

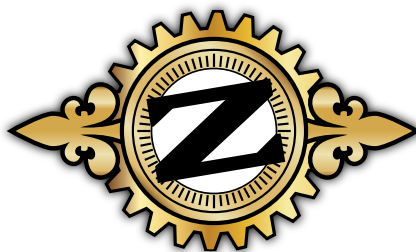


EN5ider Presents:

Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman

Part One

A 5E-Compatible Adventure for 9th- to 10th-Level Characters



Introduction

Wherein a Tiny Tinker Can Topple a Tyrant.

Welcome to the beginning of Act Two of *ZEITGEIST: The Gears of Revolution*. In the first act of the campaign the party discovered an international conspiracy tinkering with extraplanar magic and building a colossal golem in a plane that was a literal shadow of the real world. At the climax of Adventure Five, the colossus broke free and began tramping through the city of Flint until the party helped drive it away, their king tasking them with finding a way to gain control of it before the conspiracy can.

Throughout the next three adventures, the party's mission will take them across the world to disrupt enemy plots, enlist allies, and fight for mastery of the mighty metal titan. Their first step takes them to Ber, a nation once ruled by dragons but now a struggling young land of orcs, minotaurs, gnolls, and other savage races trying to learn to be civilized. One of the colossus's creators has sought asylum with Ber's ruler, who considers the tiny gnome technologist a treasure not to be lightly traded.

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OPEN GAME CONTENT
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The Short, Short Version.

The party heads to Ber to find the gnome, named Tinker. On their way to meet Ber's minotaur ruler named Shantus, members of the conspiracy ambush the PCs, get the party's local guide arrested, and then attack the party with a stampede. The PCs might clear their guide's name and find allies among the locals, but to gain an audience with Shantus they must pass through a labyrinth obstacle course. The minotaur, it seems, likes to be entertained.

At the court of Shantus, a party allied with the conspiracy has already asked for access to Tinker. Shantus decides he'll give the gnome to whoever entertains him most. He proposes a contest between the PCs and the other party, consisting of two challenges: the under-construction railroad, and the disloyal ally.

At the railroad, two companies of workers compete to build the most miles of track, and the PCs can help their efforts, disrupt the efforts of the other company, and defend against the sabotage attempts by the conspiracy's party. With the disloyal ally, the PCs try to convince him to pledge fealty to Shantus while the other team tries to provoke him to attack the party's homeland.

Shantus forbids the two parties from harming each other directly, but subterfuge and cheating is encouraged. Once there is a winner, Shantus brings Tinker out of hiding, but then is betrayed. Under the magical compulsion of a megalomaniacal industrialist named Pemberton, Tinker and a gang of traitors try to kill Shantus and both parties.

The party learns that Pemberton, an old dragon ruler trapped in human form, seeks to conquer Ber. He has replaced Tinker and others close to the king with mechanical duplicants under his control, and has put the real Tinker to work in his volcanic island lair, which he has converted to a factory building war machines.

Perhaps with the temporary aid of the conspiracy, the PCs must fight their way past a dragon-worshipping gnoll cult to reach the heart of the volcano, recruit Tinker, and defeat the last surviving dragon tyrant.

Background.

The gnome engineer **Tinker Oddcog** was always a bit addled. Though most gnomes in Risur live hidden in the forests at the borders of the fey realm of The Dreaming, Tinker embraced technology, fascinated by tiny whirling gears and the ability to invent new tools and leave his mark on the world.

Then 10 years ago while excavating tunnels for a subrail project in Risur's capital city of Slate Tinker stumbled upon a brass orb. He became obsessed with it, convinced he could hear whispers from it, and that its surface consisted of imperceptibly tiny interlocking cogs that moved like they were alive. His obsession got him fired, and soon thereafter the head of the project was crushed by a crane that seemed to swing by its own volition.

After the tragedy Tinker offered to take over the project but was rejected. When the next project head died in a hideous train derailment the aristocrats of Slate, already wary of technology, forbade any further subrail construction in their city.

Agents of the Obscurati, however, recognized that Tinker possessed the power to speak with and command machines. They recruited the gnome to help build their colossus. He earned the

Adapting the Adventure.

