototype's move.
- **Drop Your Weapon.** Quita makes one disarm attempt against a PC holding a metallic item. Quita has advantage on his Strength (Athletics) check and makes this check with a +10 bonus.
- **Pinned.** Quita makes one free grapple attempt against a PC wearing metal armor, holding them in a grapple for one round. Quita has advantage on his Strength (Athletics) check and makes this check with a +10 bonus.

Borne Prototype

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d8+32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks that aren't adamantite

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Immutable Form. The prototype is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

Magic Weapons. The prototype's weapon attacks are magical.

Spell Absorption. Whenever the prototype is damaged by a melee or ranged spell attack or by being within a spell's area of effect, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt. Lightning damage does not cause the prototype to regain hit points and it is slowed (as the spell) for 2d4 rounds. The prototype is stunned when it is targeted by *telekinesis* as Quita's control is disrupted.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The prototype attacks twice.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8+6) bludgeoning damage.

Greater Borne Prototype

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (10d10+50)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+9)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks that aren't adamantine

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Immutable Form. The prototype is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

Magic Weapons. The prototype's weapon attacks are magical.

Power Attack. When the prototype makes its first melee weapon attack in a turn, it can choose to take a -5 penalty to its melee weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to melee weapon damage.

Spell Absorption. Whenever the prototype is damaged by a melee or ranged spell attack or by being within a spell's area of effect, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt. Lightning damage does not cause the prototype to regain hit points and it is slowed (as the spell) for 2d4 rounds. The prototype is stunned when it is targeted by *telekinesis* as Quital's control is disrupted.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The prototype attacks twice.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d6+9) bludgeoning damage. If the target is the first creature attacked this turn by the prototype, it makes a DC 21 Strength saving throw or is pushed away 10 feet and knocked prone.

Tactics.

Quitall gives the golems verbal orders, directing them to attack weaker PCs, and having them double team when possible. The greater prototype is a deadly threat from its sheer size, but it's not really built for brawling, and so it only has as much reach as a Medium creature. It might shock the party when the golems start talking, bickering like brothers when one of them messes up or gets in another's way.

If a PC visibly does damage to the prototypes, Quitall uses his action for that round to try and grapple that PC, or disarm them if they have a particularly potent weapon. If one of the PCs becomes an unexpected threat, Leone pushes a golem into contact with that PC to deliver a full attack. Should things be going well for the golems, he'll use his *haste* effect to make one of the golems more efficient in close combat.

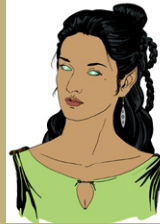
The party's allies make a big difference here. Asrabey will try to keep the greater prototype at bay while the rest of the party handles the smaller ones. During the fight he shouts at Leone to bring him



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

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

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



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

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

Kasvarina if he wants his death to be brief.

Alexander Grappa recognizes the golems – he raised them, after all – and uses his “click-to-voice” gadget to call out to them: Linus, Hunting, and Colin (the big one). Though he's useless offensively, Grappa's presence deters the golems. The golems won't attack him, and take a -2 penalty to attack any PC adjacent to him. After 5 rounds of slowly explaining who he is, he manages to convince Hunting, who stops fighting. The others are more loyal to Leone, and will keep attacking the party. Hunting won't get involved.

Without Grappa, the party might still reason with the golems, since they're starved for intellectual conversation. A petition to talk and successful DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check gets them to ask what the party has that's worth discussing in the middle of combat. If a character brings up interesting topics – by making an Intelligence (Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion) on their turn as a free action, using whatever skills are applicable – the golems take a -2 penalty to their attacks for the round as they're too distracted for their own good.



Aftermath.

If the golems take the party out, Quital drags any survivors into Area 6 and has a medic stabilize them so they can be interrogated. See “Villainous Victory” (page 29).

If the party either destroys or talks down the golems, Leone scoffs and ends his observation of them so he can prepare a final line of defense. The party remains locked in the room, but some thorough dismantling via a DC 28 Dexterity (thieves’ tools) check can make the doors open. If they got the golem Hunting to stand down, Grappa asks him to smash the doors open, but he cannot manage it.

