



ENsider Presents:

Always on Time

Part One

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



Introduction

Wherein a Lantern Heralds Dark Days

IN THE PREVIOUS ZEITGEIST ADVENTURE, THE PARTY discovered a tiefling philanthropist named Caius Bergeron was a member of a conspiracy known as the Obscurati, which appears hostile to the party's nation, Risur.

The party also learned that Caius planned to take a trip by train to a meeting in a foreign city. In *Always on Time*, the party uses that lead to outmaneuver and unmask the conspiracy.

Risur's traditional enemy, the nation of Danor, operates the 3,000-mile long Avery Coast railroad, which connects numerous nations. With the support of Risur's Royal Homeland Constabulary, the party will go undercover aboard this train and seek clues to what business Caius was traveling toward. Meanwhile, agents of the Obscurati assemble for a gathering of members of the conspiracy, bringing with them a magic lantern that is key to their ultimate goal.

Adapting the Adventure.

All the low-level ZEITGEIST adventures assume the PCs are agents of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. If your party is a group of free agents instead, they might have been hired by the RHC, especially if they had previously uncovered Caius's secrets in *Digging for Lies*.

If you are using this adventure in another setting, the central element of a coastal rail line can be made into a pseudo-medieval pilgrimage route that travels 90 miles in six days. Several later encounters that use the train as a physical space may need to be heavily altered or omitted, but the core of the adventure still works.

Several encounters can be easily stand alone, including "Dangerous Waters," a naval engagement against a ship captained by an ice mage (page 16), "Hobo Maximus," a rescue of a damsel from a trio of wizards in an arena (Act Two), or a cursed island and the dungeon beneath it (a group of encounters in Act Three).

Background

The Obscurati, detailed more fully in the *ZEITGEIST Campaign Guide*, plan to alter the nature of reality. This requires a massive ritual to change the planets in the night sky that imbue this world with different energies and essences. They're still over a year away from the culmination of their plot, but one key component has just been completed.

FROM THE PEN OF
Jacob Driscoll



SEAMLESSLY UPDATED TO FIFTH EDITION BY
Mike Myler

WITH ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY
Ryan Nock

ABLY PRODUCED AND FACILITATED BY
Russ Morrissey

EVOCATIVE COVER ILLUSTRATION BY
ShenFei

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Jennifer Taber, for her patience;

to the hundreds of gamers who backed the original release of ZEITGEIST on Kickstarter; and to the over one thousand generous patrons of EN WORLD EN5IDER whose support has made this Fifth Edition update possible.

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

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

OPEN GAME CONTENT

The game rule information in this article is designated Open Game Content. All other material in this article, including maps, graphic elements, and illustrations (including graphic elements and illustrations in the public domain), narrative and descriptive text, character and place names, trade dress, "EN Publishing," "EN World," "EN5IDER," "ZEITGEIST," all EN Publishing product and article titles, and ZEITGEIST, EN World, and EN Publishing logos, are designated Product Identity.

WITH UNPARALLELED LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN BY
Eric Life-Putnam

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

The Lantern.

Luc Jierre, a socially-awkward tiefling arcanoscientist with a nervous stutter, has invented a magical lantern. By burning fuel attuned to a specific plane, the device can channel planar energy through its light and suffuse its surroundings with the traits of that plane. This can create a variety of magical effects, making the lantern useful both as a weapon and as a tool of control.

The lantern's settings can be adjusted to change intensity and scope. For instance, if fed fuel attuned to the fiery planet Jiese, the lantern could simply make a single object become highly flammable, or it could allow fire elementals from that world to temporarily enter this world. Since Jiese also influences wars, the lantern could instead stir people toward conflict, either a whole area or just a few targets to whom the lantern has been properly attuned.

The lantern is a prototype, and it will be duplicated in large form in lighthouses across the continent. The Obscurati intend to use these lighthouses to keep the world stable while they transition the planes. More insidiously, the lighthouses will let them placate populations by manipulating their emotions *en masse*.

Recruitment.

Luc is not yet a part of the Obscurati. His uncle Sovereign Han Jierre, ruler of Danor and one of the conspiracy's three leaders, encouraged Luc's education, groomed him through life to pursue this invention, and made sure Luc had access to all the resources he needed. Under intense pressure to live up to these expectations, Luc grew up awkward and nervous, but nevertheless brilliant.

Luc has been told to take the Avery Coast Railroad from the Danoran capital of Cherage to the eastern terminus, the city of Vendricce. Luc crafted the lantern in Danor's dead magic zone, effectively a giant "clean room." Now he brings it for final testing, and he too will be judged whether he is worthy to join the conspiracy.

The Gathering in Vendricce.

The Obscurati have planned a gathering of all the heads of the various Obscurati cells to meet in Vendricce on the 20th of Winter, 500 A.O.V. (After Our Victory). To minimize the risk of discovery,

Dead and Wild Magic.

Within Danor's borders, magic quickly seeps away. Spells with a casting time of more than an action cannot be cast within Danor. Static benefits of magic items function normally over the short term (i.e., you won't have to recalculate the stats on your character sheet). However, most activated powers of items don't function, and after a number of weeks equal to the item's rarity, its magic will be drained away entirely.

A creature's own innate magical features still function, such as any cantrips granted as a racial feature.

Just beyond Danor's borders, in a broad swath hundreds of miles wide, the fabric of magic is damaged but not destroyed. In these places, known as the Malice Lands, whenever a character casts a spell, uses a magic item power, roll an unmodified 1d20. On a 1, a mishap occurs. This usually takes the form of the power backfiring, manifesting as a free-willed monster, or otherwise going dangerously awry.



Luc Jierre. Nephew of Danor's sovereign, Han Jierre, and brother of the country's Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre, Luc has always felt inferior to his family. From childhood, his stutter made him socially withdrawn, but he found comfort in the arcanosciences. He could express himself on paper in clear formulae, and he could learn a skill the rest of his family did not possess.

Only recently did Luc realize that his family has been grooming him all along. He resents them somewhat, but cannot deny that he values power.

He hopes that his new invention will earn him a place of respect. Now that he has finished the lantern, he expects he'll work on countermeasures to Risuri magical technology, or perhaps improve mana-storage devices, to let magic items last longer in Danor.

Once he's inducted into the Obscurati, he'll be given a major role in Lantern Cell, preparing larger version of his lamp and testing their ability to affect the minds of the public at large. That possibility will enthral Luc, who has never before had the ability to make people do what he wants.

the VIPs will stagger their arrival across a week; Luc Jierre arrives on the 16th. His sister **Lya Jierre** will be waiting to greet him. (The party met Lya in Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*; she is set to marry the king of Risur as part of a peace treaty.)

The Obscurati know the PCs were investigating Caius Bergeron (during Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*), but they have no reason to think the party knows about Vendricce. And the party's superior, Chief Inspector Stover Delft, encourages them to trust no one.

Spy Mission.

The party's mission is to learn as much about the Obscurati as possible. All they have to go on, though, is a train schedule retrieved from a dead tiefling philanthropist. Chief Inspector Delft tasks the PCs to ride the same train and look for anyone Caius might have been meeting. With luck, someone will lead the party to a meeting of the conspiracy.

Train Route.

The train passes through seven main points during the adventure.

- **Beaumont.** Major shipyard on the west coast of Danor. Train leaves here the morning of the 11th of Winter.
- **Cherage.** The Danoran capital, which has an evening curfew. Train arrives on the evening of the 11th of Winter.
- **Oritheia.** The only stable city in the Malice Lands. Train arrives on the 12th of Winter.
- **Trekhom.** The capital of Drakr. The train arrives on the 13th of Winter.
- **Nalaam.** A decadent casino city run by mages in the mountainous border states between Drakr and Crissilyir. Train arrives on the 14th of Winter.
- **Sid Minos.** A haunted island city off the coast of Crissilyir. Train arrives on the 15th of Winter.
- **Vendricce.** A forested border-city in Crissilyir, where the Obscurati have their palace. Train arrives just before sunset on the 16th of Winter.



It is important to stress that the PCs are not expected to run in and attack the conspirators when they find them, since they'll be severely outgunned. A victory in this mission would be to learn the identities of key conspirators and escape without being noticed. While we have included plenty of climactic combat, make sure you prepare your players to understand that they're trying to complete a mission, not win the war in one fell swoop.

The Railroad.

The main theater for this adventure is the Avery Coast Railroad, the pride of Danoran technology, and a showcase of the nation's engineering prowess. Though Danor has numerous railroads connecting its cities, the Avery Coast line is the longest in the world, spanning 3,000 miles, from the city of Beaumont on Danor's west coast, through the Malice Lands, Drakr, various minor nations, and finally ending in Vendricce, on Crisillyir's border with Elfaivar.

See the end of this document (The Avery Coast Railroad) for extensive details of the train's route, history, design, and crew.

Luc's Entourage.

Before Caius Bergeron was killed, he had already made security arrangements for the train trip with Brianne Kaldeckis, called **Bree**,

a Danoran veteran of the Fourth Yerasol War. Caius gave her a gold ring to wear, which has an internal inscription that reads "Oathkeeper Bree's Shield." Any high-ranking member of the conspiracy who sees this inscription knows that Bree is working for Golden Cell, but she is tier five: useful but with no knowledge of the Obscurati's agenda.

Bree has not heard from Caius for a couple months now, and as a good soldier she's trying to complete her mission as best she can. She has enlisted two men as "plainclothes" guards—**Olivert Boone**, a carousing tiefling who performs gunslinging shows around the country; and **Verzubak Tantalovich**, a dwarf mage who manipulates fate and chance. They'll board the train between Beaumont and Cherage.

Bree knows that Caius wanted her to come with him to a meeting at the Sovereign's mansion in Cherage, so she intends to follow that much of his plan. There she meets Luc and is given clearer instructions.

Luc has an escort of his own, **Ottavia Sacredote**, a deaf elfwoman who is a spy within the religious hierarchy of Crisillyir. She is a bit conspicuous, especially in the company of a tiefling, but she's one of the few highly-ranking operatives the Obscurati can spare who is capable of communicating via *sending*, making her invaluable

Ring Code.

Each ring has a three word inscription. The first two words can be anything, as long as their initials are O.B. The number of letters in the third word indicates what tier of the conspiracy he's in. Tier three includes just a handful of cell leaders like Lya Jierre and Roland Stanfield. Tier four members are their trusted servants who nevertheless only grasp a fraction of the conspiracy's scope. Tier five is for useful minions who are not privy to any major secrets.

A gold ring means the wearer is part of Golden Cell, a silver ring indicates Lantern Cell, and a bronze ring stands for Colossus Cell. Other cells use some local tree's wood. Caius wore a gold ring that read "Original Bergeron Gold."

Finona Duvall as an Ally.

The PCs learned of Caius's plans by recovering a letter from the philanthropist to a lady friend he was trying to seduce, a tiefling mage named Finona Duvall. The party likely defeated Finona in combat, and even if they spared her she probably died at the hands of an extraplanar monster that ate her brain. But it's possible she survived and could be pressed into service as a double agent, or that one PC might try to pose as her.

This ploy could provide an "in" for the party to more quickly identify Luc and his entourage, so don't be afraid to reward the party for clever thinking. Remember that the focus of the mission is not Luc, but rather whom he's meeting at the end of the line.

Compartmentalized Secrets.

It's important to understand that at the start of the adventure, only Ottavia knows about the Obscurati, and even she just thinks that they are an organization of enlightened thinkers who are opposed to the Clergy. She knows nothing about the Axis Seal, the colossus being built in Flint, or the conspiracy's ultimate plan.

Bree knows she's working for a secret society, but not much else. Boone and Verzubak are just hired muscle, albeit very talented muscle. They don't ask questions.

in case anything goes wrong. Also, just in case, a handful of passengers in the common cars are hired mercenaries who will come to Ottavia's aid if she gives the right signal.

Ottavia wears a silver ring that says "Orthodoxy Bolsters Gods," marking her as tier four of lantern cell.

Unrelated Actors.

The challenge for the party is the large number of passengers aboard the train. These include a half-orc businessman from Ber who has run afoul of a criminal syndicate, a Danoran madam who is taking a young eladrin woman to sell into slavery, a turncoat Risuri spy, a militia member working with train robbers, and a dirty hobo with an unlikely connection to someone the party has met before.

These characters have plotlines of their own that the PCs are likely to get involved with as they try to sort out real leads from red herrings. While each is a distraction from the main mission, if the PCs get involved and help people in need they can benefit greatly later in the campaign. Some of their fellow passengers might even prove instrumental in the success of this mission.



Brianne "Bree" Kaldeckis. A 47-year old veteran of the Fourth Yerasol War, Bree lost her right leg and arm to a Risuri-summoned jaguar. The same druid who took her limbs kept her alive, and after the war she was given a peg leg and sent back home to languish in a veterans' community. There she was approached by Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, whom the party met in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*. Wolfgang used experimental magical science to attach a recently-dead woman's limbs to Bree. He enchanted a girdle to help with the mending process, which Bree wears to this day.

World-wise and granted a second life, Bree sold her services as a bodyguard. She came to Caius Bergeron's attention after a clever ploy to thwart a pursuer; she detached her arm and set it across the room with a crossbow. Since her girdle let her control her limb at range, she was able to shoot the foe when he crossed its path. The Obscurati are always drawn to ingenuity, and Dr. von Recklinghausen had already drawn their attention, so Caius hired Bree.

Bree values honor and her word, and gladly serves as bodyguard, but she has turned down offers to serve as a soldier or assassin. She favors sleeveless shirts even in the cold, and is not shy about the massive scar around her right upper arm. When in Danor, her limbs itch at the seams, and she doesn't like to stay in the dead magic zone for more than a week at a time.



Olivert Boone. A tiefling with a smile women swoon for, Boone went adventuring in the Malice Lands at an early age. He charmed many a woman and had to defend himself from jealous husbands. He developed an amazing knack with a pistol, and eventually while exploring burnt-out ruins he stumbled upon a magic urn. When opened, it released a demon that possessed his pistol, granting him nearly unparalleled accuracy, but at a price. His demon pistol demands blood.

Already a misogynist, it wasn't hard for him to switch to killing women after he loved them. He particularly likes bringing women on his adventures and coming back with sad tales of their demise. He came to Bree's attention when he rolled into Danor with chests full of loot from his adventures. She just knows his reputation as a gunslinger, and has no idea he's a serial killer.

When amused, he slaps one hand on his chest as a one-handed clap, so he never has to take his pistol hand far from his weapon. He's working this mission for the money (about 3,000 gp), and has no ideological ties to Luc Jierre.



Verzubak Tantalovich. This bleary-eyed dwarf has studied the magic and mathematics of luck, and he only lights up when he's winning at dice. His calculations don't work well in Danor's dead magic zone, so he ended up owing a few hundred gold pieces to a gambling den in Keskey. But Verzubak still has enough luck that the killer sent for him dies before even seeing the dwarf.

Verzubak plans to bet boldly in the casinos in Nalaam, which will test his theories to the limits, because magic is entirely forbidden at the betting tables. To him, this bodyguard mission is just a way to get seed money for his "research."

Though he looks perpetually tired, he loves to drone on to anyone who'll pay attention. A genuinely nice fellow, he can find a way to pay a stranger three compliments in a single sentence, and if someone looks like they're getting bored with his talk about numbers and science he'll let them talk to help them feel far more interesting compared to him.



Ottavia Sacredote. Born deaf, Ottavia was given to a Clergy orphanage where she grew up devout in her faith, despite being an elf in a predominately human religion. She learned to communicate through sign language and even speak, albeit with difficulty. When she reached maturity, she began to hear the whispers of angels and trained in the use of magic. But as she rose in prominence in the Clergy, she began to doubt the purity of those in power.

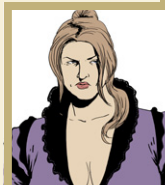


Though still earnest in her faith, Ottavia was susceptible when an agent of the Obscurati noted her concerns and offered her a chance to make a difference. She believes the conspiracy just to be a group of enlightened thinkers who want to reform society and improve the lot of the poor and weak. In Crisillyr she has been subtly acquiring information to disgrace hierarchs she thinks are abusing their power, while helping promote more generous priests.

Ottavia took an instant liking to Luc when she realized the man knew her sign language. She believes Luc's lantern will be used to shield and illuminate the weak when an inevitable reckoning occurs. Throughout the trip she presses Luc to make sure his creation is used for the right purpose.

Ottavia has an enchanted headband that lets her project her thoughts. This helps her be understood more clearly by people who cannot sign, but makes it nearly impossible for her to lie, so she tries not to use it unless necessary.

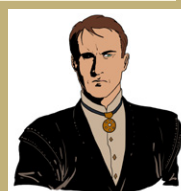
Elanor Yanette. This hugely fat enchantress travels the Avery Coast, facilitating the buying and selling of valuable people to whorehouses or wealthy patrons. By a strict reading of laws she is not technically trafficking in slaves, but rather arranging contractual employment or performing wedding matchmaking. She is a highly loathsome woman, rich, smug, and mostly lacking in empathy.



Since she cannot rely on magic in Danor, she makes use of powerful drugs and poisons to placate her "products." (She's immune herself and as a consequence she can eat just about anything.) Once the train gets through the Malice Lands she starts shamelessly enchanting men who strike her fancy to sleep with her.

Little interested in conversation, she's content to just have feasts in the lounge car and then retire to her room to read erotic poetry. But if someone shamelessly compliments her or draws her into a discussion of celebrity gossip, fashion, or magic, she opens up and brags about her work, though she has plenty of justifications for how her horrible behavior actually helps people.

Cardiff Hengehill. Your classic international man of mystery, Cardiff Hengehill spies in Danor without even bothering to conceal his Risuri accent or his memorably handsome face. After years of small time missions that he hoped would earn him a trip back home to retire while he still had his looks, Cardiff finally has achieved an espionage coup. Through contacts, bribery, and burglary, he managed to get a copy of a briefing on Danor's military build-up plans for the next five years.



He's done with Risur, though, and so he plans to sell the documents for 20,000 gold pieces to the Drakrans. Malia, a guard on the train, has arranged the meeting.

Cardiff's normal demeanor is cool and disapproving, and he tends to keep quiet so other people are more prone to fill the awkward silence. But he can fake interest with remarkable enthusiasm.

Adventure Overview

The party sails to Beaumont, but on the way the PCs are intercepted by two privateer ships working for the Ob. The party has to lie, fight, or flee in order to reach Beaumont on time.

Their ship drops them off and sails ahead, and will be waiting for them in Trekhom, Sid Minos, and Vendricce, ready to provide supplies, support, and escape at mission's end. However, an experimental Ob submarine stealthily follows their ship's movements.

After some brief down time in Beaumont, the party boards the train and heads out. The first day provides many opportunities for the party to interact with other passengers, to try to get a sense of whom they should be keeping their eyes on. Suspects include **Damata Griento**, a nervous orc businessman who is taking his family on a first-class trip and **Elanor Yanette**, a fat, brusque enchantress accompanied by a veiled woman.

By the time the train stops in Cherage for the first night, Bree, Verzubak, and Boone are all aboard, but they pretend not to know each other. Bree sneaks off into the city to meet with Luc and Ottavia. Overnight, a masterfully athletic hobo stows away on the train. This is **Andrei von Recklinghausen**, who goes by the name **Mister Mapple** (see page 8).

The morning of the second day, Luc and Ottavia board the train, but they try to stay out of sight. Also boarding is **Cardiff Hengehill**, a Risuri spy with secrets about the Danoran military. He has regular contact throughout the day with **Malia Baccarin**, a member of the train's militia who is Cardiff's contact with his buyers.

Complications.

Over the next five days, the party has multiple opportunities to observe each suspect, while other threats and mysteries provide their own distractions.

On the second night, the train stops in Orithea. While most of the passengers sight-see or conduct innocuous business, Luc and Ottavia head to the city's lighthouse, where Luc meets with a local Obscurati cell leader. He shows how his lantern works and provides documents to help the local cell convert the lighthouse into a large scale version.