If you're playing in a home campaign, you might replace the steampunk elements with more traditional forms of magic. Tinker might still be a master of machines, but he could surround himself with medieval siege weapons, cranes, and traditional golems. Instead of building a railroad, the Berans might be constructing an aqueduct; and instead of a factory, the climax might occur at an iron mine filled with Tinker's war machines.

To fit the adventure into your own campaign you can skip the introduction in Risur and start right away in Ber. Perhaps Tinker knows a secret or possesses a rare magic item the PCs need.

If you just want some inspiration for your own campaign, we have:

- a nation of normally savage races trying to civilize themselves,
- a stampede of megafauna provoked by tyrannosaurs,
- a labyrinth arena,
- a competition where two high-level parties try to sabotage each other,
- a battle with a gnome in a golem suit, and
- a dragon with steamtech prostheses.



Tinker Oddcog. Machines talk. Most people are too big to hear them, and so the machines don't like them. But they like Tinker. Their tiny little voices tell Tinker their secrets, and he treats them nicely, so when he asks, the machines do what he wants. For a while what he wanted was to make a great big machine, one so loud that everyone would hear what it was saying. Then he wanted to become so small himself that no one would find him. But now maybe it's time for the machines to start yelling. If enough of them yell together, people will be sure to hear.

Tinker yelps and cowers in the presence of things bigger than him, though when he's in his mechanical battle suit he gets a bit megalomaniacal. His goals are mercurial, and he's easily nudged toward different projects, as long as he gets to work with machines. He possesses little actual malice, except to those who doubt his brilliance. Or those who want to kill him, like the Obscurati.

Part of Tinker's unhinged personality is because he hears whispers of every machine everywhere, granting him glimpses of a world too large for his mind to cope with.

nickname "gearbuilder," but after a friend of his—the "mind-maker"—died trying to escape the conspiracy, Tinker grew paranoid. He bided his time, and when the colossus broke free (see Adventure Five, *Cauldron-Born*), he fled and boarded a ship to Ber, his precious brass orb tucked under his arm. More importantly, he carried the secrets of the colossus in his head.

Civilization in Ber.

Centuries ago, what is modern Ber was a patchwork of kingdoms ruled by dragon tyrants who kept savage races as their subjects. The last of those tyrants fell two hundred years ago, and an era of chaos and decline followed.



Then 40 years ago an orc named **Vairday Bruse** united the shattered cities, the squabbling warlords, and the roaming tribes under his banner, naming the new nation Ber. He negotiated with other countries, brought fresh wealth to his people, and developed a cult of adoration centered on advancing his people toward the civilized cultures of the rest of the world.

Throughout Ber, men and women whose parents lived in mountain caves or tents on the grasslands now struggle to adapt to fancy attire, refined etiquette, and enlightened education and philosophy. Some rebel or simply don't buy into Ber's cultural revolution, and indeed some of the most unwilling converts were those who had long lived in cities, slaves to the dragon masters. But most loved Vairday Bruse for the safety and dignity he brought them, and they see it as their duty to civilize themselves.

Eight years ago Vairday died and passed on his position to a minotaur, Shantus, who helped him in the founding of Ber. Taking his predecessor's name instead of the title king, **Bruse Shantus** has kept Ber stable and has negotiated for more foreign investment, though he is less devoted to cultural and social reforms.

Races of Ber.

Orcs are the most common race, concentrated in the northeast. Gnolls dominate the south. Minotaurs are prominent to the west, while lizardfolk are prevalent in the thinly-populated central riverlands. Half-giants live in the Anthras Mountains, close to human lands. Other races like goblinoids, shifters, and half-dragons are rare (indeed these days they're never half-blooded anymore since they're 10 generations from their original dragon ancestor). Aside from the gnolls, every race in Ber grudgingly gets along with all the others.

Though humans stereotype all these races as savage, Berans have their own clichés about their neighbors. Orcs are drunkards who sing badly and are always trying to be clever and failing. Minotaurs are lazy, take credit for what others do, and have sex with anything. Lizardfolk are thieves and all look alike. Half-giants are all homosexuals, not to mention spies for Risur. Goblins have disgusting food that makes anyone else vomit, and they are confused by any technology more advanced than ropes. Gnolls,

viewed most negatively in general, are seen as superstitious, uncivilized criminals who can never lead themselves, which is why they all miss their dragon tyrants.