Gnomish Escape Plan.

If the party is stuck for more than a minute, they hear muffled nervous laughter coming from the walls – the voice of Tinker Oddcog, a gnomish artificer who designed the colossus. Tinker mutters about how small and dark and safe the tunnel he is in is, and then begins jabbering about how he needs them to get him out. He’s quite erratic, obsessed with things being tiny, and has trouble carrying on a conversation.

He never moves out from behind the wall, but after a moment he seems to address the doors, saying:

“I know you’re large, and I don’t trust you. You were always watching me. But you do as I say! Open up! Let these people through.”

And then the doors open, revealing Area 6.

Tinker won’t show up again until Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*.

Upper Facility

The party likely won’t have time for a thorough exploration.

From where the party enters, a giant shaft rises nearly 200 feet above and a pit drops 150 feet below to bare rock that is drenched 5 feet deep with witchoil. In the center stands the colossus Borne, three hundred feet of riveted steel and adamantine, etched with thousands of arcane runes of power and protection. He appears generally human-shaped, save for a small nook in the center of his chest, about five feet across. This is where the Ob intended to install a version of the *wayfarer’s lantern*, to help stabilize it as it worked on the Axis Seal.

Two freight elevators (Area 7) run between levels. Though there are numerous defunct operating platforms at different elevations, the only two currently in operation are the entrance level and the VIP level 100 feet higher up. A large drawbridge crosses the chamber at the colossus’s shoulder level (Area 8), and a door off the right freight elevator leads to the VIP suites (Areas 10 to 26). Two utility shafts (Area 4) lead to the surface, and narrow service tunnels (Area 9) provide a possible way for characters to sneak into this area.

A truss of light catwalks surround his head, but they easily tumble if the bridge moves or if any part of the catwalks are damaged. A crane overhead sits unused, accessible only by narrow gear-toothed walkways around the edge of the chamber.

Element of Surprise.

If the party enters this area without having first set off an alarm, people shout as they spot the intruders. Despite all the technology here, the Obscurati don’t have radios or electricity to trigger buzzers, so unless they can get someone outside this area, they won’t be able to call for help from the lower facility.

6. Staging Platform.

Crates, barrels full of witchoil, and a few stacks of adamantine scales the size of a whole man have been pushed to the edges of this area. Catwalks lead to the freight elevators, which can be called by a lever at the end of the catwalk. When the party enters, the left elevator is down, and the right one is up at the VIP suites level. Ladders on the walls do let people climb the 100 feet if the elevator is out of order.

7. Freight Elevators.

When called, or when operated from the elevator itself, these huge platforms ascend or descend 25 feet per round.

8. Construction Bridge.

The bridge is suspended 100 feet above the staging platform, but has side-support rails meant to prevent any falls. A visible “cut” in the middle of bridge indicates that the support bridge can be retracted. This feature is operated by a pair of control cabins, one at each end of the bridge.

A character inside the control cab can spend an action and make a DC 11 Intelligence check to raise or lower their half of the bridge, causing the platform to tilt about 30 degrees per round. He can also ascend or descend, causing that entire half of the bridge to go up or down 10 feet per round.

9. Service Tunnels.

These 5-foot wide tunnels contain the utility pipes. Each exit is riveted (DC 24 Strength check) and covered by an *alarm* spell. As they approach Area 10, the shaft becomes vertical but has a narrow ladder.

10. Dignitary Checkpoint.

The guards here are Obscurati dark slayers, loyal members of the conspiracy and much better treated than the normal guards in the lower facility. Of the dozen slayers in the facility, four usually are on duty here, impeccably dressed. The other eight either rest or attend to maintenance of the VIP suites, acting as (again, very well-paid) butlers and cooks. If Leone knew the party was coming, eight of the slayers were sent out as the ambush party.

11. Dining Hall.

The VIPs dine here, as do the occasional Obscurati visitor like Kasvarina or Nicodemus. Leone was hoping to hold a celebration here, but Grappa’s sabotage of the colossus ruined that plan.

12. Kitchen.

Behind a chilled meat locker is a utility shaft.