On the third day, bandits raid the train as it travels through the Malice Lands. They provoke a screaming hydra-like beast to emerge from a swamp and attack the train as a distraction, and the PCs have to weigh the risk of blowing their cover with saving the lives of the passengers – possibly even Luc and his crew.

That night the train limps into Trekhom. There Cardiff tries to sell his secrets, while Damata attends a lecture by the famous dwarf philosopher Vlendam Heid. Luc again sneaks away to a lighthouse to show off his invention to another cell leader. Meanwhile, Ottavia receives a *sending* warning her that Risuri agents are after Luc. Luc's bodyguards become more wary and try to figure out who's spying on them.

On the evening of the fourth day, the train reaches Nalaam, where most of the plot-lines of the side characters come to a head. Since there is no Ob cell to meet with, Luc and Ottavia spend the evening preparing surprises for the party.

On the fifth day, as the train pulls into Sid Minos, Luc triggers a replica of his lantern, attuned to the PCs and infused with energy

of the planet Nem. The PCs' souls are pulled from their flesh and trapped into a ghostly version of the train. If they do not manage to reach the train's engine and disable the lantern quickly, they'll never be able to reunite with their bodies.

They return to this world just as the train pulls into Sid Minos station. Ottavia boards a carriage and uses illusions of Luc and company to try to lure the party to follow her. She takes a boat to a nearby cursed island, and when night falls undead rise from the sea and attack the party. Ottavia confronts the party above a tomb, which provides safety from the horde of the dead, but also serves as a prison for an ancient demon, **Ashima-Shimtu**. Though bound by magic far greater than anything the PCs could now overcome, she sees the party as an investment, and she offers to teleport them to Vendricce so they can complete their mission.

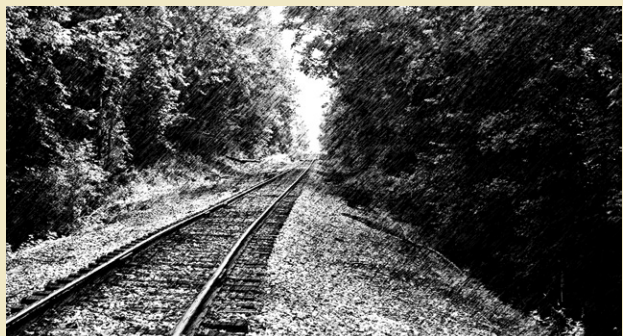
Of course the PCs might find their own way out, or simply avoid the trap. However they manage to reach Vendricce, when the train gets to the station it offloads all its passengers except Luc and his remaining guards. Then the train moves to a nearby private depot where a welcome party from the Obscurati waits. The party can spot Lya Jierre meeting with her brother, and there's an opportunity to steal the lantern before an overwhelming force of private security comes to take Luc to the Obscurati Palace.

While it *is* possible the party might follow discreetly all the way to the palace, they are likely spotted by look-outs at the depot. The fastest escape is to hijack the train and drive it to the harbor, where their ship awaits. But Lya Jierre and other Obscurati forces try to thwart them, and the submarine that has stalked them since the start of their mission blocks the mouth of the harbor. The PCs are outnumbered, and they must survive a gauntlet to reach their ship and escape.

Undercover Adventures.

While we have included a mix of action scenes and dungeon crawling, a major element of *Always on Time* sees the PCs going undercover and trying not to be detected as foreign agents. Guidelines on handling PC surveilling and interrogating their marks are summarized in the following Investigative Skill Challenges.

If the players don't seem to be enjoying keeping a low profile, don't penalize them harshly if they fall back on familiar tactics. If the PCs simply attack Luc and company when they realize he's working with the conspiracy, then try to beat information out of him, the party still has to make it to Vendricce to see the gathering. And of course the Ob can have other agents watching the train, who can be responsible for the various threats on the party's life.



Damata Griento. A 40-something half-orc from Ber, Damata has brought his wife and two children on board for a vacation. Though the rest of his family is a boisterous party of new-wealth tourists eager to see the "Old World," Damata is troubled and edging toward manic-depression.

Damata hails from a family of orcish warchiefs in Ber, and he never fit in as a warrior, so he made his wealth in real estate, mostly dealing with Risuri and Danoran elites trying to set up factories. After a decade of success, though, he was suckered into a high-stakes con by a man posing as a Risuri train magnate, planning to build a railroad across the Anthras Mountains to connect the two countries. Damata was dazzled by a slick pitch that involved teleporting him to Flint and taking him to lavish parties.

Seeing vast potential for wealth and needing a huge down payment to buy a stake, Damata took a loan from The Family, a criminal organization based out of Crisillyir. When his 'partner' disappeared with tens of thousands of gold pieces, Damata was on the hook. After begging for mercy, he was told to steal the magical heirlooms and war trophies of family, and bring them to Nalaam where the local mages could convert the items into more liquid wealth. Damata botched an attempt to lie to his wife, and ended up with her and their kids tagging along, expecting to enjoy a vacation while Damata does 'research for his railroad.'

Damata has a *suitcase of holding* full of magic weapons and amulets he stole from his villa at home, about twenty items worth a total of 34,000 gp. He has a hunch he'll never make it home alive, and even if he does, he's pretty sure his family will kill him.

- **Ejeka, the wife.** A darling in her late 20s, Ejeka is quieter and more reserved than her husband. She has an eye for art and fashion, but sees her major responsibility as shepherding her two boisterous children.
- **Dabo, the daughter.** Just turned 13, Dabo is something of a spoiled princess who is used to getting her way and speaking her mind. She isn't entirely enthusiastic about the trip, and complains frequently about missing her friends, and how unfair it is that she had to leave for months. She's disgusted by her father's recent maudlin affections, and was raised to think men are supposed to be tougher.
- **Tarro, the son.** A young boy of 7, Tarro is easily bored, and constantly seeks stimuli from new things, new people, new places, and new ideas. He explores, and is always testing his boundaries with his parents.

Damata plans to show his family a great vacation—museums, lavish hotels, grand musical venues, fine dining—until they reach Nalaam. Should something happen to him, he's made arrangements with a business associate in Sid Minos to take in his family.



Malia Baccarin. Dark, lithe, and beautiful, Malia grew up in Danor, though her family was Crisillyiri. She has tangential connections with various criminal organizations in every city along the Avery Coast line, and she enjoys favored status for getting crooks in contact with other crooks in ways that profit everyone. She makes sure to pick up the local newspapers at every stop along

the train, and often has a bundle tucked under her arm as she does her duty through the train.

She's a skilled manipulator, and can cajole, goad, or seduce most any man into doing what she wants. Her dream is to retire in a few years with a solid stash of cash and buy an island villa in Crisillyir.



Investigative Challenges

Two common actions during this adventure are following suspects to see where they go, and engaging suspects in innocuous conversation to try to tease out their motives. While the GM can always handle these situations narratively or with *ad hoc* dice rolls, those who want more structure can use the following skill challenges. Be sure to make reasonable adjustments in reaction to what the PCs are doing.

TABLE: DEFAULT SKILL CHALLENGE DCs

DC	Difficulty	DC	Difficulty
8	Routine	15	Difficult
10	Easy	17	Hard
13	Moderate	20	Extreme

Isobel Travers. An eladrin woman just entered her teens. Isobel is a third generation Danoran, basically born and raised to breed more eladrin. Her host family has a small stable of six eladrin women, and they import eladrin men to father children. The sons are sold to other Danoran households, half the daughters are kept as future breeding stock, and the rest are trained to be fine wives for wealthy patrons around the continent.

When she's not affected by Elanor's mind-numbing drugs and magic, Isobel does realize that she's basically a slave, but she has no real will to escape because she knows she could never survive on her own.

Among the many skills she was trained to make her a desirable wife, Isobel has a beautiful singing voice, but while drugged she just hums to herself, mostly tragic songs about suicide and revenge.



Mister Mapple. A year ago Dr. Wolfgang von Recklinghausen dabbled in dark magic to stitch together and animate dead flesh into a new creation. Thanks to the efforts of his father, the creation regenerates wounds like a troll, and has almost unmatched strength and agility for a human. But as a consequence of the dark magic used in his creation, he drains the soul of anyone he touches.

Wolfgang named his creation Andrei and tried to teach him to be like a son. But Andrei recalled some memories of his former life, and when he finally realized how his "father" had created him he lashed out. Andrei murdered Wolfgang's entire house staff, then drained the life out of the doctor's wife. He nearly killed Wolfgang too, but his father set him on fire and fled.

Andrei eventually recovered, but his home was destroyed. For months he had no thought but to find his father and kill him, but Wolfgang eluded him. Eventually Andrei was reduced to begging and theft, and he wandered until he came to the railroad. He's been stowing away for the past half year, seeing the world and learning voraciously, and has decided to enjoy the pleasures of life instead of dwelling on death and vengeance. But he cannot touch anyone, and he longs for someone he could take as a bride.

He has chosen the name Mister Mapple, something he thought sounded safe and pleasant.



Tailing a Suspect.

Variable Level Skill Challenge.

Key Skills: Deception, Insight, Investigation, Perception, Persuasion, Stealth

Default Difficulty: Moderate (DC 13).

When a PC tries to tail a suspect, try to think of the target's movements in three stages. For instance, in Orithea the enchantress Elanor might head to the apothecary's district, shop innocuously for a bit, then head to a merchant that sells illegal love potions. In Trekhom, Luc goes to a bar near the enclave, then his guards look for signs of pursuit, and finally he heads to the harbor lighthouse where guards stop anyone who isn't an approved visitor.

For each stage, narrate what the target is doing, then the PC has to make two checks – one to keep up, the other to stay hidden. Based on the result of the PC's checks and the target's plans, narrate the next stage of the pursuit. After the third stage, the target reaches his or her destination and the PC should be able to witness something noteworthy and important (or simply innocuous if the suspect is not actually up to anything).

If a PC fails a "keep up" check, increase the DC of further "keep up" checks by one step to the Hard DC, regardless of what skill is used. This represents the PC falling behind and having trouble seeing where the target is going. A second failed "keep up" check means the PC has lost their target.

Likewise if the PC fails a "stay hidden" check, increase the DC of further "stay hidden" checks. The target has gotten suspicious and is more on guard. A second failed "stay hidden" check means the target has made the PC. The target's reaction will vary based on situation and personality – flight, confrontation, attack, calling the guards – but he or she almost certainly won't let the PC see anything incriminating.

It might help to remind the players that if they think they might fail, it could be smarter to give up and try again when the train reaches another station on the next day (instead of tipping off a potential enemy).

Keeping Up.

Each stage have the PC make an ability check, typically Wisdom (Perception). If the target goes through a crowded district, perhaps Intelligence (Investigation) would be more appropriate. If the target asks the town guards to be on the look-out for the PC, Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) might allay the guards' suspicions. Let the PCs come up with suggestions, but feel free to adjust the DC based on how likely the skill would actually help the situation.

Staying Hidden.

Each stage have the PC make an ability check, typically Dexterity (Stealth). Strength (Athletics) might let a character stalk along rooftops, if the terrain is appropriate. Charisma (Deception) or Intelligence (disguise kit) might let a PC blend into the patrons at a coffee shop. Perhaps a character might even hold their breath and hide underwater with a Strength (Athletics) check when following a target near the docks.

Multiple PCs.

Because there are so many suspects to investigate, the players have to decide whether they want the wider coverage of splitting up, or the easier success (and safety in numbers) of working as a team. If multiple PCs are trailing the same target, each PC makes the ability checks.

If anyone succeeds the “keep up” check, it counts as a success for the whole team. However, if anyone *fails* the “stay hidden” check, it counts as a failure for the whole team and increases the DC for future checks of that sort. If the team gets a second failure to stay hidden, only those who failed their ability checks are spotted by the target.

Enemy Team.

Bree, and later Luc Jierre, have back-up covering them when they head out each night. For each bodyguard still active, increase the DC of all the skill checks by 1 (for a maximum of +4 if Bree, Otavia, Verzubak, and Boone are all on watch).

However, if the PCs have figured out the bodyguards are working together, one or two party members might distract them, so they won't count toward increasing the DC. This depends on the party being smart and learning the pattern of their enemies, and if done poorly it runs the risk of tipping their enemies off that the PCs are hostile.

Interrogating a Suspect.

Variable Level Skill Challenge

Key Skills: Deception, Insight, Intimidation, Persuasion

Default Difficulty: Moderate (DC 15).

An interrogation might involve subtly getting a suspect to talk about herself, verbally intimidating or manipulating a prisoner into confessing a secret, or physically punishing a target until he breaks. To get useful information, the PC must establish and maintain a rapport, and then extract information out of the target.

When running an interrogation as a skill challenge, first have the player explain or roleplay how they'll attempt to establish rapport, and then have them make an ability check. Then if they succeed they can explain what information they're trying to extract, and make an ability check for that.

Rapport.

Rapport reflects the target's trust of the PC. In a casual conversation, a target might think the PC is just a normal person and have no reason to look for ulterior motives, and after establishing a rapport with the PC he might be willing to share things he wouldn't with a total stranger. During a harsher interrogation, the PC must make sure that the target's anger or loathing of their captor does not overwhelm whatever other emotion the interrogator is trying to evoke.

To establish rapport, the PC must make a skill check. If the PC has a genuine connection to the target, they might make a Charisma (Persuasion) check to keep the target happy. Charisma (Deception) works if the target is faking a connection, particularly for seduction or to pose as a fellow criminal. If the target is a mage or scholar, the PC might even use Intelligence (Arcana, History,

Pacing and Leveling.

The party starts this adventure at 6th level. At the adventure's end they should reach 7th level. If the PCs have not earned enough experience through encounters, award story experience at the end of the adventure.

Favors and Prestige.

The *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide* details the Prestige system and how the PCs can use it to request items and call in favors. Though this adventure takes place far from Risur, the RHC has agents around the world. If the PCs do well at establishing contacts during the Mission Planning montage, they will be able to get at least quick favors handled.



Nature, or Religion) to make the target think they have much in common. Charisma (Intimidation) also works but will usually leave the target unfriendly or even openly hostile after the interrogation.

If the PC succeeds their ability check, they establish a rapport and can move on to “extraction.” If they fail the ability check, the target cannot be coaxed to open up. The PC can try again, but the DC increases to Hard. If they fail a second time, the target won't respond to further attempts unless something changes in his or her relation to the PC (such as if the PC saves the target's life).

Extraction.

Once the PC has established a rapport, they can make a skill check to extract information from the target. This is almost always a Wisdom (Insight) check. On a success the PC gets the target to reveal something useful. The target might tell a total lie but the PC is able to see through it and figure out what's really true.

If the PC fails their check the target gives up nothing and becomes a little wary. If the PC fails a second time they lose their rapport with the target (which counts as one failure on a “rapport” check).

Good Cop, Bad Cop.

When two or more characters coordinate in an interrogation, each PC can make a skill check to establish rapport. As long as at least one PC succeeds their check, the whole team establishes rapport. Only if everyone fails does the DC for further attempts increase.

Once the team has established rapport, anyone can actually ask the questions but they just make one Wisdom (Insight) check to extract information, using whoever skill modifier is highest.

In the classic “good cop, bad cop” situation the pair coordinate to get the target to open up and then the character with a stronger insight asks the questions. A variant is to have one person physically break a target, and then afterward a different interrogator asks the questions. Or the same mechanics could handle five PCs carousing at a bar, getting a suspect drunk and then encouraging him to brag about his secret mission.



Adventure Layout

The majority of *Always on Time* occurs during a period of six days it takes the train to travel 3,000 miles. Most of the party's investigations and interactions will occur at whatever pace they are comfortable with, but the various suspicious NPCs won't sit around and let themselves be interrogated all day. While the days are spent on the train with the occasional social interactions, the nights take the action into various cities.

We present the scenes that occur at specific locations in chronological order. You'll want to be familiar with the various NPCs in order to handle the PCs investigations, which can turn out countless different ways.

Scene Layout.

Each scene is presented in a format of Title, keywords, and tag-line. Keywords include:

Scene Type: Action, Exploration, Exposition, Puzzle, Social, or Hybrid.

Duration: Montage (a few hours or days), Real-time (a few minutes), or Tactical (round-by-round).

NPC Roster.

Because of the large number of NPCs the party will meet, we've compiled two handouts to help you keep track of their various statuses, mannerisms, and role in the adventure. A DM handout lists keywords and traits to help you portray the NPCs, while a player handout details characters whom the PCs would be familiar with at the start of the adventure. Encourage the players to add notes as they meet new people of interest.



Recurring Characters. Stover Delft, Damata Griento, Andrei von Recklinghausen, Ashima-Shimtu, and Lya Jierre all play prominent roles in later adventures. All other NPCs that appear in this adventure might recur in minor roles, but feel free to do with them as you wish. If anyone important dies, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

NPC Entry	Page
Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft	13
Brienne "Bree" Kaldeckis, war vet	5
Damata Griento, orc businessman	7
Olivert Boone, gunslinger	5
Verzubak Tantalovich, luck mage	5
Elanor Yanette, sex trafficker	6
Isobel Travers, eladrin slave	8
"Mister Mapple," Andrei von Recklinghausen, the Creation	8
Luc Jierre, arcanoscientist and inventor	3
Ottavia Sacredote, Obscurati priestess	6
Cardiff Hengehill, turncoat spy	6
Malia Baccarin, treacherous train guard	7
Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre	Act Three

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

NPC	Page
Candace Coman, RHC double agent	14
Hank Gallager, reporter/spy	14
Clark Dunstan, docker/spy	14
Miggs Maloney, cop/spy	14
Jessica, Anna, Emilia, Kell-guild thieves	14
Glaz du Sang Magie, Obscurati water mage	16
Jerrial and Auria, privateer captains	17
Xorin Marchand, conductor	20
Kov Marik, train chef	20
Doris Gavagne, piano player	20
Bucher Monmarl, Danoran bureaucrat	24
*Hanse Randall, architect/Obscurati cell leader	29
Rodinn, Malice bandit captain	29
Vankloff Jeanov, dwarf ritualist	Act Two
Ulrik Pevedin, military secrets buyer	Act Two
*Ramos Zoltan, prison magnate/Obscurati cell leader	Act Two
Vlendam Heid, renowned philosopher	Act Two
Sylvester Fomazelli, Family capodecina	Act Two
Azon the Stoneforger, magical item launderer	Act Two
Lord Kulp, Master of Games	Act Two
Nikola the Necromancer	Act Two
Father Balthazar	Act Two
Jaime the Weevil	Act Two
Cordell Donofrio, Sid Minos businessman	Act Three
Gene, lunatic godhand	Act Three
*Lester Guillory, Risuri engineer (Ob tier 4)	Act Three
*Dustin Huff, Danoran astronomer (Ob tier 4)	Act Three
*Emily and Anna Davis, Crisillyiri lobbyists (Ob tier 4)	Act Three

Rewards

At the end of this adventure, the party's Prestige with Risur should increase by 1 step. If they manage to stymie or confront the conspirators in Vendricce in any way and manage to escape alive, their Prestige with the Obscurati increases by 1. If they rescue Isobel and get her to safety, their Prestige with the Unseen Court will improve. It's very unlikely the party's Prestige with Flint or The Family will change.

At the end of Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*, each PC should have had gear valued at around 16,000 gp, not counting anything they hid from an office audit. At the start of this adventure, the PCs each receive 6,000 gp worth of stipend and salary.

List of New Magic Items.

New items are presented in the appendix.

- Luc Jierre's *wayfarer's lantern*.
- Bree's *butcher's girdle*.
- Ottavia's *headband of roaming thoughts*.
- Cardiff's *amulet of the impeccable spy*.
- Boone's *demonic pistol*.
- Verzubak's *lucky dice ki focus*.
- Lya Jierre's *razorburst rapier*.
- An apostate godhand's *hands of heaven and hell*.