Asylum and Industry.

Tinker reached Ber on the 21st of Spring and quickly contacted **Glauca Evora**, a gnoll member of Executores dola Liberta, the "enforcers of freedom" who are tasked with maintaining the revolution. Tinker offered his technological know-how in exchange for asylum, and the Bruse accepted. Empowered by Ber's rites of rulership, Shantus has cloaked Tinker from divination. The Bruse always knows the gnome's health and status, and if anyone harms him, Shantus will be able to see it.

However Shantus does not automatically know who speaks to Tinker, or where he goes. So he is not aware that Tinker was soon met by **Benedict Pemberton**. Pemberton, an eccentric industrialist, inventor, and firebrand from Risur, proposed a new arrangement: Tinker could come work for him at his private island on Ber's southern coast, he could still benefit from the Bruse's protection, and he'd be building far more interesting things than railroads and steam boilers.

Pemberton provided Tinker with the schematic and material necessary to craft a "duplicant": a mechanical body that can be controlled remotely. Each duplicant contains a small vessel of witchoil (see Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*), which holds a sliver of the soul of whomever the machine has imprinted. The machine becomes a near-perfect double of the original person, though it must obey Pemberton's orders.

Tinker built his own duplicant, bonded to it, and left it behind to do modest work for the Bruse as he snuck off to Pemberton's island, Isla dolas Focas. Iron mines riddle the island, and at its heart lies a dormant volcano, once a lair of one of Ber's old dragon tyrants.

Expected Timeline.

The adventure begins on the 1st of Summer, 501 A.O.V. (After Our Victory). The party can teleport to Ber the same day, or spend days sailing the 800 miles from Flint to Seobriga. An average ship could get there in 10 days, while Risur's fastest ship could get there in 2 days with some magical help, and by having the crew toil through the night for every last scrap of wind.

Lya Jierre's group is stuck trying to entertain the Bruse and curry favor until the party arrives and shakes things up. From there, it likely takes 20 days to finish the Cantabrilla Railroad challenge. The railhead is about 300 miles from Citado Cavallo, so even with fine horses it would take 6 days to get there. Only slightly faster is riding to Renza then taking the train, which shaves off a single day. This means the party will likely split up, or perhaps send their ship to Marrajado de Oro so they can teleport back and forth.

Once they get back to the Bruse's summer court, a day passes before Tinker arrives and provokes a battle. Then it's another 400 miles from Seobriga to Isla dolas Focas to find the real Tinker. Teleportation isn't possible this time, and Lya's ship *Lux Profectusque* will get there in 3 days. Even if the party dawdles during the Bruse's game, they'll likely finish the adventure in less than a month.

Bruse Shantus. Shantus took over from Ber's previous ruler, Vairday Bruse, seven years ago. Though he was instrumental in the early growth of the revolution, after a few years of bearing the weight of a nation on his shoulders, and of seeing how slow and embarrassing progress was, Shantus has begun to slip back into the traditional patterns of power. Though he hasn't betrayed the principles of his predecessor, he has come to believe that Ber has made enough progress for one revolution.



Shantus thinks of himself as mischievous, using his power to force petitioners into silly situations to get what they want. He tells himself this endears his people to him, though in truth many see him as petty and decadent. He doesn't brook disagreement, though, and the handful of advisors who tried to explain how tone-deaf he was to the needs of his people were given assignments in Ber's swamps and deserts so they wouldn't bother him.

The Last Dragons.

Starting five hundred years ago, it became popular for mighty heroes and would-be kings to slay dragons, and they descended upon the domains of the dragon tyrants, until finally in 300 A.O.V., according to common lore, King Boyle of Risur slew the last of the dragons. Though a few scattered legends tell of survivors, dragons are believed extinct.

In truth, a handful of dragons escaped this genocide. The dragons fought off most challengers until 295 A.O.V., when the world's already tenuous connection to the plane of air was nearly severed (see Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*). With their massive bodies now forced to obey the same physical laws as birds, most dragons were rendered incapable of flight. Their numbers rapidly dwindled.

But King Boyle of Risur saw more value in the remaining dragons than simply mounting their heads as trophies. He offered the last dragon tyrants refuge in Risur and vowed to protect them and even keep their hoards safe, as long as they pledged never to take hostile action against Risur. But for the pact to be secure, they would need to live 100 years in the form of a human.