13. Hybridization Laboratory.

This lab is where some of the researchers worked to infuse first animals and then humans with shadow magic, and to apply mechanical enhancements to flesh. Most of these researchers worked on the witchoil golem and flayed jaguars the party faced in Adventure Two. They are non-combatants, and likely cower behind their shelves of dead experiments. The place is full of horrible devices and deadly fluids, in case combat ends up here.

14. Golem Laboratory.

Similar to above, here is where the prototype golems were constructed. Those that didn't guard Area 5 have been shipped off to other Obscurati projects or scrapped after their consciousnesses were transferred unsuccessfully into the colossus.

15 – 26. Lodgings.

Rooms 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, and 26 house the Obscurati dark slayers. Room 21, 23, and 25 held other researchers working in the two labs.

Room 16 is Leone's. 18 was Tinker Oddcog's, though he'll have fled before the party gets here. Room 20 was Grappa's, but currently Kasvarina stays here. See "Grappa and Asrabey" (page 19) for details of Kasvarina's state. Right now she only remembers her life up to about age thirty, and she has no real magical powers or useful knowledge. The walls of her room are covered in ornate tapestries, hiding the daunting shell of steel.

Villainous Victory

Action. Tactical. Level 10+.

With the party at his mercy, Leone torments the party. The colossus's activation prevents him from killing them.

If the party was defeated previously, they are disarmed, bound in *mage-cuffs* (which deal damage to anyone casting a spell while wearing them equal to the spell's level, forcing a concentration check), and then dragged to the colossus construction chamber.

Leone has his men bring the party onto the bridge in front of the colossus, and has them set on their knees. Lorcan Kell and his bodyguards come out, and if necessary Kate Glenn rouses them with light healing magic.

If you think this scenario is likely, try to have an ace up your sleeve to get the party out of near-certain doom. Maybe the party has a verbal duel with Leone, and as he grows angrier and more impatient, the metal around him flexes; if the party continues to enrage him, a clamp securing the colossus breaks loose, and Borne moves. Perhaps Alexander Grappa can address the colossus and make it activate. If the party spared an Ob technician or operative earlier in the campaign, maybe the man has second thoughts; perhaps a disgruntled engineer who just wants out swings the crane and knocks the colossus loose.

But before that point, Leone gloats. You can use this opportunity to let him explain any lingering mysteries about the cell (as long as you don't reveal Roland Stanfield's involvement, nor anything about the Axis Seal) and disabuse the party of any crackpot theories they might have tricked themselves into believing.

Depending on how dark you want things to get, Leone might even use his power to torture or kill one of the PCs – slowly crushing him in his own armor, dangling him telekinetically over a 200-foot drop into a pool of witchoil, or killing one PC with the weapon of another. Then, either right before or right after the point of no return, some lucky break gives the party a chance.

The colossus activates, the cavern shudders, Leone frantically tries to regain control of it, and the party has to survive Lorcan Kell if they want to get out alive.

Borne to be Wild

Action. Tactical. Level 10+.

Lorcan Kell attacks the party, and won't give up even as Borne activates and tears the mountain apart around them.

The party's arrival brings forth the last defenders of the complex. Exactly who shows up depends on how the party got here.

Kell's Group.

- Lorcan Kell
- Kate Glenn
- Nick Reder

Obscurati Defenders.

- 4 Obscurati dark slayers (page 22)
- Leone Quita, the steelshaper

Conditional Defenders.

- 8 additional Obscurati dark slayers
- Norm, Obscurati liaison

Feel free to add foes – guards or dark creepers – if you think the party needs the challenge. If they have a ton of soldiers or fey still with them, you might have an equivalent force of guards arrive, letting you reduce the two groups' battle to background detail while you focus on the party versus Kell and his bodyguards.

When combat begins, Asrabey immediately abandons the party and moves at full speed toward the VIP suites, shouting for Kasvarina. Leone sees that Asrabey has no metal equipment (wooden shield, sword made of fire), so he devotes himself to trying to manually control the colossus. He uses his magnetic powers to pull himself to the colossus's shoulder. Meanwhile, Grappa makes his way to the construction bridge.