Final Word Before We Start

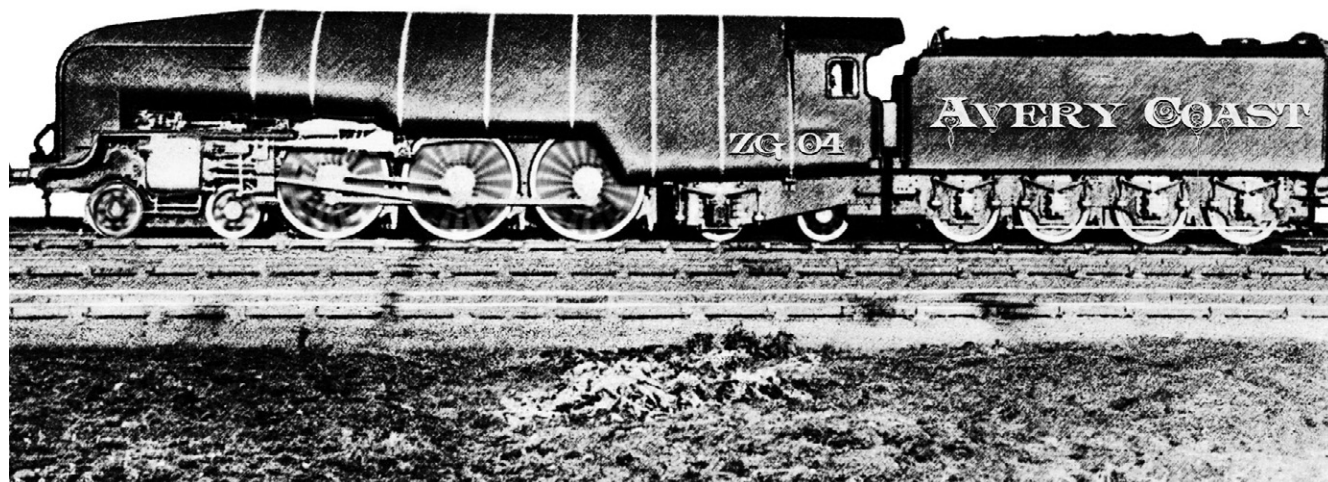
We are sensitive to the risk of "railroading" the players in an adventure that literally takes place on a railroad. The players can only score a complete success in their mission if they ride the train to the end, and so we list events that are very likely to occur at various points during the trip. However, do not hesitate to let the party's actions change things dramatically. Fun games are full of dramatic surprises, and a derailling train is certainly that.

Character Themes.

Each ZEITGEIST adventure includes one or more scenes that bring the PCs' character themes (detailed in the *Zeitgeist Player's Guide*) to the forefront.

- Dockers will find friends in the docks along the Avery Coast, making it easier to slip in and out of cities and send messages to their allies at sea. But sufficiently popular dockers might find their fame a liability when trying to travel incognito.
- Eschatologists get to meet the founder of their movement, Vlendam Heid.
- Gunsmiths might enjoy shopping for enchanted firearms in Trekhom, where Drakran gunsmiths are experimenting with grenades and rockets.
- Martial Scientists will get to duel esteemed swordswoman Lya Jierre, and learn her signature severing technique.
- Skyseers take a bit of a back seat after getting a lot of attention in the past two adventures. However, they'll have a strong intuitive grasp of Luc's lantern.
- Spirit Mediums as always provide an invaluable skill in an investigation where dead bodies might show up.
- Technologists are riding a train. Odds are high they'll get a chance to drive or possibly even crash the train. Who wouldn't enjoy that?
- Vekeshi Mystics have an opportunity to rescue an enslaved eladrin woman, and through Ashima-Shimtu they can learn part of the truth about the Great Malice.
- Yerasol Veterans will be heading into the homeland of the enemy they faced in the last war. You as GM should look for opportunities to present old rivals who remember the PC. Bree could work for this, but ideally the PC would not be compelled to attack her on sight, either for revenge or to maintain a cover story.

An Avery Coast Railroad train at full steam along a lonely stretch of track.



Prologue: If You Choose to Accept It

THIS SECTION COVERS THE PARTY'S PLANNING EFFORTS prior to embarking upon their spy mission.

Mission Planning

Puzzle/Social. Montage. Level 8.

The PCs and Chief Inspector Delft plan a mission in foreign territory.

To set the stage for the adventure, read or paraphrase the following.

Mere days ago you learned the name of the conspiracy: the Obscurati.

They have kept their secrets well. Though twice their plots have endangered Flint, both were accidents—an earthquake released a flood of deadly magical fuel they were refining on Cauldron Hill, and an alien monster freed by their tinkering with ancient magic nearly pulled the RHC headquarters into an insane far realm. You don't know what their ultimate designs are, but what you've seen suggests they have access to many resources.

Your boss, Chief Inspector Stover Delft, asks you to meet him aboard your ship, far from any possible spies. The conspiracy seems overconfident in their ability to keep secrets, and they don't know how much you've learned. But you have a time and place where you know this 'Obscurati' will be gathered: the 20th of Winter, in Vendricce. It's time to plan your next move.

"I apologize for not bringing pastries and coffee," Delft says. "This meeting needs to be as hush-hush as possible. I have the first tiny bits of a plan in my head, but it won't work if any spies get wind of this. Loose lips sink ships and you, constables, are going overseas."

Delft explains the basic idea of the mission:

Caius's letter said he'd be traveling by train from Beaumont, at one end of the Avery Coast Railroad, to Vendricce, the other end. He'd be leaving on the 11th of Winter, and would attend a meeting on the 20th in Vendricce. Delft has a hunch he'll be meeting with someone else from this Obscurati group.

The party will take the same train Caius would have, and they'll look for people he might have been meeting along the way, or others headed to the same meeting. In Vendricce they'll try to recover useful intelligence about the conspiracy, possibly take a prisoner for later interrogation, and then return to Risur. He admits it's complicated, but they have about fifty days to figure out all the details.

Five Elements to a Good Spy Mission.

There are three elements that need to be handled before the party leaves, and two components to the mission itself.

First, **secrecy**. The party must tell as few people as possible what they'll be doing, because they can't know who might be a spy or

Timeline.

The ZEITGEIST calendar consists of four seasons of 91 days each. The adventure begins somewhere around the 35th of Autumn, right after the end of *Digging for Lies*. The party's ship sets out for Beaumont on the 85th day of Autumn. They should arrive seven days later, on the 1st of Winter, giving them ten days of leeway in case of delays. On the 11th, the train departs Beaumont, and barring a derailment it will reach Vendricce just before dusk on the 16th.

New Ship?

In adventures two and three the party likely cruised around on an unarmed cutter, just big enough for a party of adventurers to handle on their own. In *Always on Time*, though, they get access to either a two-masted schooner or a seaworthy steamship, armed with eight light cannons. We present two specific ships that meet these criteria on page 39—*Roscommon* and *Khalundurrin*.

be under surveillance. Toward that end, they'll need a cover story, a red herring so that any spies won't get suspicious at the lack of activity.

Second, **cover identities**. This will be a difficult operation, requiring them to use false identities as they travel through multiple foreign nations. They'll need documents, appropriate attire, and ways to explain their uncanny martial prowess if anyone sees them get into a fight. They'll be traveling first class, so even if the party has a bunch of weird races, sufficient money tends to get people to overlook such issues.

Third, **contingencies**. The RHC does have agents laying low along the route the PCs will be taking, but it will be a challenge to coordinate them so they can be useful to the party without drawing attention. Also, the nation of Risur has access to many resources, and the more preparation the party does, the easier time they'll have on their mission.

Once the planning is complete, there's still the actual mission. The party will board a ship – a new vessel, since the one they've previously used is likely being watched – and sail to Beaumont. That leads to the fourth component, **spycraft**.

On the train they'll need to identify people of interest without blowing their cover. Delft figures that they can safely contain their investigations to first- and second-class passengers, since he doubts anyone important would ride coach. He reminds them that the big payoff is in Vendricce, so they should be careful not to move too soon and spook someone who might lead to more valuable information.

The final step is **extraction**. The characters will need to come up with several ways to get out of Vendricce when the mission is over. Delft would love it if the characters plan a nice, quiet escape where no one ever knows they were there, but he figures the party won't be so subtle, so he admonishes them to plan for other eventualities, such as if they're being pursued by an entire army or something.

Planning Montage.

The players are not expected to decide every detail; instead they'll spend the next few weeks in a sort of 'planning montage,' where the party's clever ideas and/or skill checks determine how well the party prepares for various challenges and contingencies.

To start, show the players the Avery Coast Railroad Brochure handout (page 40), and then make sure they know the following key details.

1. The train they want to be on leaves Beaumont at 7:30 a.m. on the 11th of Winter. It reaches Vendricce at around 5:30 p.m. on the 16th of Winter. Caius's meeting is supposed to start on the 20th.
2. The party will want to leave for Danor with plenty of time to spare, in case of complications along the way. Delft suggests the 85th of Autumn, about 50 days from now.
3. Delft suggests having the PCs' ship drop them off in Beaumont, then sail ahead. The train moves faster than the boat, but due to terrain it would be possible for their ship to be in Trekhom when the train is scheduled to arrive on the 13th, as a contingency in case things go wrong. It could also be in Sid Minos when the party arrives on the 15th. From there it would still be able to reach Vendricce by the 16th.

After that, proceed to the montage, which should progress as a collaborative brainstorm. Don't be stingy with answering their questions or even suggesting a few elements they might have overlooked. After all, in-game the PCs have much more time to plan than the players do.

Mission Preparation

Variable Level Skill Challenge.

Key Proficiencies: Deception, Insight, Intimidation, History, Perception, Persuasion, Stealth

Default Difficulty: Unless otherwise noted, all ability checks are DC 15.

This challenge has three goals which the party pursues simultaneously. Successful ability checks, clever ideas, or good roleplaying can count as successes, and the more successes the party has, the better chance they have for victory in their mission.

Each goal lists tactics that can contribute successes. Some tactics are marked with an asterisk (*). These do not contribute to the main pool of successes, but provide alternate routes to success or make things easier for other checks. It is unlikely the party will succeed at all their goals. That's fine.

- Goal One: Secrecy.
- Goal Two: Cover Identities.
- Goal Three: Contingencies.

Passage of Time.

This montage consists of seven rounds, each roughly a week in length. Handle events week by week. Like any good montage you'll show lots of things happening at once to remind everyone of what's going on. With every round show a little improvement, but to show it all will take too long.



Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft.

A local Flinter in his early 40s, Delft gets squinty and condescending when his authority is questioned, but he can recognize talent and good work. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. He walks with a cane because a mimic tore a chunk out of his leg fifteen years ago. He has a habit of poking inanimate objects with the cane before he gets too close to them, and spitting on them when he wants to be extra sure.

Meanwhile in the News...

While the PCs are buckling down on their mission planning, what's going on in Flint and the rest of Risur?

- **Fire.** Scholars throughout Flint weep as the Miller Memorial Library burns down. The library, which was built over 400 years ago during the first term of Governor Roland Stanfield, contained original copies of some of Risur's oldest literature, poetry, and religious epistles. Police authorities blame poor construction of the building's gaslight lanterns, but some found it suspicious that no adjacent buildings caught fire. The lawyer for a pair of lizardfolk brothers serving a life sentence in prison for arson delivered a statement on their behalf. Though they did not explicitly claim responsibility, they warned that Risur should release them, or else more buildings will burn.
- **Fireband.** Benedict Pemberton, owner of experimental arms manufacturer Pemberton Industries, is on a tour of the nation, speaking with members of parliament and rich power-brokers to promote his new book, *Behold! Science!* In it, he argues that the Risur-Danor peace conference scheduled for early Spring 501 could kill the nation's progress in technological innovation, since without the threat of war there will be no motivation for research. Critics charge he's making a veiled push for war with Ber, about which he makes derogatory claims throughout the book.
- **Fired!** As protests continue in Parity Lake over factory conditions and worker abuses, several owners discharged their entire workforce without notice and brought in police to arrest as trespassers any workers who showed up. The same day, several hundred Beran immigrants arrived at Bosum Strand and were ushered directly to the factories.
- **Fireworks.** The year ends on the 91st of Winter, and that evening the people of Flint can expect a dazzling display of fireworks launched from ships in the harbor. Parades are being organized, including the grand March of Kings, a mobile costume ball with dancers and all manner of extravagant entertainment. A few small factories upstream of Stray River are producing high-quality fireworks, while those in Parity Lake are under watch to make sure nothing burns down.
- **Ice.** Climate researchers at Pardwight University warn that extra soot and smoke in the air from the industrial economy will block sunlight, cooling the planet and causing horrible winters. A spokesman for Eschatologists of Flint United sent a thank you letter to the department, encouraging them to keep spreading evidence of the world's imminent demise.



Large and Small Parties.

For each PC fewer than five in a skill challenge, reduce the number of successes needed for partial victories and complete victories. For each PC above five in a skill challenge, increase the number of successes need by two.

Have each PC choose one goal to pursue, then describe how they'll attempt to reach that goal. If necessary, use an ability check to adjudicate whether the PC succeeds. Once all the PCs have had their turn, a new round starts.

Goal One: Secrecy.

This represents keeping up appearances so that the various spies who are watching the party don't get suspicious, or simply hiding from the spies outright. Sample tactics for this goal include:

- **Do Busy Work, Leave Fake Paper Trail.** [Dexterity (Sleight of Hand), Charisma (Deception or Persuasion)] The PC pretends to be on another case, or actually pursues some minor investigation unrelated to the Obscurati, or files false paperwork. If the party gets at least one success this way each week for five consecutive weeks, the party earns two extra successes, because even spies assume the party can't be faking it for that long.
- **Act in Secret.** [Dexterity (Stealth)] Alternatively a PC might arrange a careful system to ensure that no one can get a look at what the party is really up to. This tactic can contribute no more than four successes to the goal, however.
- **Locate Spies.** [Wisdom (Insight), Charisma (Deception or Persuasion)] If the PCs are going to spend their time faking effort, they ought to make sure those efforts are actually being watched by someone. This doesn't contribute to the main pool of successes, but a success on this tactic makes the above tactics easier, reducing busy work, fake paper trails, and actions in secret to DC 15.
- **Turn the Spies.** [Charisma (Diplomacy or Intimidation)] This risky gambit can only be attempted after the party locates the spies. One success at this tactic establishes contact with the spies. A second success lets the party buy off the spies. For the price of a bribe worth 1,000 gp, the party convinces the spies to deliver false intelligence. (The bribe takes the form of various favors and small items, not a single cash payment, though it is counted from the party stipend.)

The risk, however, is that a failure on either skill check spooks the spies, and they report that they've been discovered. At that point, no matter how many successes the party gets on this goal, they can never achieve a complete victory.

Alternately, after the first check establishes contact with the spies, the party might try to just kill them. The spies are no real threat – equivalent to a handful of low-level rogues—so the party automatically can take them out, but this likewise tips off the spymasters that something's up, so the party cannot achieve a complete victory at this goal.

Results. If after seven weeks the party has eight successes, they get a complete victory; the Obscurati have no idea the party will be heading to Danor, making their enemies much less suspicious.

Six or seven successes are a partial victory; the Obscurati know the party is preparing for a sea voyage, so they make various precautions.

Fewer successes are a failure. The Obscurati pretty much know the party's plans – someone blabbed, or a spy snuck a magical listening device into their office, or they got a member of the party's ship's crew to betray them.

Goal Two: Cover Identities.

Before going undercover in foreign countries, the PCs need to make sure their cover identities will withstand scrutiny. Simply showing up and announcing they're RHC constables will get them tossed out of the country or arrested as spies. Some tactics toward this goal include:

- **Visas, Passports, Miscellaneous Documents.** [Dexterity (Sleight of Hand), Intelligence (forgery kit), Charisma (Diplomacy)] These items, acquired legally or illegally, provide 'proof' for the party's cover identities. This tactic can contribute no more than three successes.
- **Look the Part.** [Intelligence (disguise kit), Charisma (Deception)] A PC finds appropriate clothes and accoutrements for the whole party, and makes grooming suggestions to aid the disguise. This tactic can contribute no more than two successes.
- **Rehearse Personalities.** [Intelligence (disguise kit), Wisdom (Insight)] A PC can quiz the rest of the party to make sure they won't be tripped up by questions, that they don't answer to the wrong name, and that they all know each other as well as they should. This tactic can contribute no more than three successes.
- **Finishing Touches.** [Intelligence (Arcana, History, or Religion)] The appropriate skill depends on what cover the party is using, but a PC could coach the party on topics their cover identity would know.
- **Results.** A complete victory here means the party not only has pulled together convincing backstories, costumes, and documentation, but they've had a chance to get comfortable with their cover identities. They'll only be discovered if they act overtly out of character (and you as GM should try to remind them before they accidentally do anything that would break their cover).

What Spies?

A secretary in the RHC office, **Candace Coman**, thinks she's just keeping tabs on the PCs for a reporter, but the reporter she's in contact with is actually **Hank Gallagher**, a spy who delivers his information to an anonymous proxy in Parity Lake. The information Gallagher delivers eventually gets to Lorcan Kell's thieves guild, who in turn pass it on to the Obscurati.

Meanwhile a docker named **Clark Dunstan** watches the party's ship, while an elderly cop named **Miggs Maloney** looks for chatter about the party from other police officers. Both report to a similar chain of command as Gallagher. The only real threat are a trio of Kell-guild thieves—**Jessica**, **Anna**, and **Emilia**—who watch the PCs' homes and occasionally tail them.

A partial victory means the identities are hard to pierce, but they won't stand up to close scrutiny. A failure means that their identities are just the minimum sufficient to get them into Danor and onto the train. If they raise a fuss or draw the attention of the authorities, they'll have to work to avoid discovery.

Goal Three: Contingencies.

Each week a PC can choose to take the necessary steps to prepare for one of the following contingencies. Most of these do not require any sort of skill check to succeed; it's enough for the narrative that the player is making plans. Some are harder to get, though.

- **Docks and Ports.** If the PCs need to sneak in or out of a city or get contraband delivered, this contingency will ensure they have allies they can turn to at the docks of one of the six coastal cities along the railroad (Nalaam is in the mountains). These allies might only number five or six, and they won't fight for the party, but they'll act as look-outs or do safe favors. The main challenge to this contingency is to arrange and communicate codes and signals to people across the sea. After all, the PCs and their allies have likely never met before.

Each time the party chooses this contingency, they can arrange contacts in another city's port. A character with the Docker theme always has a chance of finding friends in port even if the party did not arrange for allies in a given city.
- **Enclaves.** Each night the train stops in a Danoran-owned enclave with entertainment and lodging. Each time the party pursues this contingency, they can arrange for allies in one of the seven cities along the railroad. As above, these allies won't fight for the party, but they can be a useful extra set of hands.
- **Friendly Passengers.** Each time the party chooses this contingency, they can arrange for one Allied Passenger to be in the coach cars, ready to act when they see the right signal. The stats for Allied Passengers are presented in Appendix One: The Avery Coast Railroad.
- **Eyes on the Train.** [Charisma (Persuasion)] With a successful check, a PC can arrange for a low-level RHC agent to get a job aboard the train, likely as cleaning or cook staff. If the party succeeds a second check they can also get someone hired on to the train's security detail.
- **Teleportation.** [Intelligence (Arcana)] If the party is not able to do so themselves, they might need a mage to teleport them, particularly if they get thrown off the train and need to catch up to the next stop. Only Trekhom, Nalaam, Sid Minos, and Vendricce can be teleported into, as they possess the

Bah! Let's Start Already!

If your players just want to jump into the mission, they can use the following cover identities. Adjust genders, names, and races as needed. Strange races will require more elaborate explanations.

- **Royston Porcher.** Veteran of the Fourth Yerasol War, turned land-owner in the southwestern Risuri province of Blackgap. Now touring the Avery Coast with his bodyguards and former war buddies.
- **Gary Normanson.** War buddy of Royston's.
- **Tristan Wolfe.** Another war buddy.
- **Scottie Butcher.** Mage bodyguard, hired to check for compulsions and illusions.
- **Chet Foster.** Foreign manservant.

As for secrecy and contingency, assume the party got a partial success on maintaining secrecy; and give them two "spy tokens." During the adventure they can hand over a spy token to get help for one of the contingencies above, as if they'd planned for it.

necessary teleportation beacons (cities without beacons are difficult to teleport into or out of, due to latent gold deposits in the ground). A successful check gets a mage in one of those cities to wait on retainer, ready to teleport the party.