Some dragons rebuked the king, and he slew them, but a few agreed to his terms. One, known then as **Inatch the Hex-Eater**, eventually became a loyal advisor to several kings of Risur, and today serves as Risur's principal minister under the name of **Harkover Lee**.

Another dragon, **Gradiax the Lord of Steel**, became human but avoided all contact with the leaders of Risur. He used his remaining treasure to invest in land, then invented a family line so he could assume new identities and inherit his own wealth. But after his century of waiting came to an end, he understood that even if he resumed his old form, he would just be another beast to be slain. He needed a power base before he could reveal himself.

Today, Gradiax goes by Benedict Pemberton, owner of Pemberton Industries, which until recently manufactured experimental military technologies in Flint, the industrial heart of Risur. Harkover Lee and Pemberton both know each other's identities, and Lee has kept an eye on his fellow dragon, wary of betrayal.

But Pemberton has slowly been building a second path to power. He was in the process of negotiating to sell the Bruse golems for constructing his new railroad when he learned of Tinker Oddcog's arrival. Recalling rumors of the gnome's knack with machines, Pemberton was determined to turn the Tinker into an asset. The tiny little madman has performed far beyond Pemberton's dreams.

Isla dolas Focas.

Pemberton secretly controls this 50-mile long sliver of land off the southeastern coast of Ber: the Island of the Seals, named for the massive population of seals that nest on its shores. Two centuries ago Pemberton—as Gradiax—ruled a small nation of gnolls from here. Though like all the dragon tyrants he oppressed most of his people, the gnolls of Isla dolas Focas he treated grandly, and when he left he promised he would return.

The gnolls refused to ally with the rest of Ber under Vairdy Bruse, and encouraged other tribes to resist. They call themselves the Cult of the Steel Lord, and for two centuries they have continued to excavate the iron mines, stockpiling ore for their



lord's return. The one time Pemberton has returned to his true draconic form was seven years ago to slay the ruler of the gnolls and reclaim his domain.

The Cult of the Steel Lord believes humanoid races are unworthy to wield metal, and that if they are pure they will become as strong as steel. Indeed, as a blessing to his most faithful follower, Pemberton recently had Tinker construct a duplicant for a gnoll named **Pardo**, who he then sent as an emissary to Shantus. Now Pardo's machine body represents the unincorporated tribes of Ber at the Bruse's court. He has even earned the honorary title "Minister of Rebellion."

No one aside from the gnolls who worship him knows that Pemberton leads the cult.

Father and Daughter.

When Gradiax faked his death and abandoned the island, he left behind a clutch of eggs laid by his slain lover. The Cult tended these during his absence, and when Pemberton again took control of the island he dared to have them hatch one egg. Alas, the child who emerged was crippled, missing an eye, a wing, and most of one leg.



Benedict Pemberton. The dragon Gradiax, Lord of Steel, has almost never resumed his true form for the past two centuries, and has grown accustomed to his eccentric alternate identity as a businessman and technologist. Though he only looks about fifty, and has the verve of a young man, he jokingly exaggerates his aged infirmities. He speaks slowly with a

deep, country-accented voice, and often leans back and tucks his thumbs in his belt loops as he talks (imagine a more laid-back Foghorn Leghorn).

Confident in his ability to win in the long run, Pemberton almost never loses his cool. He enjoys playing subtle power games; if he spies a loose thread on someone he's talking to, he'll draw out a short folding knife he always carries, flick it open, and without explaining what he's doing will walk over and snip the thread free, or if they flinch he'll chuckle at the person's nervousness around a harmless geezer like him.



Pemberton raised his daughter, whom he named **Terakalir**, hoping he might still establish a dynasty. He abducted tutors to educate her, and she trained her mind because her body was weak. But when Tinker Oddcog arrived, the gnome excitedly crafted her steel prostheses to replace her missing flesh. Tinker became cherished by the Cult of the Steel Lord, and the gnolls grew only more fervent in their belief that they were blessed by this new half-dragon, half-machine.

Draconic Machinations.