If the party already killed Lorcan Kell (and you don't think you can bring him back as an even angrier, steam-belching, witchoil-dripping mechanically augmented revenant or something), you might need to come up with another headliner foe, or perhaps change the focus to rescuing Kasvarina.

The key to this encounter is to make sure the party perceives the main threat and engages it, and then halfway through the battle have something trigger the colossus's release. The main threat is likely Kell, and the colossus probably gets released when the party gets curious and does something to it, causing the wards the Ob put in place to falter long enough for it to break free.



However, if the party isn't grooving on Kell, and if they don't disturb the colossus, you still have some options.

Grappa.

The Mindmaker likely makes a move for the colossus as soon as he can. He climbs to the bridge, then scrambles across scaffolding to reach Borne's face. He tries to communicate with it.

If you don't think your players would mind NPCs doing something plot-critical in their presence, have Grappa place his hand to the colossus's face. Leone recognizes the bronze golem and realizes that it must be Grappa. He uses his powers to rip one of Grappa's arms off, but Grappa hunkers down and maintains contact with Borne. Leone's powers then tear the bronze golem completely apart. This enrages the colossus, and it growls "*Father!*" as it rips free.

Leone.

The Steelshaper is beyond the party in a stand-up fight now, but if it leads to a good resolution, they could strike Leone while he's distracted, causing him to lose his perch and tumble. He would instinctively reach out with his steelshaping powers to catch himself, and in the shock of being attacked he over-exerts, tearing free sheets of metal that were warded to keep the colossus still. The titan begins to move, and Leone gets perhaps one or two more attacks off against the party before either they strike him again and knock him free, or the colossus's movement sends him plummeting deep into the construction pit. It's an ambiguous death, but the party won't have time to follow up since the whole facility will be collapsing around them.

Ekossigan.

If the party failed to stop Ekossigan and didn't come with him, perhaps he is the main threat, having been augmented and controlled by the Ob after he failed to defeat the complex. He fights much as in Thread Two, but as the ice spreads it causes the colossus to break free.

Alternately, an allied Ekossigan might get impaled by a steel spear thrown by Leone, and his death shakes the whole area, jostling Borne free.

Kasvarina.

Perhaps when Asrabey brings Kasvarina out of the VIP suites, she screams, confused and terrified by the combat. Her scream jolts the colossus, and it turns its head to face her. It growls, "*Mother,*" and starts to tear free.

Battle on the Big Bridge.

The Obscurati dark slayers take up position on the big bridge (but generally stay away from the explosive red barrels). They rain fire down on the party with their rifles, and have cover against the party's counter-attacks.

Leone meanwhile manually grabs the colossus's right arm and swipes it across the staging platform. At initiative count 0 each round, each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Strength or Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 bludgeoning damage, be knocked prone, and be pushed toward the east end of the room.



Together, these likely force the party to take the lift up so they can avoid the slayers' advantage and get to a spot where the colossus – still mostly restrained – cannot reach.

Before leaving the VIP suites, Kate Glenn used her *wand of invisibility* to turn herself, Nick, and Kell invisible. When the party reaches the bridge, Kell and his bodyguards attack. Alternately, they might descend on the lift or climb down the ladder if the party doesn't come up. Kell attacks with furious hate for the people who destroyed the guild he spent his life building, and he fights to the death. His bodyguards might surrender if he goes down and things look bad for them.

Uh-Oh...

After 5 or 10 rounds of combat, something should happen to let the colossus break free, and each round thereafter the facility becomes more unstable. If the party runs, Kell follows them, preferring vengeance to escaping alive.

Borne Round 1: A deafening rumble fills the chamber as a massive engine turns over. Black smoke begins to pour out of vents along the colossus's back, equivalent to a small factory worth of smokestacks. The party likely recognizes the distinct smell of witchoil burning within the golem's chest.

Borne takes its first step and tears free from the magical bindings that have been holding it. This causes a massive tremor to shake the room, knocking anyone inside prone unless they make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw.

Borne Round 2: Borne moves again, this time crashing through the main support bridge in front of him. The bridge heaves and anyone on it must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or be thrown 10 feet, perhaps off the side.