These cities' teleportation beacons are in secure facilities under heavy guard. While foreigners are allowed to enter, they will be questioned thoroughly, subjected to mild divinations, and asked to pay for a teleportation visa if they do not already have one (at the cost of 500 gp per person, valid for five years).

- **Care Package.** [Charisma (Persuasion)] If the party is capable of *sending*, they can requisition gear from the RHC just as if they were present in person. After first making an Intelligence (Arcana) check to get a mage on retainer in Flint, the party will have to convince the RHC's quartermaster to be ready to hand over requested items to the mage. If successful, the party would be able to cast *sending*, use the normal Prestige rules to requisition items, and then have the items delivered via teleportation to the city of their choice. The time required would be about 8 hours longer than however much time it would normally take.

Results. After the seven weeks of preparation, make a list of what contingencies the party planned for. When they run into trouble during the adventure, encourage them to call upon whatever plans they made in advance, and try not to say no to reasonable suggestions. It's likely the party will make some plans that are never necessary, so if they actually picked the right spot to plan, make sure to reward them for it.

Act One: All Aboard

THIS ACT INCLUDES THE PARTY'S JOURNEY TO Danor and their train's travel through Danor and the Malice Lands.

Dangerous Waters

Exploration. Montage.

The party sets sail across the Avery Sea, but their route is watched by the Obscurati.

On the night of the night of the 85th of Autumn, Delft wishes the party luck, and then they set out aboard their ship (detailed on page 39, *Roscommon* and *Khalundurrin*). Any skyseer in the party notes that one of the golden motes of Urim has disappeared, likely devoured by Nem. This heralds a change in fortune, and promises secrets will be revealed.

The ship sets out on a seven-day voyage west into the Yerasol Archipelago, then north to Beaumont. It's a well-trafficked merchant route, and though their ship flies Risuri colors, Danor's navy is not supposed to attack.

On the fourth day, as they near the archipelago, the party might notice a smoke plume following them a mile or two away with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check, as if coming from a steamship. But there's no sign of an actual vessel. If a PC uses a spyglass eventually he spots a small steam pipe sticking five feet out of the water, emitting the smoke. Just in front of it is a periscope.

Cachalot.

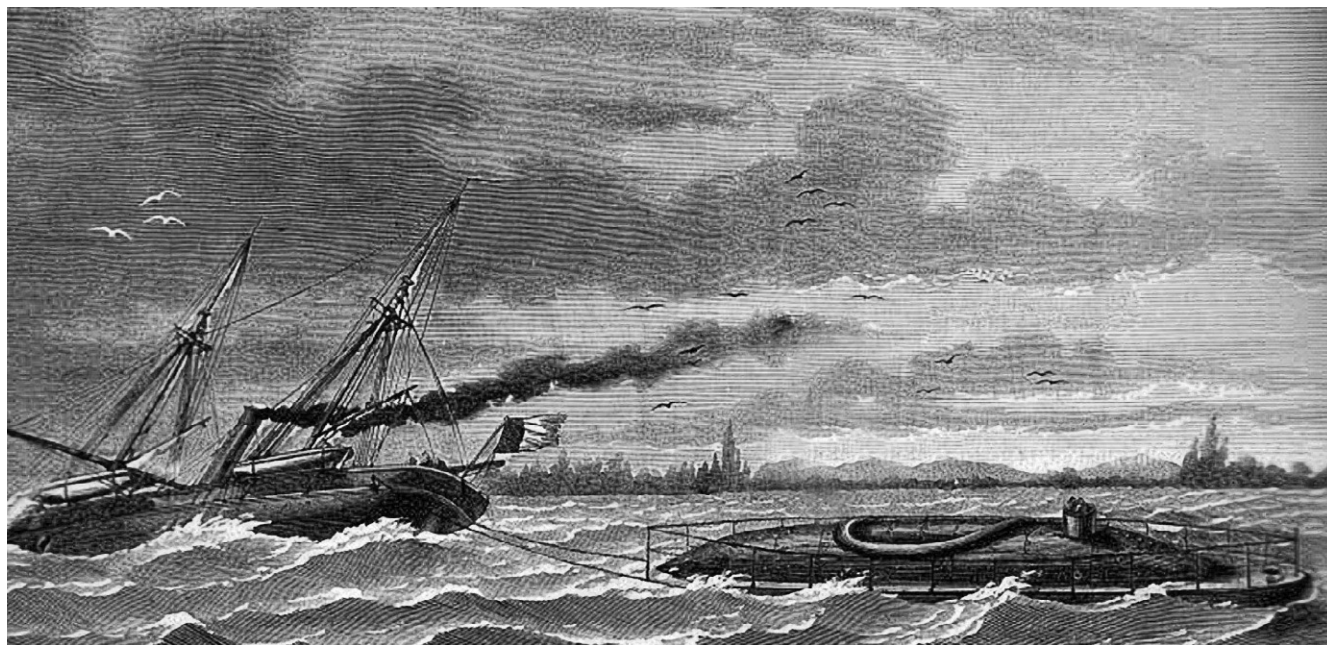
The party's ship is being followed by the *Cachalot*, an experimental submarine powered by both steam and magic. The Obscurati have a handful of these vessels, and they patrol around Axis Island. Each is 110 feet long, 15 feet wide, and has a crew of 8 marines and one magitech engineer. They're little more than tubes with pumps, compressed air, and engines, but with the aid of magic they're fast enough to track any ship in the sea. If threatened they can dive to a depth of 30 feet and easily slip away. Each also carries two smaller submersible pods with mechanical arms. They can be used as escape vehicles, or as delivery devices for spellbombs.

The engineer and captain of the *Cachalot* is a very old Danoran wizard named **Glaz du Sang Magie**. He specializes in hydromancy, but has a fascination for ice and steam as well as liquid water.

Welcome Party.

Obscurati mages on Axis Island regularly cast divinations to see if potential threats might be approaching, but they get lots of false positives because they're paranoid. When the party approaches, they send out a submarine to see if they're a legitimate threat. If so, they have on their payroll various privateer ships in the archipelago they can magically contact. The Ob's actions vary based on how well the party handled the Secrecy aspect of the planning montage.

Complete Victory. One of the pods sneaks up and plants a magical tracking device on the bottom of the PCs' ship's hull. The submarine tails them for a day until they get near Danor, where even the seas are part of the dead magic zone. It reports back to base, and the Ob perform more divinations. Eventually they realize who the



An Ob vessel tows the Cachalot into position for its subterfuge mission.

Sightseeing.

If the PCs take this opportunity to take a look at how things have developed on Axis Island since they left, warships patrol the waters near it. Should the party somehow get onto the island, they find excavations akin to those at the ziggurats, but on a much grander scale. Factories have sprung up around the Axis Fortress, assembling humanoid constructs for manual labor so that no menial workers will be exposed to the island's secrets. A lake is being drained, its feeding streams diverted so that in the coming months the giant Axis Seal can be unearthed. Security is extremely tight.

party is and where they're headed, so they give the *Cachalot* orders to follow the party's ship all the way to Vendricce.

Partial Victory. As above, but the Ob also sends two privateer ships to board the party's vessel and look for anything suspicious. This might provoke a fight, but it's not necessary.

Failure. The Ob wants to stop the party now, so they order the privateers and the *Cachalot* to attack.

Interception.

The route through the Yerasol Archipelago gets a bit dicey in a few spots, and every captain has his favored stations of passage. One such is a steep wooded island called Rivenstone. The trees here yield soft lumber, good for quick ship repairs but not long-term shipbuilding. There's even a large safe cove with sheltering rock walls, named Colmarr's Folly after a gnome ranger who sank his ship when he sailed too close and cracked his keel. The wreck lies split on either side of the cove's threshold.

In the predawn hours of the fourth day of their journey (89th Autumn), the party's ship passes near Rivenstone. Any PC with darkvision who is on lookout might notice one of the *Cachalot*'s pods sneaking up to the party's ship in the predawn hours by making a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. If the pod crew thinks they're undetected, they use the pod's mechanical arm to jam an enchanted metal spike into the bottom of the ship's hull; this spike acts as a beacon, making it easier for *Cachalot* to track the party's movements. Then, if the Ob has ordered a boarding or attack, they use the pod's mechanical arm to detach the party's ship's rudder.

If no PC noticed the pod, the party's crew realizes the rudder isn't working within a few minutes, by which point it has drifted away into the night. If the party spots the pod or is wary of sabotage, they might be able to get the rudder and start to reattach it. At best they'll get done just after sunrise, right as the privateers arrive.

Battle of Colmarr's Folly

Action. Tactical.

Two ironclad privateers attempt to board the party's vessel, while a submarine lurks nearby.

Two privateer ships – *Canis est Carnes* and *Amicus Selachii* – appear on the horizon and make for the party. Using semaphore, the privateers signal for the party to yield to boarding and search. Once the ships reach close range, the privateers prefer to board and force surrender rather than sink a valuable ship.

Naval Combat.

Escaping the privateers is only possible if the party's ship has its rudder intact. Even then, it's a long endeavor. Every eight hours can each make a DC 14 Dexterity (vehicle [water]) check to help navigate, aid the crew, trick the pursuers, or perhaps hide amid the archipelago. If at least half the party succeeds these checks, they get a victory. They have to rack up three victories to shake the privateers off their tails. If all the PCs fail, it negates one victory. If the party is already out of victories and then all PCs fail, the privateers catch up.

Canis est Carnes

- 28 privateer crewmembers
- 2 privateer officers
- Captain Jerrial

Amicus Selachii

- 22 privateer crewmembers
- 4 privateer officers
- Captain Auria

Cachalot

- 8 Obscurati marines
- Glaz du Sang Magie

Each privateer ship individually is an average encounter. Together they're a hard encounter. The *Cachalot* would be a hard encounter, though they withdraw if they don't win as fast as they'd like, so they're more like a challenging encounter. If the party is set upon by all the ships at once, it's equivalent to a very difficult epic encounter.

Terrain.

If the party has a rudder they can make for the cove, Colmarr's Folly, which presents a bottleneck for the privateers so they can only attack one at a time. First the *Canis* attacks, starting 100 feet away and closing 40 feet per round until it stops adjacent. The *Amicus* appears 8 rounds later, sailing up alongside the *Canis* and using it as a bridge to the party. The *Cachalot*'s pods flank the party and attack from the far side. Also, because the cove is only about 20 feet deep at its entrance, the *Cachalot* won't follow because its captain is wary of getting stuck. Of course, the party might simply get caught out in open water.

The *Cachalot* can detach its side pods, each 15 feet long with a hatch on top. If someone is inside to pilot, they have a speed of 50 feet underwater, or 20 feet on the surface.

Tactics.

The privateers aren't particularly clever. Jerrial, who wears *buccaneer's breastplate* so he can swim safely and walk on water, leads his crew in melee. Auria has two of her crew hold and load spare muskets for her as she fires from her ship's forecastle at anyone who's out of reach of the main crew. The officers use their fencing skills to try to dark around and make attacks on weaker opponents.

Aboard the *Cachalot*, Glaz watches through the periscope. Even if he has orders to attack the party, he's wary of risking his ship so he lets the privateers exhaust themselves first. Then he surfaces and pops the hatch so he can conjure an ice storm to trap the party's



ship. Four marines swim to the ice floe and climb aboard the party's ship, while the others pair up in the sub's pods. Each pod has one pilot and one man up top, shooting out of the hatch.

If more than half the marines are defeated, or if Glaz feels threatened, he orders a retreat. As many men as possible pile back into the sub, and then it submerges.

Privateer Crewmember

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8+2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws passive Perception 10

Skills Athletics +2, Vehicles (water) +3

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

ACTIONS

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

Privateer Officer

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 65 (10d8+20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws STR +4, DEX +5, WIS +2

Skills Athletics +4, Deception +4, Vehicles (water) +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The privateer officer makes three melee attacks: two with their rapier and one with their dagger. Or the privateer officer makes two ranged attacks with their pistol.

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

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

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

REACTIONS

Parry. The privateer officer adds 2 to their AC against one melee attack that would hit them. To do so, the privateer officer must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

EQUIPMENT

Gear. The privateer officer carries a *potion of greater healing* (heals 4d4+4 hp).



Captain Jerrial, *Canis*

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (*buccaneer's breastplate*)

Hit Points 112 (15d8+45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws STR +7, DEX +5, CON +6

Skills Athletics +10, Intimidation +5, Vehicles (water) +8

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Brave. Jerrial has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Jerrial hits with it (included in the attack).

Net Master. Jerrial does not have disadvantage on attack rolls with his net from being within an enemy's reach. In addition, he is able to make attacks with other weapons the same round he attacks with a net.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Jerrial attacks twice with his magic trident and once with his net or makes three melee attacks.

Magic Trident. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) piercing damage.

Net. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 5/15 ft., one target. *Hit:* If the target is Large or smaller it is restrained until it is freed. A restrained target or another creature within its reach can use its action to make a DC 10 Strength check to escape the net. Dealing 5 slashing damage to the net (AC 10) also frees a restrained target without harming it, ending the effect and destroying the net.

REACTIONS

Parry. Jerrial adds 2 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, he must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

EQUIPMENT

Gear. Jerrial carries a *potion of greater healing* (heals 4d4+4 hp).

Captain Auria, Amicus**Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil****Armor Class** 16 (studded leather)**Hit Points** 75 (10d8+30)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws DEX +7, CON +6, WIS +4**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Athletics +6, Deception +4, Insight +4, Perception +4, Sleight of Hand +7, Vehicles (water) +7**Senses** passive Perception 14**Languages** Common, Elvish**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)**Brave.** Auria has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.**Cunning Action.** On each of her turns, Auria can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.**Deadeye.** A firearm deals one extra die of its damage when Auria hits with it (included in the attack) and Auria ignores any cover but total cover when attacking with a firearm.**Evasion.** When Auria is subjected to an effect that allows her to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, she instead takes no damage if she succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if she fails.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** Auria attacks twice.**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4+4) piercing damage.**Musket.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d12+4) piercing damage.**REACTIONS****Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker that Auria can see hits her with an attack, she can use her reaction to halve the attack's damage against her.**Obscurati Marine****Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral****Armor Class** 15 (chain shirt)**Hit Points** 39 (6d8+12)**Speed** 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws DEX +5, CON +6, WIS +3**Skills** Athletics +4, Perception +4, Vehicles (water) +5**Senses** passive Perception 14**Languages** Common, Elvish**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)**Frost Bullets (10, 1/turn).** The Obscurati Marine's pistol attack deals cold damage instead of piercing damage.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The Obscurati Marine attacks twice. They can only attack once per round with their pistol.**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.**Pistol.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10+2) piercing damage.**REACTIONS****Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker that the Obscurati Marine can see hits them with an attack, they can use their reaction to halve the attack's damage against them.**Glaz du Sang Magie****Male humanoid (human), lawful neutral****Armor Class** 17 (*mage armor, ring of protection*)**Hit Points** 130 (20d8+40)**Speed** 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Dex +7, Wis +5, Cha +4**Skills** Athletics +2, Arcana +6, Insight +4, Perception +4**Senses** passive Perception 14**Languages** Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Sylvan**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)**Cold Training.** By spending a bonus action when he casts a spell that deals damage, Glaz can change the damage the spell deals to cold.**Focused.** Glaz has advantage on Constitution saving throws made to maintain concentration on a spell.**Sculpt Spells.** When Glaz casts an evocation spell that affects other creatures that he can see, he can choose a number of them equal to 1 + the spell's level. The chosen creatures automatically succeed on their saving throws against the spell, and they take no damage if they would normally take half damage on a successful save.**Spellcasting.** Glaz is an 8th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following spells prepared from the wizard's spell list:**Cantrips (at will):** *light, ray of frost, shocking grasp, true strike***1st level (4 slots):** *burning hands, color spray, magic missile, shield, thunderwave***2nd level (4 slots):** *blur, flaming sphere, invisibility, protection from arrows, scorching ray***3rd level (3 slots):** *dispel magic, fireball, protection from energy, slow, water breathing***4th level (2 slots):** *fire shield, ice storm, wall of fire***ACTIONS****Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.**Cold Blast.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10+3) cold damage.**EQUIPMENT****Gear.** Glaz carries a *ring of protection*.**Aftermath.**

If the party prevails, they sadly can't do much with the extra ships, though if they do manage to seize the *Cachalot* they might decide to trade up to the more advanced vessel. Glaz begs for mercy if defeated, and offers to give the party information about the Obscurati. He doesn't know much they aren't already aware of, but he can give them an idea of what's happening on Axis Island, and might even be willing to lie to the Ob via *sending*, telling them both the PCs' ship and his own sub sank, but that he found his way to an island and does not need rescue.



If the party is defeated and the GM wants to salvage the rest of the adventure, perhaps have them taken to Beaumont as prisoners, where they'd have a chance to escape. They'd probably have to board the train as coach passengers, but they'd still have a chance. If the GM thinks the PCs might enjoy owing a favor to the fey, they might be rescued at sea when the privateers are attacked by merfolk agents of **Beshela**, the archfey who appeared briefly in the first adventure as an ally of Duchess Ethelyn.

Entering Danor

Social. Montage.

Arriving in Beaumont, the party has a few days to get settled before the mission.

A ship riddled with cannon holes will raise a few eyebrows in the port of Beaumont, but luckily the Obscurati do *not* have allies everywhere, so the party can get into the city easily. A customs agent and his security staff briefly check the party's documents, then welcome them to Danor.

The PCs should get lodgings appropriate to their cover stories, and they might fill their time by visiting the local military academy Lamar University, attending an opera, or taking in a burlesque show. The city is smaller than Flint, with a thicker stench of industry hanging in the air, but it's full of people like any other. Most dislike Risuri, but they're hardly a faceless enemy nation.

Very little magic works in Danor, and so the city lacks any of the tiny magical flourishes found in every civilized part of Risur. But perhaps the biggest shift is the climate. Just a couple hundred miles north of Flint, Beaumont has no shelter against frigid arctic winds blowing south. While it hasn't begun to snow yet, the temperature drops near freezing at night, weather unheard of in Flint.

Needle in a Haystack

Social. Real-Time.

As hundreds of people board at the western terminus of the railroad, the party looks for suspicious characters.

Boarding: Bree, the Griento family, the PCs.

On the morning of the 11th of Winter, the party's train is set to depart at 7:30 a.m. (See map opposite and Appendix 1, page 33.)

The elaborate architecture of Beaumont's Western Station looms over you: seemingly drooping, heavy with stone depictions of the celestial bodies. Behind you, imposing in its vastness, a giant marble clock face some twenty feet in diameter gives accurate time down to the second. Brass numbers dictate the passage of each moment, an exacting feat of engineering that Danor has exported to most of the world.

In front of you is another of Danor's marvels: the Avery Coast train, a great behemoth of black iron, still somehow appearing sinuous as it stretches into the distance in front of you. Windows stud its length, and, at the far end, gray smoke belches out of the smokestack of the locomotive. This is the marvel that is said to have tamed the Malice Lands, and it is working to unite the continent into one grand economy. Brochures

announce that the railroad has proven that Danor can accomplish more with intelligence and manpower than most nations can accomplish with mystical secrets and genuflecting to gods.

The train hisses and steam spurts from its edge, casting a white haze over the platform and obscuring some of the other passengers waiting here. There is a whistle, and a man waves at the crowd, welcoming you aboard. He wears a brilliant red and yellow sash emblazoned with the symbol of the Avery Coast Line: a pair of train tracks, woven in an infinity symbol.

The waving man is the train's conductor, the amiable and boisterous **Xorin Marchand**, and when he realizes the party is traveling first class he beams at the chance to impress them. He offers to personally escort them to the rear of the train. Porters can take their luggage, and the whole group boards onto the lavish first class dining car, Car 19, while the crowd of coach passengers waits in line.

Xorin introduces the party to **Kov Marik** the first class chef and **Doris Gavagne** the piano player, then escorts them to their suite in Car 17. While the porters deposit their bags, Xorin encourages them to enjoy a complimentary breakfast in the dining car. The party might decline Xorin's tour so they can better watch who else boards the train, and he won't press the matter.

Exploring the Train.

The coach cars are about half-full with workers, and the second-class rooms are also about half-full with businessmen. Only one other suite in first class is occupied. If the party brings their tickets with them they have free run of everything from Car 10 on back, but the crew ask everyone to be in their assigned spaces when the train departs, to make sure they have an accurate count.

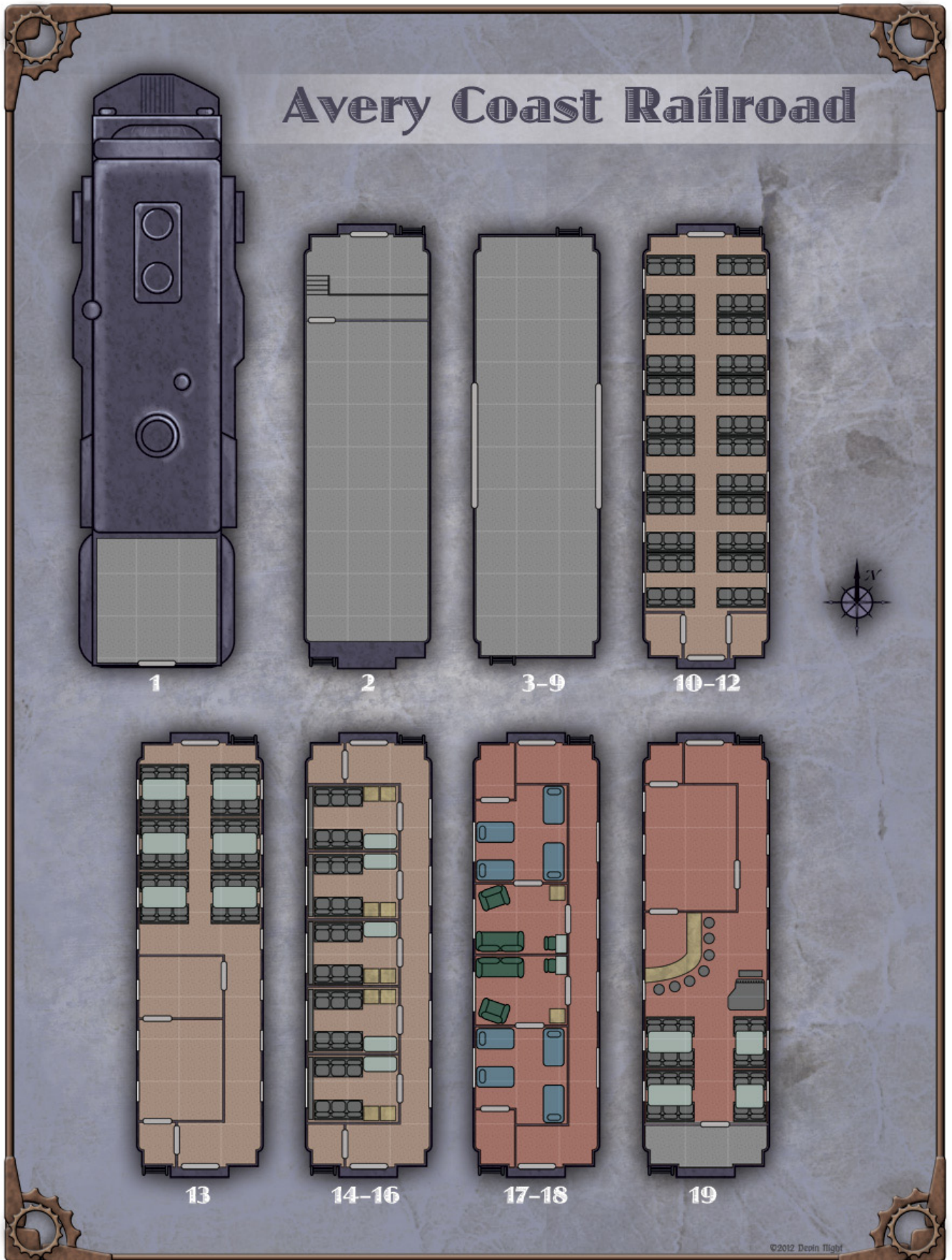
Among the hundreds of people on board, there are about forty in the second class rooms, and a family of four in the suite next to the party's. Of the former, only one makes an immediate impression.

Bree.

Brianne Kaldeckis, called "Bree," boards in a fairly sour mood, and if asked, she may confess that she has a friend who was supposed to board with her, who is now missing. Though she has a seat in Car 16, she sits in the first class lounge car, looking for Caius. She knows his mission was secret, though, so she won't give away many details. She's not terribly talkative, and if pressed tries to steer conversations to generic topics like travel and weather. Talking about the war does get her interested, and she's excited to hear how it looked from "the other side."

The Grientos.

A family of four Beran half-orcs is on board the Avery Coast line, riding it from one end to the other as a sightseeing trip. They are the Grientos, and behave very much like an archetypal tourist family. They are also very "new money," traveling in a first class that they are fairly inexperienced at handling gracefully. They board the train, and take up residence in the first class lounge, in awe of their environment. The husband, Damata, is particularly excitable and chatty, and he tries to strike up conversations about engineering, but hems and haws if anyone brings up sightseeing.





If the PCs haven't already noticed, Tarro the son makes a fuss about Bree's arm scars. Ejeka the wife apologizes and tries to get the boy to drop the topic, but Bree just smiles calmly and tells Tarro that if his sister's arm ever gets cut off, he should hold onto it in case they can sew it back on. This excites Tarro the son to no end, and causes Dabo the daughter to shriek. Damata becomes stricken at the thought of his children being hurt.

Last Check.

At 7:25 (a.m. and p.m.) train security guard **Malia Baccarin** makes a pass through the first class and second class sections, checking to make sure everyone's in their right section and no rabble snuck in from coach. The beautiful, dark-skinned woman stands out in Danor almost as much as the family of half-orcs.

Malia makes an offer to any men in first or second class, as well as women (like Bree) who look tough. She asks if they'll be staying with the train on to Trekhom. If so, it's traditional for distinguished guests to enjoy a 'safari' of sorts in the Malice Lands. They sit on the roof of the train with muskets, and with the guidance of the train's security personnel they can shoot at any malice beasts that come at the train. Malia's ulterior motive here is to figure out who might be a threat when her brigand allies attack in the Malice Lands. If anyone's interested, she offers to acquire fine rifles when they're in Cherage, for the low price of 100 gp apiece. See the Arms Dealers sidebar in Act Two for details.

Shortly after the security check, the clock tower outside the station booms out a tune on the half hour. There is a great snapping hiss heard throughout the train, and the behemoth vehicle lurches into action, metal squealing and clicking. The party can feel the train accelerating, slowly but steadily hauling its tons of cargo and passengers up to speeds unmatched except by magic. Beaumont glides past, and soon the scenery of pastoral Danor is flying by at 60 miles an hour.

Keskay

Social. Montage.

More suspects board at the city of Keskay.

Boarding: Elanor and Isobel, Verzubak, Boone.

The train stops about once an hour at different small cities, waiting just 10 minutes for people to board or disembark. No one else boards on first class, but the ranks of second class and coach shuffle gradually through the day. If you need help fleshing out impromptu social interactions between the PCs and these unimportant passengers, see Filler NPCs (page 35).

The train stops in the agricultural hub city of Keskay at 11:17 a.m. Outside the windows the party can see people gathered on the landing, and amid a crowd of unassuming human workers and businessmen, four people stand out.

Big Pimping.

The people attracting the most attention on the Keskey stop are a pair of travelers joined at the wrists by ornate bracelets of gold. One is Elanor Yanette, an immense woman, well-dressed in a flowing silken gown, with a constant expression of disdain on her jowls. She escorts a figure wrapped from head to toe in black fabrics, such that it's impossible to tell if it's a man or a woman. Even the eyes are hidden by dark gauze. This is Isobel, an eladrin woman who was raised by a Danoran family and has just turned twenty. Elanor is taking her to Nalaam, where she'll fetch a stunning price as a trophy wife.

Elanor leads Isobel, and the gazes of hundreds of curious onlookers follow them. The two board; while their luggage is taken to a suite in Car 18, they head straight for the first-class lounge. Elanor demands food. Isobel sits across from her and says nothing. Occasionally she starts to hum, but Elanor slaps her hand to silence her.

Isobel eats only food Elanor brought along, which is laced with drugs that dull the senses and willpower. She'll be allowed to sober up in Nalaam, to be presentable to buyers, but Elanor can't have her valuables running away. Elanor keeps Isobel veiled to hide that she's an eladrin woman, and forces her to wear multiple gold rings and necklaces so she can't teleport. She never lets Isobel leave her sight, and won't blink to kill anyone who tries to steal from her.

Lady's Man.

Another object of interest is Olivert Boone, a tall, refined-looking tiefling, dressed in a long leather coat, underneath which he wears an ostentatious red-velvet vest. His horns sprout through a rough hat that he wears to shield his eyes from the sun. He smiles charmingly at the two lovely, high-class looking women who have draped themselves around his shoulders. Once he has stowed his luggage (in Car 14), he makes straight for the common food car (Car 13). He proceeds to buy drinks for the two dozen people there, flirts with some women, and then heads to the first class lounge (Car 19), grinning at the jealous anger of his two lady friends.

Well, That Was Lucky.

Verzubak Tantalovich, a bleary-eyed and richly dressed dwarf, boards in the coach section (Car 10), then makes his way through crowded aisles to his seat in Car 15. As he is passing through the common dining car, there is a small outcry: a man has choked on a small nut and died. The PCs might investigate or learn later that the dead man was armed with a hidden, poisoned dagger, and he had a portrait in his pocket of a dwarf that sort of resembles Verzubak.

The death is an accident. Verzubak jostled the man in passing, causing him to choke, but it was not intentional. The dwarf is just that lucky, thanks to the power of a pair of magic dice he uses. The power is subtle, but it protects him even in Danor's dead magic zone.

Secret Mission.

Bree, Boone, and Verzubak all note each other, but don't interact. Someone hanging out in the first class lounge who makes a very good DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check can tell that the dwarf is ignoring the others a bit too studiously, but Boone and Bree are good enough liars not to give any tells unless the PCs engage them in close conversation.

Night in Cherage

Social. Real-Time.

It's much harder to keep an eye on suspects when they all get off the train for the night in the capital of Danor.

The train arrives in Cherage at 5:38 p.m. A few minutes later another train, heading west from Orithea, pulls up parallel to them. Both park for the night.

Fifteen minutes outside of Cherage, the train guard Malia asks everyone to please return to their seats to keep an eye on their personal effects. The enclaves are always busy, she says, and it's easy for thieves to hop on board in the commotion and nick unattended valuables.

The majestic capital city of Cherage looms on hills around the train station, casting deep purple shadows in the light of the setting sun. Already lights are beginning to turn the city into a shining wonder of wealth and prosperity. The hills shield the city proper from the smoke of its inland industries, but you can still smell soot on the wind.

The conductor and various security staff have repeatedly reminded you of Cherage's curfew for visitors, often pointing out tall buildings that show the scars of old fires. Because the Workers' Riots a generation ago nearly burned the city to the ground, now only those few citizens with proper passes are allowed to travel between city districts after sunset. But you are welcome to enjoy the fine dining and entertainments of the rail enclave.

Cherage is the capital of Danor, built on several hills around a bay. Streets are lit by gas lamps that reflect off the high windows. Cheragans are so fond of. Different districts are separated more by elevation and architecture than by actual walls or gates. Police have the authority to ask for identity papers of anyone, and if you're found outside your "home district" at night, they'll arrest you. The party's train tickets count as a permit for the railroad enclave, which consists of a few city blocks ringed by a 20-foot wall. The wall is more of a reminder than a blockade: it has many gaps, holes, and unlocked gates that those determined to break curfew can use to get into the rest of the city.

The enclave itself has one cheap hotel for coach passengers and a fancier hotel the party will stay in, located on opposite sides of the train tracks. A handful of cheap bars, one fancy bar, two theaters, four restaurants, and a somewhat conservative dance hall cater to passengers, staying open well past midnight. Other buildings of note include a police station, the office of the city's transportation authority, and a few touristy museums.

The PCs are welcome to sleep in their suite on the train, but most everyone else goes to the hotels.

Getting Into Trouble.

The various suspicious passengers go about their own affairs at night, and the party might decide to follow one or split up to keep tabs on multiples. See the *Tailing a Suspect* skill challenge (page 8) for guidelines.

The enclave police are equipped to deal with mundane threats, not highly-trained spies and spellcasters, but when the party gets into trouble they can call for reinforcements – enough men with



carbines and pistols should be sufficient to get even PCs to stand down. If the party just comes quietly, the cops will let them go for a small bribe (10 gp apiece). If the party fights back, they might end up tossed in an oubliette and held until the Danorans figure out their secret identity.

Should the party raise red flags but escape, or if they piss off the wrong people, the next morning the police come on the train and insist on searching the party and confiscating any weapons or magic items they find, calling them evidence. They happily explain that the party is free to stay in town and file the proper paperwork to have the items returned to them after the investigation is over.

Of course, the same goes for other travelers, so the party's suspects aren't eager to start a fight.

The Grientos.

The family go to a few children-friendly buildings in the enclave, with Damata listing off interesting factoids about construction, engineering, and mathematics to educate his children ("these arches are fascinating constructs, each one using only gravity, placed on a single keystone to keep the entire building erect!", "This building was constructed in the early age after the Great Malice, by a governor who wanted to pay homage to his dead wife, whose stone portraiture makes up the columns...", etc.).

As the family returns to the hotel, however, they cross paths with a group of drunken militia members who are traveling coach. They

sling insults, slurs, and half-full bottles at the foreigners. The group claims that all Berans are savages, especially the orcs, and that they deserve only to be enslaved for their own good. Damata attempts to herd his family away from the belligerents, but his daughter Dabo starts crying and runs straight at them (in orcish culture, girl's temper tantrums tend to be aggressive). If the party doesn't intervene, Dabo gets savagely beaten and kicked before she can be pulled away, and Tarro receives a black eye after biting one of the militia members' ankles.

If the party intervenes, the militia members aren't a real threat (use the standard statistics for **Guards**), but a scuffle will draw attention of the police, who'll side with the militia.

Elanor and Isobel.

Elanor meets with two Cherage town guard after disembarking the train, and an hour later, after she gets settled in her hotel room, they return with a travel permit to a wealthy district. She heads out, with Isobel in tow and the guards as protection, and eventually comes to a rather opulent manor house high upon a hill. She is greeted warmly at the door, and is welcomed inside.

Her host, a high-ranking bureaucrat named **Bucher Monmarl**, flatters Elanor and adores Isobel, hoping to curry favor so some day he might benefit from the woman's fleshmongering. A few more guests arrive and share a small banquet. Getting a close look would be very tough, but it would yield the purpose of Elanor's trip.





The Bodyguards.

Bree, Verzubak, and Boone travel independently but act in concert. They all get rooms in the fancy hotel, and then stagger their departure. The plan is for Boone to go to leave around 8 p.m., being flamboyant, flirting with women in the hotel lobby, and overall attracting attention. He heads to the 'cheap' hotel, where he convinces a 16-year-old woman to come with him to the enclave's fanciest bar, *L'Wabe du Fonne*. Five minutes behind him, Bree leaves her room and heads to the same bar. Verzubak, who has been sitting in the hotel lobby fiddling with dice and a notebook, watches both people to see if anyone follows them. Then, five minutes later, he goes to the same bar.

If the PCs follow either Boone or Bree, Verzubak notices them if their "Stay Hidden" check (see *Tailing a Suspect*, page 8) does not beat DC 18. If they are trying to Stay Hidden from Verzubak, they only have to beat DC 14.

The bar is busy enough that the trio can all spend time there without crossing paths. Bree nurses a drink, Boone chats up this evening's lady, and Verzubak plays the stereotypical Drakran dwarf, drinking, buying drinks, and laughing at people's jokes. He plays a lot of dice, losing mostly, but winning big once to recoup his stake.

At 9 p.m., Verzubak booms out a toast that quiets the room, offering to buy a round if everyone will listen to him for just a minute. His toast is a signal to the other two.

- *If he saw no one following either:* "To those we trust in, and to those who earn our trust. May alcohol forever help bring us together!"
- *If someone was following Boone:* "To adventure, and never waking up in the same town twice. Or at least not in the same bed!"
- *If someone was following Bree:* "To the owners of this fine establishment, who will soon be taking a lot of money from me. You give us drink; we give you this toast!"
- *If both Boone and Bree were followed:* "To the train, which unifies this continent, and to all the lovely people aboard it who will be sleeping off their hangovers tomorrow!"
- *If he personally is being followed:* "All of you care so much for free drinks that you'll listen to a foreigner ramble on, so I suppose I must toast myself! To Verzubak Tantalovich!" (This one elicits laughing boos.)

If Verzubak suspects the PCs of following him, Boone, or Bree, he approaches them right after this toast and buys them a drink, then suggests they play a game of dice. This lets his accomplices know who to look out for. After that, the dwarf's job for the night is done. He keeps a wary eye out for clues, but mostly just tries to help everyone have a good time. At 11 p.m. he joins a small crowd who head out to watch a burlesque show.

Sneaking Out.

A few minutes after Verzubak's toast, Boone suggests he and his young lady friend should find some place private. Boone offers some high-spirited shouts to the other beautiful women around the room, but then he and his friend leave the bar and head out of the rail enclave. They sneak through one of the gates, avoiding any guards. Then they stop in an alleyway and have some private time.

Perhaps ten minutes later, Bree finishes her drink and leaves discreetly. She takes a different route out of the enclave, using an official travel pass to get past the guards. But then she takes a path that goes right past Boone's alley. If anyone followed her, and managed to get out of the enclave, Boone tries to disrupt their pursuit when they come past by stumbling into them, pretending to be drunker than he is, and threatening to challenge them to pistols at dawn. This distraction gives Bree a chance to shake the party, and counts as one failed "keeping up" check.

If the PCs aren't simply following the same streets Bree takes, Boone won't spot them. He's busy, after all.

Bree's Rendezvous.

Bree goes to a carriage depot and hires a ride. In the post-curfew streets of Cherage, following her will be challenging, but she goes to the Sovereign's mansion even if she knows she's being pursued. More and more police roam the streets as the party nears the capital district where all the major government buildings are. The Sovereign's mansion itself has a wide, flat lawn surrounding it, and numerous soldiers guard the walls.

Getting this close ought to yield enough information, but there is almost no chance the party will be able to follow Bree to the actual meeting. The grounds of the mansion are studded with stones gathered from Methia, the former capital of the old holy empire of the Clergy, abandoned after the Great Malice. These stones nullify magic entirely, with the one exception of tieflings' *infernal wrath* power. Spellcasters might be able to scrape by elsewhere in the country, carrying their own mana with them, but here they are powerless.

Inside the mansion, Bree meets with Luc and Ottavia, who did not know about her or Caius. Sovereign Han Jierre, who is one of the heads of the entire Obscurati and knew Caius, makes the connection and tasks Bree with helping keep Luc safe on his journey. They spend the next few hours discussing plans, and then Bree heads back to the rail enclave.

Extracurricular Activity.

After Bree passes Boone, he feels his job for the evening is done. He takes his lady to an even more secluded spot, then stabs her through her heart. He takes her hair and uses it as a brush to coat his demonic pistol, then spends a few minutes disemboweling her. He stretches her limbs spread-eagle, places her liver in her right hand, her heart in her left, then pulls her intestines into a ring around her. When he's finished he walks away, and slowly the blood coating him is absorbed into the pistol, turning the metal crimson. It slowly fades over the coming day.

If the PCs won't give him privacy, he abandons his plan, and is surly the entire next day as the demon in his gun urges him to kill.