Borne Round 3: The colossus realizes its way forward is blocked, so it looks up and grabs the walls overhead. Its fingers tear through stone and steel, and it heaves itself up the construction shaft. Again creatures must make a DC 13 Strength or Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone from the tremors.

Borne Round 4: The colossus strikes the ceiling, roars, then punches several times into the stone above it. Every in the facility must make both a DC 13 Strength saving throw and DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. The first avoids being knocked prone. The second avoids 4d6 bludgeoning damage from falling debris.

Borne Round 5: Borne tears a tunnel free to the surface and heaves itself up until its head peeks out of the hole. The massive weight of the colossus causes massive chunks of stone thirty feet or larger to cleave free from the walls. The party can see that they're about to tumble, and they have until the start of the next round to seek cover – perhaps the arch of the Golem Guardpost, or one of the VIP suites.

Borne Round 6: Borne pulls itself to the surface. Anyone out in the open is crushed, taking 10d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 13 Strength saving throw halves). The resulting destruction shatters the various wards surrounding the facility, transporting the broken remnants of the complex, Borne, and all those inside the Cauldron Hill region of the Bleak Gate back to the material plane. Light from outside pours through the hole overhead – either daylight or starlight – making it clear to the party they've transitioned to the real world.

Later: Borne pauses a moment atop the hill. Though Grappa has removed its conscious mind, its base primitive mind marvels at the beauty of a world it has never seen. It stands still for a few minutes, giving the party a lull during which they can climb to safety.

Eventually Borne continues moving, slowly stomping its way down the mountainside. It triggers massive rockslides that would kill anyone still on the mountain, though luckily the natives of The Nettles fled here months ago, thanks to the warnings of the skyseer Nevard. The colossus stumbles several times, having never actually walked before, and eventually it stops at level ground between the base of Cauldron Hill and Stanfield Canal.

Aftermath.

In the chaos, Leone and Grappa likely fall into the pit and have an ambiguous death. They'll return in Adventure Seven. If Grappa wasn't here, by the time the party gets back to the RHC headquarters, he'll have slipped away.

As soon as the facility shifts back to the real world, Asrabey grabs Kasvarina and uses magic granted him by the Unseen Court to travel to the Dreaming, sparing the party only a brief nod of thanks before leaving.

If necessary, the party might receive aid in exiting the pit when Captain Dale and his men atop Cauldron Hill throw ropes down. Dale handles the sudden appearance of the colossus with aplomb and points out that even if it isn't under anyone's control, it will devastate the city just by trampling buildings.

Alternately, perhaps Gale can help them out with air magic. If Kvarti is present, the dwarf announces that he's off to go drink, because he suspects the end of the world is nigh. 🍷

Ally Stats.

Allied Soldier

Medium humanoid (any race), lawful neutral

Armor Class 14 (breastplate)

Hit Points 39 (6d8+12)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Insight +3, Stealth +3

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Soldier Healing Ration (1/long rest). The allied Risur soldier carries a *potion of healing*.

ACTIONS

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

Hit: 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage.

Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 50/150 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d10+1) piercing damage.

Allied Fey

Medium fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Dex +3, Wis +1

Skills Acrobatics +5, Deception +5, Performance +5, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Primordial, Sylvan

Challenge ¼ (50 XP)

Fey Power. The Allied Fey has one of the following. Roll 1d4 to randomly determine the feature.

1 Flight: A fly speed of 30 feet.

2 Gremlin Tricks: Firearms hang fire when aimed at the fey, going off immediately if the attacker stops aiming at the gremlin; otherwise they fire one round after the trigger is pulled. When the fey dies, the nearest mechanical device stops working until repaired.

3 Innate Spellcasting (spell save DC 11; spell attack +3): The fey can innately cast one of the following once per hour—*charm person, disguise self, entangle, silent image, sleep*.

4 Wild Might: The fey gains a +2 bonus to melee attack and damage rolls, and the damage dice of its weapon increases by one step.

ACTIONS

Melee (Varies). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6-1) damage (varies by weapon).