If interrupted during the act, Boone flees frantically, trying to hide his face. If cornered or if he knows he's been identified, he fights back. If he gets away, though, he makes a point of finding a police station and reporting that he was attacked by a group of thugs, led by a man with spiky white hair. He claims the woman he left the bar with was taken, and he was left in an alley. The cops eventually find the woman's body, and assume Boone is just a victim.



If he is not interrupted, Boone returns to his hotel and sleeps soundly. The next morning there's talk about a woman brutally murdered in the night, but no one links her to the tiefling gunslinger. Boone will repeat this procedure every night throughout the journey until he's caught. He's careless on the first night, killing someone he's been seen with, but from then on he picks up strangers and performs his ritual sacrifice with somewhat more discretion.

Eventually, if the PCs don't manage to catch Boone first, Bree figures out what he's been doing and tries to punish him. That's detailed in the scene Three Milestones (Act Three).

Mister Mapple.

At some point later in the evening, perhaps as the PCs are returning to their hotel room, a grinning man darts past them, apparently enjoying himself. The shabby-looking gentleman wears nothing but a long coat with patches and holes, and he smells pungently of bath oils. Four enclave guards chase after him, but the stranger is faster. It takes only a few moments for him to sprint to the bridge over the train tracks and jump down onto the train, not even breaking stride. He tumbles and rolls to the far side of the train, out of sight.

This is Andrei von Recklinghausen. If the PCs inquire, they learn that the man came to the front counter of the hotel, introduced himself as "Mister Mapple," and asked if anyone was staying in the top floor Mayoral Suite. When he learned no one was, he walked outside and was spotted climbing up the side of the building (he had pants on at that point.)

It took half an hour for the hotel to decide to send people up, and they found him bathing in the suite's tub. He shoved his way past the guards with ease, and actually seemed to take it slow on the stairs down, like he was enjoying being chased. The cops figure there's no use looking for him now.

Mister Mapple, for his part, sneaks onto the train, steals some clothes from random people's luggage, and heads for Car 6. He peels open the wooden paneling on a box of silver religious artifacts that has a lot of cloth padding. He shifts the contents into other boxes and crates, then uses the box as his bed. He sleeps with one eye open.

Into the Malice Lands

Exposition. Montage.

The railroad heads into an inhospitable region of wild magic.

Boarding: Cardiff Hengehill, Luc Jierre, Ottavia Sacredote.

Once again, the train is set to leave at 7:30 a.m. First- and second-class passengers can have porters bring their luggage down from the hotel. If the party got into any trouble the night before, the police might show up around 6:30 a.m. to question them and search their suite. Conductor Xorin is aghast that his first-class travelers might be inconvenienced, and so he can manage to keep the party out of jail as long as they don't fight back.

If Boone was unmasked, he tries to sneak back aboard the train. He's taken a ton of precautions, so unless the party explicitly keeps an eye out for him around the cargo cars, he manages to stow away on board. Once he gets to Orithea he'll buy an illusory disguise and pick his mission back up where he left off.

New Passengers.

As the party gets back aboard, they notice Malia the train guard followed by a pair of men carrying a huge chest marked with the logo of a prominent gun manufacturer. These are the rifles she's acquired for the safari. She orders the men to load them into the first class lounge car's supply room.

Just then a tall handsome man with a briefcase strapped to his wrist by a leather cord – Cardiff Hengehill – pushes through the crowd, grabs Malia by the arm, and drags her aside for a private conversation. She shakes free of his grasp, but remains professional as she quietly tells him she'll give him a letter later with details on the meeting she has arranged. Cardiff walks off to Car 14 without a word.

A bit later, a very unusual pair arrives at first class: a flat-faced tiefling man with an air of boredom about him walks arm-in-arm with a sternly beautiful elf woman. Geometric tattoos are visible along her hands and neck, and any PC that succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes as marks of an oracle of the Clergy. They are both dressed in quite high fashion, and their luggage is carried on by private servants. Onlookers are abuzz with speculation about them.

Elanor Yanette recognizes Luc Jierre, and gossips loudly that he has a reputation as something of a shut-in, since he hasn't been seen in town for a few years. The woman, she opines to anyone who is still listening, is clearly a bought bride, and she insinuates that she would have arranged a better pairing.

Just before Luc and the elf woman get on the train, the woman (Ottavia) waves her hands in very precise gestures. Luc pauses, responds with a few gestures of his own, and the woman laughs. She makes one more volley of hand signals, and then Luc thanks the porters, stuttering, "Th-th-the lady s-s-says th-th-thank you." Then they head for their suite in Car 18.

In the very unlikely situation that a PC understands Crisillyiri sign language (it's only recently been developed), Ottavia asked if Luc was nervous, and he said that he's ridden the train plenty of times. If the party was hoping to eavesdrop, they're out of luck.

Across the Border.

Throughout the day the party can cross paths with other guests in the lounge car. The train goes through a city every hour or so, until finally at 4:51 p.m. it reaches a station at the base of a hilltop fort. This marks the border between Danor and the Malice Lands. Numerous soldiers disembark, leaving the coach section fairly empty. A boisterous band greets them, creating a festive atmosphere for a few minutes before the train moves on.

The air tingles and seems to shift temperature and humidity based on one's emotions (hence why the fort tries so hard to keep its troops spirits up). Outside the train, the terrain south of the track is a bog with jagged rocks rising out of it; to the north is a flat sheet of ice with cactuses sticking out of it.

Malia the train guard comes through and reminds people that while magic can work, because of the risks it poses they must insist that none be used until the train reaches Orithea. An assistant with her begins moving all the clocks on the train forward one hour. They've entered a new time zone.



Safari Time!

Malia starts rounding up people who were interested in shooting at malice beasts. She hands out rifles to those who are interested, then leads people up to the roof of Car 19. Malia's comfortable walking up top, but she suggests everyone else sit down and plant their feet on the lip along the edge. If anyone falls, the train can stop, but the conductor will be furious for being made late.

The train slows to a leisurely 20 miles per hour (150 feet per round). This afternoon's safari will be brief – the train's schedule can only spare about half an hour – but tomorrow they'll have a couple hours. A keg of beer and pitchers of hot spiced cider are provided to make for a pleasant experience even if no monsters show up.

Feel free to choose a few creatures with appropriate challenge ratings, mostly natural or elemental beasts, and “monsterize” them with wretched malformations. Some just loiter a few hundred feet away. Some heard the train coming and roar as it rolls past, or charge after it, trying to leap onto its side and climb up. Malia just laughs, confident people in and on the train are safe.

Shooters.

In addition to any PCs who get involved, Bree, Boone, Cardiff, and both Damata Griento and his son Tarro want a crack at the monsters. Cardiff transfers the cord of his briefcase to his ankle instead of his wrist, so it won't bother his shooting. Malia and four other train guards also have rifles, but they don't shoot unless a monster looks like it might be an actual threat.

After the group fires off a few dozen shots, people spot a figure standing atop Car 6, shouting at them and waving a crowbar in the air in frustration. This is Mister Mapple, whose afternoon nap was ruined by all the racket. The PCs should be able to recognize his coat. A few guards go to try to get him down, but he ducks back into one of the cargo cars and hides.

Aurora over Orithea

Exploration/Social. Montage.

As the train stops for the second night, the party can observe suspicious movements of the enemy.

The train arrives in Orithea at 6:04 p.m. The train coming from Trekhom has already arrived.

The evening sky is streaked with the brilliant colors of gold, violet, red, and blue. More than just a sunset, the heavens warp and change the sun's light into an aurora, painting the sky with streaks of iridescent, chaotic color and ribbons of ethereal light.

Like the day before, fifteen minutes outside of Orithea the train guard Malia asks everyone to please return to their seats to keep an eye on their personal effects. The enclaves are always busy, she reminds you, and it's easy for thieves to hop on board in the commotion and nick unattended valuables.

As you roll into Orithea you can spot people mingling atop the odd wobbling spires that rise above so many of the buildings in this city. Almost no structures have straight edges. Out on the coast, even the beam cast by a lighthouse seems to curve on its way out to sea.

Then you enter the Danoran-operated rail enclave, and it's all perpendicular and parallel lines. The layout here is the same as every other nightly stop, with one fancy hotel, one common hotel, and plenty of entertainment. But there's no curfew like in Cherage, and out there await the oddities of Orithea, this one safe oasis in the Malice Lands.

Orithea's city center is smaller than Cherage, but dozens of idiosyncratic suburban farming towns surround it. Once you get outside the rail enclave there are a few places that tourists tend to gather. A series of high towers on hills north of the city give spectacular views of the constant aurora, and the Night Market near the docks is full of crafters hawking their wares and spellcasters promising safe rituals in the dim orange-green light.

In the enclave, the entertainment is much tamer than in Cherage. Lounge singers backed by strings and pianos are popular; one theater puts on an elaborate puppet show. A museum tells the history of the Malice Lands, with a prominent exhibit presenting relics of the first “Malice State,” Pala, founded by the philosopher William Miller shortly after the Great Malice. Daring travelers can sign up for an overnight trek outside the stable zone, to ruins north of the city, which are seeded with kitschy fake relics of a “lost civilization.”

Law Enforcement.

Standards are much laxer in Orithea than Cherage, and the city is more welcoming of weirdoes and foreigners. If the party causes trouble and gets caught, the city doesn't want to hold onto prisoners if it can just ship them out, so the party will be held overnight, then escorted to the train by a large complement of guards who ensure the group leaves town.

The Grientos.

The family takes in a puppet show until 8 p.m., then heads to a high tower near the center of town – not as good a view as the north hill towers, but a safer spot to watch the aurora. Plus, there's a restaurant. Dabo claims to be a vegetarian, and Tarro ends his meal early to crawl beneath the table, but by and large the night is uneventful. Damata leaves a hefty tip after the meal, and has a romantic dance with Ejeka (much to Dabo and Tarro's disgust).

Elanor and Isobel.

Elanor leaves the hotel at 7 p.m. for the Night Market, Isobel as always at her side. Unbeknownst to her, Mister Mapple follows her, and the party might cross his path if they're also watching Elanor.

Other shoppers give Elanor a wide berth. She visits a small apothecary that deals in potions of charm and domination, where she purchases a few. On her way back to the rail enclave, Mister Mapple steps into her path and tries to engage Isobel in conversation, reciting a love poem about a troll and a princess, all the while ignoring Elanor. Isobel is too dazed to respond coherently. Mister Mapple tries to pull aside the veils covering her face. Elanor reacts by reaching for her spell components, but Mister Mapple grabs her wrist and squeezes. He asks if she's willing to risk fighting him here. Elanor screams for help, playing on the idea that she might be a helpless old woman. At the sudden attention, Mapple backs away, then runs, leaps, and clambers up to a rooftop, out of sight.



Cardiff.

Cardiff takes a carriage to a very luxurious restaurant on top of one of the aurora observing towers, called *Brilliance*. He lets it be understood that he spends profligately and tips generously, and he uses this to get a window seat, where he orders a fine steak and dines completely alone.

During his leisurely meal, Cardiff studies a Dwarven phrasebook, and he seems to be preparing for a business meeting. Cardiff leaves the restaurant shortly after his meal, and goes to one of the fancier inns in town for the night, but not one inside the enclave. He is never without his briefcase.

Malia.

Malia lingers at the train as many of the other militia members depart. When they ask her to attend, she confesses that she's worried about some of the freight, and is staying behind to check up on it. She searches the cargo cars and eventually spots Mister Mapple's little nest in the box that once held silver church icons. Malia does not report the disturbance.

She heads to the Night Market. She makes contact with an old witch who offers potions and trinkets. Malia knows the witch, though, and the two of them leave for a nearby inn, where they descend to a basement. Malia pays 75 gold pieces for the witch to use *sending* to contact brigands in the Malice Lands. Tomorrow those brigands will rob the train.

The message is, "Train arrives at nine. Four guards at front. Six guards at caboose, eight hundred feet back. Target car six. Barricade six hundred feet from monster."

Afterward, Malia goes to the *Effervescent Cup* back in the enclave, where she meets her fellow train guards.

Mister Mapple.

The stowaway has become intrigued by Isobel, whom he sees as a prisoner. His romantic streak manifests in a stalker-ish way, and he follows her and Elanor to the Night Market, as mentioned above. After Elanor gets him to back off, he flees back to the enclave, climbs the outside wall of the hotel and breaks into Elanor's hotel suite. He finds one of Elanor's bags of drugs and alchemicals to dull the mind, and he concocts a plan, which he'll enact in Trekhom.

Luc's Crew.

Boone, Bree, and Verzubak repeat the procedure from the night before, with just a few adjustments. After everyone gets settled in their rooms, Bree goes by their rooms and Luc and Ottavia's room. She slips a note under the door, explaining what route she wants that particular person to take, but she makes no mention of the others, so that the letter won't by itself reveal they're all working together.

At 7:30 p.m., Bree goes to the *Effervescent Cup*. Shortly thereafter, Boone picks up a lady from the fancy hotel and hangs out with her on the route between the hotel and the bar – they make out on the bridge over the train tracks.

Verzubak waits behind, playing dice with one of the enclave guards and writing mathematic equations in his notebook. Luc and Ottavia go to the concierge desk, and Luc stutteringly asks for

Reactions of Luc's Crew.

The bodyguards try to use the same tactic every night to prevent Luc and Ottavia being followed. If one of the bodyguards is unavailable—most likely Boone—the others follow as much of the plan as possible. If two of them are out, the one remaining bodyguard just tries to keep watch and slow down pursuers.

If the bodyguards notice the party following once, they'll be suspicious, but they don't immediately conclude the party is spying on them. If the PCs are spotted more than once, though, the bodyguards will look to Ottavia for guidance. Using the Obscurati guideline of maintaining secrecy first, she will tell everyone to stay as close to the train as possible and do nothing that will give the spies any more information. Luc will ask the conductor to contrive a ruse that will make the party vacate their suite and catch the next train. If that still doesn't work, they'll simply wait patiently until the train has passed Nalaam to eliminate the threat (as detailed in Three Milestones in Act Three).

If the PCs ever directly attack Luc's bodyguards, all who are present defend each other with lethal force. Survivors will demand the PCs be thrown off the train or arrested. Note that while it might make sense for Luc to just leave this train and catch the next day's, doing so will cause the party to miss out of most of the side plots that resolve in Nalaam.

If the PCs are sufficiently discreet, though, Luc's crew won't suspect anything until Ottavia receives a *sending* in Trekhom.

advice on a few bars in the area. Then they too head out, Luc carrying a large case that contains his lantern. They pass Boone, who keeps an eye out to see if anyone's watching them. Then Verzubak follows from the hotel.

At the bar, once again they use toasts to signal whether they're being followed. In addition to the ones before (see page 25), they also use:

- **If Verzubak saw Luc and Ottavia followed:** Verzubak toasts, "To meeting strangers, and realizing that you only want to kill about half the people you meet!"
- **If Boone saw Luc and Ottavia followed:** Boone toasts, "I don't want to detract from my own great time, but I just want everyone to raise a glass to my fellow tiefling. He looks a little nervous being out of Danor, so let's show him a good time, ah? Cheers!"

Sneaking Out.

As in Cherage, Boone sneaks out with his lady friend. He plants himself in a spot on the way to the Night Market. Ten minutes later Bree departs and heads for the docks, where she pays a handful of dockers to do her a favor, then sits and watches the aurora over the sea.

Finally Luc and Ottavia excuse themselves and head out. They take a route past Boone, into the Night Market, then to a carriage depot. They hire a carriage for the evening and head to the docks, past Bree, toward the city's lighthouse.

If anyone is following them to the Night Market, Boone will again do his "stumble and get angry" trick to slow the pursuers. If the party follows them to the docks, Bree has her hired dockers



delay the party by dropping and shattering crates in the road just after Luc and Ottavia's carriage goes by. If the party's in a carriage of their own, they won't be able to get through the mess and will have to detour around it.

Once Bree's confident Luc and Ottavia are not being followed, she rendezvouses with them at the lighthouse.

Boone's Next Murder.

After his job is done, Boone takes his lady to an inn, sleeps with her, then slips out. He finds a random woman of the evening, takes her to an alley, and ritually sacrifices her to his pistol, just like in Cherage. The next morning, people again are talking about rumors of a second grisly murder, which leads to suspicions that the killer might be on the train.

Luc & Ottavia.

Luc and Ottavia follow Bree's plan to avoid being observed, but their ultimate goal is to present Luc's invention to a local Obscurati cell leader in Orithea. They meet on a small spit of land that juts into the harbor, at a small support building adjacent to the city's lighthouse, where a crowd of 20 armed guards greet their carriage.

Inside, a wealthy architect named **Hanse Randall** watches Luc show off his lantern, and then magic-using assistants ask questions about how it works, how to recreate it, and how to scale it up to lighthouse size. During the course of these questions, a small accident occurs. The wild magic of the Malice Lands causes the lantern to surge with excess power while burning oil infused with the essence of Mavisha. At exactly 10:14 p.m., every fire in the city is transformed into water, leaving the city lit only by the aurora. Simultaneously, a patch of sea around the lighthouse bursts into flames for a moment.

People in Orithea treat this sort of oddity like people living near a fault line would react to a minor earthquake. There's caution, but no one's too worried.

The Screaming Malice

Action. Tactical.

Train robbers strike while a towering monster distracts the guards.

The train leaves Orithea at 7:30 a.m. The complement of first-class suites stays the same, and no one of consequence boards in second class. As in Cherage, if Boone is on the run, he sneaks on board in coach.

As soon as the train's out of Orithea, Malia invites interested parties back up onto the roof of the lounge car for another round of shooting at helpless malice beasts. The same group as before shoots – Bree, Boone, Cardiff, Damata and Tarro Griento (Cardiff again attaches his briefcase strap to his ankle instead of his wrist) – plus 6 of the train's guards. The terrain changes rapidly, and creatures obediently show up and die. This goes on until 9 a.m., when a gang of brigands spring their surprise.

They have laid a huge barricade of logs and explosives atop the rails east of the edge of a swamp, which is home to a horrible psychic monster called a screaming malice. When the train emerges from



the swamp's fog, engineer Steeg sees the barricade and pulls on the brakes. Just as Malia predicted, the train manages to stop 100 feet from the barricade. The monster will spring from the swamp and attack the middle and rear of the train, giving the bandits easy access to the freight cars at the front of the train.

Great Train Robbery.

As the train is passing through a fog-filled swampy region, the train lurches and its brakes begin to screech. Everyone on the roof must make a DC 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall off the side of the train. Those already seated are safe. The train travels 200 feet before stopping.

Just as the train screeches to a stop, a deafening chorus of roars sounds from the fog. The screaming malice rises from the swamp north of Car 10 and attacks.

- 1 screaming malice
- Rodinn, Malice bandit captain
- 8 Malice bandit riders
- 9 Malice beast steeds (treat as warhorses)

Terrain.

The encounter is roughly divided into a swamp section to the west and a desert section to the east, with the train running eastward through them. At the start of the encounter, Cars 1 to 8 are in the desert, Cars 9 to 19 are in the swamp. The boulder barricade the bandits set up is 50 feet east of the locomotive (Car 1). This barricade is just an illusion, created by the bandit leader Rodinn. Clever PCs might notice that the nearby terrain of swamp and desert would not suffice to provide enough boulders.



The screaming malice appears north of Car 10. The assumed course of events is that the PCs make their way down the train to the screaming malice, then fight it off, save passengers from its spawn, or rush onward to the locomotive, to get the train moving. Use the timeline below to keep track of what happens up until when the PCs intervene in a particular location.

Timeline.

Front of train.

- **Round One.** Bandits ride in. Chief guard Vodyarika Lerkem leads 3 other guards to the locomotive.
- **Rounds Two to Five.** Bandits jump their steeds onto the locomotive. They dismount and fire pistols while the steeds claw and bite. They kill one guard per round. Guards knock out one bandit each round. Engineer Steeg surrenders.
- **Round Six.** Bandits stabilize their wounded, who remain as rear flank.
- **Rounds Seven to Ten.** Bandit captain and four bandits remount and ride to Car 6.
- **Rounds Ten to Twelve.** Bandits shoot Mister Mapple, who tries to drive them off. He's left for dead, but will regenerate.
- **Rounds Thirteen to Twenty.** Bandits steal items of value from Car 6.
- **Rounds Twenty-One to Thirty.** If no one from rear of train is approaching, bandits quickly grab valuables in Cars 3, 4, and 5. They ride away as soon as they see trouble approaching.

Middle of train.

- **Round One.** If any characters are near the front of the train, they may see a lump rising in the black, swampy water below the bridge. The tumescent growth rises, brackish water cascading off of it, revealing something slick, black, and tarry reflecting the dim sunlight. Something like a tentacle shoots suddenly out of it, smashing through the windows of Car 10. Other tendrils – actually long necks capped by amorphous, reptilian heads – rise up and begin to scream.
- **Round Two.** The head in Car 10 detaches, and the neck pulls back out. A new head regrows. The original head, still screaming, splits apart into four whip-tailed drakes called malice spawn. These begin to kill the passengers.
- **Rounds Three to Fourteen.** Each round, the screaming malice moves about half a car-length toward the back of the train. On odd-numbered rounds the malice reaches a new car, then smashes through windows with its head. Every even numbered round it detaches the head, creating new spawn. If not stopped, it reaches Car 16 in round thirteen.
- **Round Fifteen.** The screaming malice withdraws into the swamp, and its spawn leave the train. They'll merge with their original body, and thus feed the malice.

Rear of train.

- **Round One.** People see the screaming malice rise up. The guards are dumbfounded. Tarro Griento screams, and Malia feigns terror as well. Cardiff detaches his briefcase from his ankle, considers attaching it to his wrist, but decides he needs both mobility and free hands to shoot.

- **Round Two.** Malia yells for the other guards to go help, and says she'll make sure the first-class passengers are safe. She climbs down into the lounge car. Bree and Boone meet gazes, and she nods downward, implying they need to protect Luc.
- **Round Three.** Damata drags his son down the ladder, and heads into Car 18, shouting warnings as he runs to get his family in Car 17. Bree also climbs down, and she stops outside Luc and Ottavia's suite, banging on the door. Boone heads to the connection between Cars 17 and 18, keeping an eye on the monster. Verzubak and a lot of other people flee from the second class suites toward the rear of the train.

The above people stay at these locations until the end of the encounter, unless the PCs get them to move.

The other six guards start to nervously approach the screaming malice along the train's roof. Cardiff grabs four of the rifles discarded by Damata, Boone, Bree, and Tarro, and he follows the guards.

- **Rounds Four to Eight.** Cardiff and the guards advance one car every two rounds, eventually stopping at Car 16.
- **Rounds Nine to Twelve.** Cardiff and the guards fire at the screaming malice. They deal a combined 24 damage per round to it.
- **Round Thirteen.** With the monster only one car away, Cardiff and the guards run back toward the end of the train.

See the table below to track how many spawn and casualties there are, and how much damage the guards have dealt with their rifles, when the PCs finally engage the monster. Make a note of how many casualties there are in this fight; it will affect the party in the encounter *Three Milestones* (Act Three).

MALICE SPAWN CASUALTIES

Round	Malice Location	# of Spawn	Casualties
1	Car 10	0	0
2	Car 10	2	0
3	Car 11	2	2
4	Car 11	4	4
5	Car 12	4	8
6	Car 12	6	12
7	Car 13	6	18
8	Car 13	8	24
9	Car 14	8	32
10	Car 14	10	40
11	Car 15	10	50
12	Car 15	10	60
13	Car 16	10	70
14	Car 16	10	80
15	Departs	10	80

Tactics.

The screaming malice feeds on intense emotions, and the bandits lured it to this swamp with a ritual and a sacrifice. When it senses the unease of the passengers on the train (due to the sudden braking), it approaches to eat. Its screams acts as a psychic aura

The Suspects.

If the PCs think to check on the NPCs during this encounter, here's what they're doing:

- **Luc and Ottavia** stay locked in their suite in Car 18.
- **Bree** guards Car 18.
- **Boone** waits on roof between Car 17 and Car 18.
- **Verzubak** heads for Car 19.
- **The Grientos** stay in Car 17, arguing over whether to hide or run.
- **Elanor and Isobel** stay locked in their suite in Car 18.
- **Mr. Mapple** fights off bandits, gets shot and left for dead, regenerates.
- **Cardiff** leads train guards to shoot the monster.
- **Malia** waits in Car 19, trying to keep passengers from fleeing into the swamp.

to heighten people's emotions, and its spawn wreak havoc inside the train, causing panic and capturing actual flesh (terror is a fine *apéritif*, but flesh and blood are the main course).

When the PCs get within its field of view, or if any PCs attack it or its spawn, it is attracted by the rare taste of heroism. The malice spawn break off from killing passengers, and they rush the party – some through the train cars, others along the top. The screaming malice itself closes in and tries to bite and fling whoever is dealing the most damage to it. It does not move adjacent to the railroad, though, since the rigid metal injures it (the attacks of the railroad guards are not substantial enough to get its attention since the guards are as frightened as the passengers).

The bandits try to flee before the party reaches them, but if forced into a fight the riders form a defensive group as they withdraw to their steeds, while their leader Rodinn unleashes illusions in an attempt to buy them time.

Aftermath.

There are few wounded, but likely many are dead. Malia, upon seeing the carnage, withdraws from everyone, shocked because she expected the bandits to use a monster as a distraction to rob the train, not to actually kill people. Captured bandits know they had an ally on the train, but only Rodinn knows the ally was Malia.

The surviving guards inspect the barricade and realize it's an illusion. Engineer Steeg nervously starts the train moving, and the illusion disappears when the locomotive comes into contact with it.

During the rest of the trip to Trekhom, Conductor Xorin makes his way through the train, checking on people and asking if they saw anything that might be useful for the formal investigation into the attack.



Screaming Malice

Gargantuan aberration, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 232 (15d20+75)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	6 (-2)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws CON +9, CHA +1

Skills Perception +8

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Malice Spawn. Whenever a malice spawn is destroyed, the screaming malice takes 10 damage.

Many-Headed. The screaming malice has five heads, each of which occupies its own 10-foot square. When the malice moves it can move its heads to any space within 25 feet of its body. The heads are part of the malice, and so share its AC and hit points. Effects that inflict conditions or force movement can affect a head, but each head tracks its conditions separately. The screaming malice can only make attacks (including opportunity attacks) against creatures adjacent to one of its heads.

Truly Gargantuan. Once the screaming malice reduced to 155 hp or less it flees, as do all its spawn. The screaming malice is immune to conditions and cannot be affected by any sort of forced movement. Its heads do not have this same immunity, however.

The screaming malice has disadvantage on attack rolls against creatures adjacent to its main body.

Vulnerable to Order. The malice beast's flesh withers at the touch of the railroad. If its body or one of its heads starts its turn at ground level adjacent to the train, the screaming malice takes 10 damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Screaming Malice makes five head bite attacks.

Head Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target.
Hit: 13 (2d6+6) piercing damage.

Produce Spawn. When there are 10 or less malice spawn created by the screaming malice it can detach one of its heads in place of making an attack. The area the head occupied becomes four new malice spawn. The head regrows at the end of the malice's next turn.

**Malice Spawn**

Medium aberration, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 22 (3d8+9)**Speed** 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws WIS +3, CHA +2**Skills** Stealth +6**Damage Immunities** poison**Condition Immunities** disease, charmed, frightened, poisoned**Senses** blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception xxx**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)**ACTIONS****Claw. Melee Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) slashing damage.**Malice Bandit**

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)**Hit Points** 39 (6d8+12)**Speed** 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws DEX +5, CON +6, WIS +3**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Athletics +4, Perception +4, Sleight of Hand +5**Senses** passive Perception 14**Languages** Common**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The Malice Bandit attacks twice. They can only attack once per round with their pistol.**Shortsword. Melee Weapon Attack:** +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.**Pistol. Ranged Weapon Attack:** +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10+2) piercing damage.**REACTIONS****Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker that the Malice Bandit can see hits them with an attack, they can use their reaction to halve the attack's damage against them.**Rodinn, Bandit Captain**

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (mage armor)**Hit Points** 104 (16d8+32)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws DEX +6, CHA +6**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Deception +9, Insight +2, Perception +5, Stealth +6**Senses** passive Perception 15**Languages** Common**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)**Cunning Action.** On each of his turns, Rodinn can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.**Evasion.** When Rodinn is subjected to an effect that allows him to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, he instead takes no damage if he succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if he fails.**Sneak Attack.** Rodinn deals an extra 21 (6d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Rodinn that isn't incapacitated and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.**Spellcasting.** Rodinn is a 4th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following spells prepared from the sorcerer's spell list:**Cantrips (at will):** *acid splash, dancing lights, mage hand, minor illusion***1st level (4 slots):** *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield***2nd level (3 slots):** *enlarge/reduce, suggestion***ACTIONS****Magic Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:** +6 to hit, reach 10 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.**Acid Ray. Ranged Weapon Attack:** +6 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6+3) acid damage.**REACTIONS****Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker Rodinn can see hits him with an attack, he can use his reaction to halve the attack's damage against him.

Appendix 1: The Avery Coast Railroad

RAIL TRAVEL HAS ONLY BEEN AROUND FOR A FEW decades in Danor and even less time in the other nations along the Avery Coast line. The promise of easy trade and travel convinced countries that once viewed Danor as an enemy to let Danoran engineers, businessmen, and even soldiers into their lands. In every town and city along its route, Danor owns small enclaves with housing and dining for long-haul guests. Though most of the employees of these enclaves are locals, each station is run by a very visible tiefling coordinator. Tickets are purchased in Danoran coins (helpfully provided by moneychangers), and this is slowly making international merchants comfortable doing business in Danoran currency.

Route.

The trip from Beaumont to Vendricce (see the map on page 4) takes six days, and each evening the train stops at a major city as a waystation. To minimize the risk of rail damage, derailment, and banditry, the train only runs during daylight hours. To traverse the 3,000 miles and keep its schedule, the train reaches speeds as high as 60 miles per hour, unmatched by any other vehicle in the world.

In total a dozen locomotives operate on the railroad at any given time, enough so that each day a train reaches each station going in both directions. Depots between major stops store replacement locomotives and train cars in case of damage, but daily maintenance has kept such failures low. For the three years of its operation the railroad has only had a handful of major delays. Travelers can count on a train coming to their city, headed in either direction, every day, and so the Avery Coast Railroad has earned one of its slogans: “Always on Time.”

The other popular slogan, “Taming the Malice,” is perhaps the railroad’s greater achievement. The Malice Lands lie between Danor and Drakr, in the territory where magic works occasionally but erratically. Creatures mutate readily into monsters and inconstant magical energies conjure bizarre weather. The presence of so much iron in such a regular construction seems to have a stabilizing

Bad Economics.

Normally the benefit of rail travel is that it allows easy transportation in directions not serviced by sea lanes or rivers. In the United States, for instance, the Mississippi River was an early boon to trade in its watershed, while the Transcontinental Railroad ran perpendicular to the river, connecting the east and west ends of the country and starting a massive economic integration.

The Avery Coast Railroad, however, mostly hugs the coastline. Drakr already had its own network of railroads under construction by the time Danor proposed this international route. The only safe waystation in the Malice Lands was Orithea, which is coastal, limiting their options for connections with Drakr. The designers decided that rather than trying to create the most *useful* railroad, they would make it the most *visible*. Rather than creating opportunities for new towns to spring up, it runs through major existing cities.

Now that they are becoming comfortable with their presence, Danor is letting the various border states use their own money to hire Danoran experts to build additional branches of the railroad.

effect on the wild magic, and the railroad’s crack militia can handle any threat with a pulse.

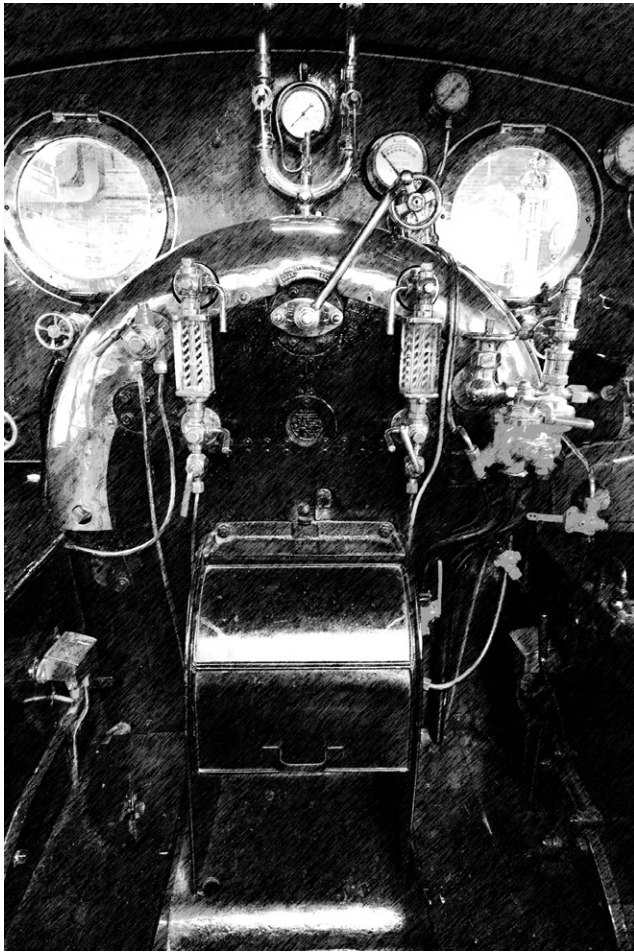
The railroad has seven major enclaves along its route. Each enclave is roughly 500 miles from the next, and the train stops at a different enclave each night. After twelve days of travel, the train returns to Beaumont where it is taken out of service for a day for thorough cleaning and maintenance.

- **1st Enclave:** Beaumont, on the west coast of Danor.
- **2nd Enclave:** Cherage, the capital of Danor.
- **3rd Enclave:** Orithea, the only stable city in the Malice Lands.
- **4th Enclave:** Trekhom, the capital of Drakr.
- **5th Enclave:** Nalaam, an independent city state run by mages in the mountainous border states between Drakr and Crissilyir.
- **6th Enclave:** Sid Minos, an island on the coast of Crissilyir.
- **7th Enclave:** Vendricce, a forested border-city in Crissilyir.

The Train.

Refer here for names of key train staff and the disposition of security. Key staff include:

- Engineer Steeg Leon
- Conductor Xorin Marchand
- Vodyarika Lerkem, head of the train’s militia
- Grason Wasson, guard between second class and first class
- Kov Marik, chef in first class
- Doris Gavagne, piano player in first class
- Malia Baccarin, guard liaison for first- and second-class
- 8 miscellaneous attendants who keep the place clean, work as waiters, and respond to minor trouble
- 9 miscellaneous militia guards



If any staff are injured or killed, they will be replaced the next time the train stops for the night.

Treat militia members as **guards** armed with rifles and bayonets (when a bayonet is fixed, the rifle can be used as a spear). The militia might shuffle a bit during the day at different stops, and there are too many for everyone to know each other. Overnight, enclave security guards watch the train, and in the mornings the train's militiamen are a bit lax when it comes to checking their work.

The layout of the train the PCs take, from front to back, is as follows (see the map of the train cars on page 21):

- **Car 1 – Locomotive:** This is where Engineer Steeg runs the train. Conductor Xorin also stays for the majority of the train's trip. They are usually guarded by two militia members.
- **Car 2 – Fuel Car:** The fuel car carries enough fuel for two days' worth of travel, but it is refilled at each nightly stop. Because Danorans cannot refine firegems themselves, and because the Malice Lands do odd things to the crystallized fire, the train runs on actual coal between Beaumont and Trekhom. From Trekhom to Vendricce, the train uses firegems instead, as they are cheaper than coal. A single militia member here helps shovel fuel for the engine.
- **Cars 3–9 – Freight Cars:** There are five freight cars. At each stop, various pieces of freight are loaded and unloaded by teamsters in each town. The frontmost car is loaded with

heavy industrial equipment for a steelworks, bound for Vendricce. That car has a contingent of five militia members, who occasionally check on the other freight cars whenever the train stops.

If the PCs check the other cars, their contents vary day by day, but might include quite a bit of preserved food, some expensive Danoran fabrics, some casks of fine Trekhom ale, and several tomes of history and the arcane. Between the Freight Cars and the Common Cars, a militia member named Vodyarika keeps stern watch.

Mister Mapple stows away in different cars each day.

- **Cars 10–12 – Common Cars:** Also known as the “sardine cars,” these cars have seating for 36 people, but are usually crammed above capacity. Each car has two lavatories at the rear.
- **Car 13 – Common Food Car:** A car serving nuts, dried fruits, and jerkies, with six tables set up in it. A militia man and two attendants work here, and a small private room often hosts train staff for brief breaks. The common food car is a frequent destination for families from the common and second class cars, as well as anyone who just needs to stand up and stretch.
- **Car 14–16 – Second-Class Cars:** These cars have five rooms with seating for six apiece, slightly more spacious leg-room, and minor furniture. Each car has a restroom at front and back. A militia member named Grason stands guard between the second-class cars and the first-class cars.

Bree has a seat in Car 16, Verzubak in Car 15, and Boone in Car 14. Cardiff sits in Car 14.

- **Cars 17–18 – First-Class Personal Cars:** These luxurious cars have two suites, each with beds for five people, a small common room, and a private restroom with standing shower.

The party has had one suite rented for them in Car 17. The Grientos have the other suite in Car 17. Luc and Ottavia have one suite in Car 18; Elanor and Isobel have the other.

- **Car 19 – First-Class Lounge:** The “caboose” of the train, the First Class Lounge is a richly-appointed bar. There are plush seats, wide windows, and a piano for entertainment. Portraits of the magnates of the Avery Coast line adorn the walls. A server and chef named Kov staffs the bar here, and cooks most meals. An old woman named Doris performs cheerfully on the piano, but has a good read of the crowd's mood and is never a bother.

Terrain Elements of the Train.

A fight may break out on board the train itself. In these combats, there are benches, chairs, pianos, bars, and other bits of furniture the party may interact with.

- **Taking Cover.** Most of the cover on the train is not large enough to fill an entire 5-foot square. However, a creature can spend a bonus action to take cover behind an adjacent object, such as by ducking down behind a bench, leaping behind a bar, or scurrying under the piano. They gain the benefits of cover against ranged attacks coming from the

other side of the object (half, three-quarters, or total cover at the GM's discretion).

- **Travel Between Cars.** To pass between cars one must open a first door, step across a 5-foot platform with just a knee-high railing, then open a second door to enter the next car. In combat a character would have to spend a bonus action and the Use an Object action.

The doors remain open unless someone closes them by hand.

- **Outside the Train.** Moving along the top of a train car while it is in motion requires a DC 8 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or else the creature falls prone at the start of their movement. A creature must make the same check if it takes damage while standing atop the train.

The windows and decorations along the sides of the train cars provide plenty of handholds. Climbing along the side of the train requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

It's quite safe to sit atop the train's roof, since a sturdy lip provides a good foot rest. A creature seated and braced in this way counts as prone, but can use crossbows and firearms without penalty. Militia members typically sit on the roof of a train car while in the Malice Lands, the better to shoot any malice beasts that attempt to attack the train.

- **Driving the Train.** Normally the train travels at 50 to 60 miles per hour (250 to 300 feet per round), but an operator in the locomotive can safely accelerate or decelerate the train, changing its speed by 10 feet per round, to a maximum of 800 feet per round. The train can also move backward at a maximum speed of 100 feet per round. If the train makes a turn at a speed above 700 feet per round, the train operator must make a DC 15 Intelligence (vehicle [land]) check or the train derails.

An operator can also apply the emergency brakes, decelerating the train by 100 feet per round (from its cruising speed to a halt in 3 rounds, or from its full speed to a halt in 8 rounds). Applying the emergency brakes causes any creature on the train to make a DC 13 Dexterity saving

throw or fall prone and be pushed 5 feet in the direction the train was traveling.

A character with the technologist theme can easily understand the machinery of the locomotive. Any other character must make a DC 15 Intelligence check as an action to figure out how to accelerate, decelerate, or apply the emergency brakes. After a successful check, the character no longer needs to make a check for that action.

Filler NPCs.

The party is likely to talk to a lot of NPCs. If you don't want to tip them off by naming only "important" NPCs, here's a quick roster of filler folk for the second class section.

- **Alexi Mohrbacher.** A Drakran human returning home after selling magical implements to Danorans who want to be able to use magic. It's a solid business because the goods never last more than a few months.
- **Bethany Cousineau.** A Danoran tiefling on a private errand for her family.
- **Charon Chevrolet.** Old man taking a vacation from his goat farm to see his grandchildren.
- **Dan Boyene.** A Danoran traveling ophthalmologist, with a suitcase full of eyeglasses.
- **Emile Davion.** A lieutenant in the Danoran military traveling with five soldiers who are enrolling in the Woodruff Memorial Martial University in Cherage.
- **Ford Zugoksy.** A minor Danoran politician going to a fundraiser in Cherage.
- **Giles Bonhomme.** A nervous musician who constantly holds his trumpet case to his chest.
- **Herbert Nembillion.** A tall blonde duelist going to Nalaam to fight in the arena.
- **Jacques Labelle.** A fat sea captain who has to go to Cherage to file an insurance claim.
- **Kipana Swansdotter.** A college professor from Nalaam who was doing experiments on how magic decays in Danor.
- **Leroy Flowers.** A man on the run after he murdered his wife.

Appendix 2: New Magic Items

Amulet of the Impeccable Spy.

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

The side of this amulet that faces outward is just a bland copper disk dotted with silver studs, but on the reverse is an inward-facing eye. While wearing it, you are aware when your Charisma (Deception) or Dexterity (Stealth) checks fail to conceal your motives or movements from observers whom you are aware of and whom you can see.

In addition, you can cast *disguise self* (DC 12). The amulet can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

Butcher's Girdle.

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

A normal girdle keeps your belly in the shape you want. This belt does that for your whole body. If one of your limbs becomes severed, you can move and control the limb as if it were still fully functional. Whenever you move more than 5 feet, the limb can fly up to its speed (maximum height of 30 feet), though it must remain within 100 feet of you or else it falls inert. You can use your severed limb to attack as normal. If the limb shares the same space as you, you can use a bonus action to reattach it to your body, restoring full function.

In addition, you can intentionally sever your own limbs with a blade as an action. This does damage to you equal to one-quarter your total hit points. A missing leg effectively makes you prone (even if you can stand up, you can't balance well enough to fight at full effectiveness).

Demonic Weapon.

Weapon (any), very rare (requires attunement)

Though no visual trait betrays its nature, this weapon is frighteningly warm to your skin. As you touch it, for a moment you feel like your hand is submerged in fresh blood. The sensation passes, but you cannot help but long to feel it again. When you hit a creature with less than half its total hit points, the weapon deals an additional 1d4 fire damage per points of proficiency bonus you possess.

When you first touch the weapon, if it does not have a living wielder it instantly attunes to you. The first time each encounter you attempt to draw or retrieve any item, if you are not already holding the weapon, you draw the weapon instead of whatever you intended to get.

Once per day you must kill a sentient being and smear the weapon with its blood. If you do not, you suffer a cumulative -1 penalty per day to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma ability checks due to the gun whispering into your mind, compelling you to feed it. If this penalty exceeds your Wisdom score, you are driven mad and kill yourself with the weapon.

The weapon cannot be destroyed as long as it has a living wielder. The curse can be removed by the *remove curse* spell or greater magic (which requires using the weapon to kill a pregnant she-goat submerged in holy water).

Focused Severance Technique.

Wondrous item, rare

Characters with the Martial Scientist theme who witness Lya Jierre use this technique and later acquire her martial thesis, *Field Study of Melee Effectiveness and Foe Debilitation through Focused Limb Severance Techniques Contrasted with Mainstream Opportunistic Techniques*, can learn this technique.

Whenever you hit a target with a melee weapon that deals slashing damage and the target has fewer hit points remaining than your level, you can attempt to remove a limb. The target must make a Constitution saving throw (DC equal to the damage of the attack). On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice – hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, you choose which extremity the target loses. Creatures without extremities are unaffected.

Special. If you are wielding a *razorburst weapon*, such as the one Lya Jierre owns, add double its magical bonus to attack and damage to your level to determine the HP threshold of this ability.

Hands of Heaven and Hell.

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

These arm-length fingerless gloves are infused with the pugilist training of the Clergy's elite godhands, and tainted by the lightning tongue of a demon. While you are wielding these specially ordained brass knuckles, once per round when you hit a creature with an unarmed strike you may pummel it or another creature adjacent to you, dealing 1d6 points of electricity damage. Each time you pummel this way, the *hands of heaven and hell* gain one charge counter, which lasts until the end of the encounter.

When the *hands of heaven and hell* have at least six charge counters, after your next successful melee attack with them you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to the amount of damage the attack dealt.

Lucky Dice Ki Focus Thoughts.

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

Keep these two six-sided dice in your pocket. They're good luck. If you have a *ki* pool, the size of your *ki* pool increases by 1. When you roll these six-sided dice, the result can be any number you want. Numbers outside the range of 2 to 12 will be quite suspicious, however.

Special. If you want to bring the idea of the character owning special dice to your gaming table, have the player owning this magic item choose one d20 they own. The player must only ever use the chosen die for attack rolls. No one but that player may touch that die. Once per session if the selected die rolls badly, they're allowed to make a "cleansing" re-roll to get the bad numbers out. If the owner violates these rules, they must set aside the offending die and replace it.



Razorburst Weapon.

Weapon (any), very rare

Pairing Drakran magic and Danoran science, this weapon's blade is edged with hovering, jagged teeth that glint in the light. Upon activation these teeth saw back and forth in a keening blur, liable to sever something vital. When you use this weapon to damage an enemy that has fewer hit points than double the weapon's bonus to attack and damage (minimum 1) the weapon shrieks as its bladed teeth saw back and forth, a mechanism unspooling near the hilt. The target must make a Constitution saving throw (DC = damage dealt by the attack). On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice – hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, you choose which extremity the target loses. Creatures without extremities are unaffected.

A severed arm or hand prevents use of anything that a target was holding or carrying. A severed foot slows the target. A severed leg renders the target prone.

The Wayfarer's Lantern.

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)

The eight-faced cap of this lantern depicts symbols of seven planets and the sun. Eight brass arches beneath contain a light that glows without flame, held contained without glass. As the light touches you reality seems to shift. You can use a bonus action to adjust the lantern to shed dim (25-foot radius) or normal light (50-foot

radius), or to turn off. It is fragile and has only 10 hit points (AC 13).

The lantern's greater powers require special fuel – oil that has been attuned to a particular plane by steeping it in some item attuned to that plane. Typically this is some form of meteorite that has been ground to dust. An ounce of this oil burns for 5 minutes.

Each ounce of oil is effectively a consumable item of uncommon, rare, or very rare rarity. The level, based on how much meteor dust the oil contains, determines the strength of the effect. A given ounce of oil must be attuned to a specific plane.

You can use an action to fill the lantern with oil and light it. The lantern either affects everything it illuminates or only creatures that are specifically targeted. To specifically target a creature you either need to be able to see it when you light the lantern, or the creature (or its gear or domicile) must be marked with an arcane sigil prior to lighting the lantern. Targeted creatures that leave the area of the lantern's illumination are no longer affected, but they will be affected again if they return to the area.

The lantern's effects extend 50 feet in every direction, ignoring even total cover or concealment. A creature with total cover or concealment has advantage on saving throws to resist the lantern's effects because the light is not actually touching them, but the magic can pass through solid objects.

Choose an effect below appropriate to the oil's planar attunement. Each round targets must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC equal to the level of the oil used). A creature that is hit falls under



the lantern's effect for 5 minutes. If it later moves beyond the radius of the lantern it is no longer affected, but it will be again as soon as it comes back into the area.

The lantern's effect lasts for the full 5 minutes. It cannot be snuffed prematurely without shattering and destroying the lantern.

- **Any.** Within 1 minute a random encounter occurs as creatures native to the plane are drawn to the lantern. The encounter is up to GM's discretion based on the current party level.
- **The Dreaming or Bleak Gate.** Those affected are physically transported to the coterminous spot in either the land of the fey or the land of shadows.
- **Vona.** Affected creatures gain a +10 bonus to Wisdom (Insight) and Wisdom (Perception) checks. An affected creature with vulnerability to radiant energy or sunlight takes 1d6 radiant damage at the beginning of its turn each round.
- **Jiese.** An affected creature that takes 1d6 fire damage at the beginning of its turn each round. Objects catch fire more easily.

Alternately, affected creatures become argumentative and hostile. Any creature that remains under the effect for at least 1 minute makes a Wisdom saving throw or is frightened. While so frightened, if it ends its turn and has not attacked anything, it must attack or charge the nearest creature. If it succeeds its saving against being frightened, it recognizes that its mind is being affected, and is immune from the compulsion for 5 minutes. If a creature is still in the radius of the lantern after that time, it can be attacked again.

- **Avilona.** Howling winds blow across affected creatures. At the beginning of each round roll 1d8 to determine the wind's direction. Whenever an affected creature ends its turn, it is pushed 1d4 x 5 feet in that direction. Alternately, other types of weather can be called forth, albeit in a limited area.
- **Av.** Any creature under the lantern's effect for at least 1 minute becomes *slowed* (as the spell, ending on a successful saving throw). If it fails its save, it falls asleep and has vivid shared dreams. If it succeeds it shakes off the effect and is immune for 5 minutes.



- **Mavisha.** The flow of water within the area obeys the mental commands of sentient creatures. An affected creature can use an action raise, lower, or part water, or increase a vessel's speed by 10 miles an hour, but it's not fast enough to be used as a weapon. Multiple creatures thinking in opposition (5 or more) can rouse the anger of the water causing it to manifest as a water elemental.
- **Urim.** Illuminated stone, crystal, and metal becomes harder. Affected creatures have resistance against bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.
- **Apet.** Affected creatures can teleport 50 feet as a bonus action, but must remain within the radius of the lantern's light.
- **Nem.** Affected creatures are pulled from their bodies into the plane of Nem, a spirit world on the far side of the Bleak Gate. The world resembles reality but is bereft of occupants and slowly fades away as the disembodied creature wanders away from the spot where it died. Even if their body moves, the spot where they entered Nem is an invisible gateway. If they ever stray more than 3 miles from that gateway, they pass into the afterlife and cannot be resurrected. This is normally not a factor with the lantern because it will not burn long enough.

Creatures in Nem cannot see or be seen by living creatures. They gain the Ethereal Movement feature of a ghost (useful for scouting environments).

If their souls leave the area of the lantern, they instantly snap back to the spot where they first entered Nem. If their bodies are moved from the lantern's area, their souls snap back into their flesh.

Player Handouts

Roscommon and Khalundurrin

Roscommon.

A century-old schooner given the favor of Medb, one of the queens of the Unseen Court.

The schooner is one of the lightest types of vessels used for oceanic voyages. Its nimbleness makes it ideal for blockade-running and surveillance but if cornered by an actual warship it must rely on the skill-at-arms of its crew since it cannot mount many weapons.

Roscommon, named after the region in Risur that provided for most of its material, mounts a two-masted square-topsail rig. Her lower deck could accommodate as many as thirty but she typically sails with fifteen crew and a cook plus some small elite complement of officers or specialists. (See illustration at right.)

Laid down in 417 A.O.V., when it was nearing completion its designer had a druid deliver a replica to a fey circle near the town of Roscommon. The model ship delighted the local fey queen Medb and the next morning when the designer returned to work the ship's figurehead had been replaced by a beautiful faerie woman carved from living wood.

The *Roscommon* is a sailing ship with 2 decks, 25 feet across and 80 feet long. There are four light cannons each to port and starboard. Each cannon requires one person to operate. Its two masts are 70 feet high. Once per short rest, the captain standing at the head of the ship can use an action to ask the favor of the queen's figurehead. The *Roscommon* and everyone aboard teleports 50 feet to an unoccupied space. It maintains the same heading and speed.

Khalundurrin.

A Drakran-built steamship, sturdy and well-armed, with a bold heart.

The *Khalundurrin* joined the Drakran navy at the tail end of the Fourth Yerasol War. It was captured by Risuri forces when the ship strayed too close to an ongoing naval battle between the Risuri and Danorans. Its captain claimed that he tried to avoid the fight, but his ship had changed course when he wasn't looking, like it wanted to get into combat.

The dwarves of Drakr built the *Khalundurrin* to be a sturdily armored scout ship, capable of patrolling the edge of a naval formation and surviving a few hits if it ran into trouble. Arcanists who examined the ship postulate that some manner of spirit might inhabit its steam engine. (See illustration on previous page.)

A squat conning tower rises up in the center of the ship, and angled steel plates slope outward toward the water around the maindeck, with shuttered slots for cannons. The lower deck is hot and cramped, but crew sleep easily and speak of dreams filled with bold imagery like something out of a Drakran opera.



The *Khalundurrin* is a steamship with 2 decks, 25 feet across and 80 feet long. There are four light cannons each to port and starboard. Each cannon requires one person to operate. The fuel compartments carry enough to move the ship 2,000 miles at a time. Creatures on the deck of the *Khalundurrin* have cover (half, three-quarters, or total cover, at the discretion of the GM) against attacks made from outside the ship.

Planned Timeline.

- **85 Autumn, 500.** Your ship departs Flint. Trip to Beaumont should take seven days.
- **1 Winter, 500.** Your ship arrives in Beaumont. Your ship sails for Trekhom.
- You have a ten day buffer in case of trouble at sea.
- **11 Winter, 500.** Train departs Beaumont at 7:30 a.m.
- **11 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Cherage by 6:00 p.m.
- **12 Winter, 500.** Train departs Cherage at 7:30 a.m.
- **12 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Orithea by 6:15 p.m.
- **13 Winter, 500.** Train departs Orithea at 7:30 a.m.
- **13 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Trekhom by 6:30 p.m. Your ship will be waiting at the harbor.
- **14 Winter, 500.** Train departs Trekhom at 7:30 a.m. Your ship sails for Sid Minos.
- **14 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Nalaam by 6:00 p.m.
- **15 Winter, 500.** Train departs Nalaam at 7:30 a.m.
- **15 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Sid Minos by 5:30 p.m. Your ship will be waiting at the harbor.
- **16 Winter, 500.** Train departs Sid Minos at 7:30 a.m.
- **16 Winter, 500.** Train arrives in Vendricce by 6:00 p.m. Your ship will be waiting at the harbor. Trip to Flint should take eight days.



The Avery Coast Railroad

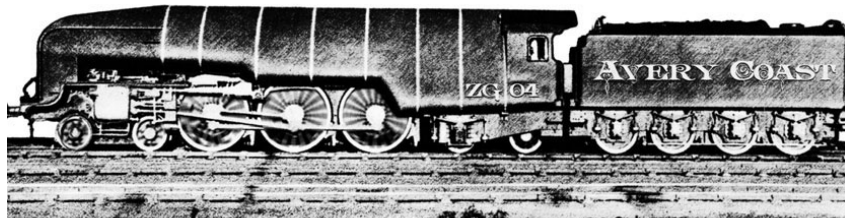
First Class Accommodations.

Fine Dining.

Scenic Views.

3,000 Mile Route Servicing

BEAUMONT • CHERAG •
ORITHEIA • TREKHOM •
NALAAM • SID MINOS •
VENDRICCE
in only six days.



Trains Departing Every Day from Every Station.

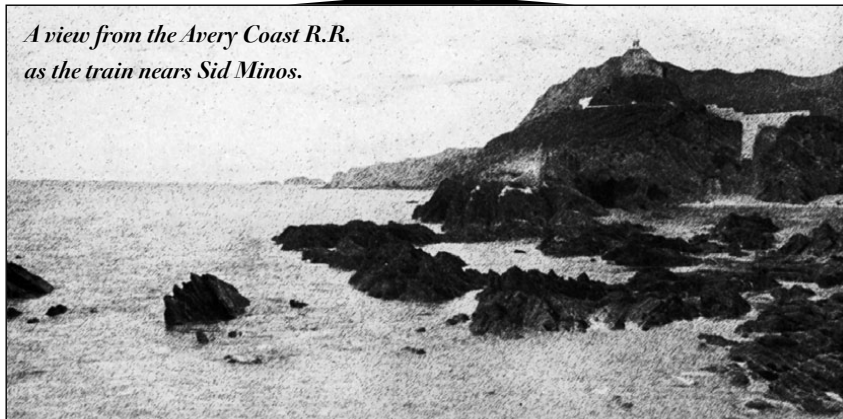
TRAVEL THE COAST AT HIGH SPEED IN COMFORT AND SAFETY.

Our trains' nightly Stop-Overs are in safe, populated Areas attended by Security Professionals.



Our Courteous, Helpful, Experienced Staff always accords Special Attention to traveling Families.

A view from the Avery Coast R.R. as the train nears Sid Minos.



GM Quick Reference

Dramatis Personae

- **Assistant Chief Inspector Stover Delft.** Party's boss. Chews tobacco. Cane. Spits. Good-natured.
- **Brianne "Bree" Kaldeckis.** Danoran war vet. Dresses to show off right arm and leg transplants. Honorable. Clever. Loves hearing and telling war stories. Sympathetic to suffering.
- **Damata Griento.** Half-orc businessman. Looking for a friend. Pretends to be normal tourist. Afraid of dying, so overly sensitive and emotional. Panicked concern for family.
- **Olivert Boone.** Tiedling gunslinger and lady's man. Braggart. Jovially puts down people. Demon-possessed revolver demands sacrifices. When amused, claps by slapping chest with one hand.
- **Verzubak Tantalovich.** Dwarven luck mage. Looks perpetually tired. Rolls dice, makes notes about random events in his notebook. Rejects Heid Eschatol focus on the end of life. Observant. Can tell what people care about, so pays a lot of compliments.
- **Elanor Ynette.** Hugely fat enchantress. Sex trafficker. No empathy. Smug. Keeps people around so she can show off wealth and gossip. Reads erotic poetry.
- **Isobel Travers.** Young, beautiful eladrin. Raised to have little personality. Beautiful singing voice. Usually drugged or magic-addled. Hums errantly.
- **"Mister Mapple," Andrei von Recklinghausen.** Scruffy, shabbily dressed. Smells of fancy bath soaps and perfume. Amazing acrobat. Lives to experience new pleasure. Romantic heart. Regenerates wounds. Touch drains life force.
- **Luc Jierre.** Tiedling inventor. Stutters. Avoids conversation. Resentful of those in power, but desires power of his own. Frighteningly intelligent. Excellent manners and etiquette.
- **Ottavia Sacredote.** Elf priestess. Geometric tattoos of a Clergy oracle. Deaf. Can talk, but prefers to use sign language. Devoted to ending corruption in the church. Recognizes people's flaws, tries to bring out their nobler sides. Cares for Luc, and is overly protective.
- **Cardiff Hengehill.** Risuri spy. Handsome. Hides through confidence and looking like he belongs, instead of discretion. Suitcase strapped to wrist holds stolen documents of Danoran naval intelligence. Bouts of heroism. Short temper. Grabs people when making a point.
- **Malia Baccarin.** Crisillyir-born, Danor-raised. Rail guard. Contacts with criminals along railroad. Collects newspapers. Skilled at cajoling, goading, seducing. Wants to score big, retire young.
- **Ashima-Shimtu.** Ancient demoness. Chained by Clergy. Scaled skin. Speaks as if narrating events, never in first person. Hints at knowing great secrets, reveals very few.
- **Minister of Outsiders Lya Jierre.** Tiedling martial scientist. Ambitious. Haughty but friendly. Progressive. Wants peace. Arcano-technological vorpal rapier.
- **Nicodemus the Gnostic.** Smokes leaf of Nicodemus. Movie-star charisma. Dominates a room with his presence, but encourages others to talk. Enjoys solitude and posing surprising questions about philosophy. Ghost who travels between bodies. ☞