Pemberton has slowly begun replacing high-ranking officials in the more distant areas of Ber with duplicants. The design of the devices requires that the original body remains alive, so that it can maintain a link to the mind and soul of the person it is mimicking. This connection also protects the duplicants from magical detection, because unless you know what you're looking for, they register as being the creatures they're mimicking.

Pemberton's gnoll minions keep the abducted officials imprisoned in their main caves, but he's wary of stretching too far and being discovered. His ultimate goal is to replace the Bruse and his advisors, then steer the nation to desire a new dragon overlord. Toward that end, he has had Tinker craft golems, which themselves helped craft more golems, as well other machines. His old lair has been fortified and transformed into a massive automaton factory.

Within a year, he'll have enough war machines and duplicant-enhanced gnoll soldiers that even if his plan to seize control of the Bruse fails, he'll be able to conquer Ber outright. Until he's ready, though, he continues to play the role of an eccentric industrialist from Risur, pretending that he just seeks to make money by building railroads.

Obscurati Involvement.

Pemberton is in no way affiliated with the Obscurati, and he only knows a little about them from what Tinker has mentioned.

The Obscurati want Tinker silenced. In the two and a half

months since their colossus construction facility was raided they've fought with the RHC to try and tie up loose ends – by getting assets out of Risur before they could be captured, or killing prisoners before they could reveal any information. Simultaneously, the party and other agents of Risur have chased down fringe members of the Obscurati, rooting out potential threats within their own nation.

Risur wants Tinker – to interrogate about the Obscurati at least, to become an asset if possible. The Ob, meanwhile, intend to kill the gnome. And though Tinker has done a good job hiding his tracks, both the party and their rivals manage to catch wind of his location at the same time.

The Ob leadership, understanding that Tinker is a valuable asset to Ber, have sent tielfling diplomat **Lya Jierre**, one of the top-tier members of the conspiracy. An experienced negotiator and expert swordswoman, Lya travels with two elite bodyguards – **Rush Munchausen** and **Merton Goncala** – as well as a ship full of Obscurati operatives.

Lya has nearly every resource she could need for this mission, but even the Obscurati aren't aware of Pemberton's identity, nor his plots. Though Risur and the Ob are at odds, neither side wants Ber to fall under control of a dragon, so the party might have reason to work with their enemies, at least in the short term.

Tinker's Secrets.

What can the party learn from Tinker if they capture or recruit him? First, he can fill in any missing pieces of information about the nature of the Bleak Gate construction site in Flint.

Second, he can intuitively track the path of colossus, even while it is exiled in the Dreaming. By the time this adventure starts the titan has wandered over the fey version of the Anthras Mountains into fey Ber, where it has incited much furor among the nature spirits. It's heading toward Seobriga to make crossing to Elfaivar at the narrowest spot. Tinker knows the machine is trying to find Kasvarina, which it thinks of as its mother.

Third, of the most interest to the party's bosses, he's a brilliant inventor, and can help design new arms and vehicles, perhaps even helping craft an airship for the party.

But most importantly, he knows how the colossus works. Its specifications called for it to be able to lift a flat object 100 feet in diameter, weighing 43,000 tons, and hold it up with one side angled on the ground (this is the 200-ft. diameter, 30-inch thick golden plate atop the Axis Seal). It needed to be able to withstand truly extreme energy, equivalent to standing in a volcano, as well as resist kinetic injuries (because the Ob don't know what sort of energy will be released when the Axis Seal opens).

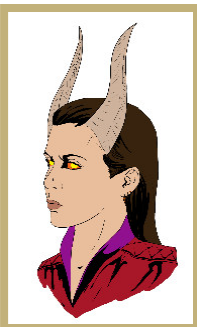
It needed to stabilize its own magical energies, without having to rely on power from other planes (because those planes would be changing). Tinker notes that the last refit they made was to open a small hollow in the colossus's chest, about big enough to hold a pumpkin, which had a pipe that could feed in some sort of liquid fuel (so that a replica of the *Wayfarer's Lantern* could be integrated into it, to infuse it with whatever planar energy was needed).

It also needed to be able to function underwater for extended periods, at pressures seen only deep under the ocean (so that years of effort would not be ruined if case the ship transporting it to Axis Island sank).

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

She serves as Danor's Minister of Outsiders, giving her great leeway to travel and make alliances. After the peace talks with Risur fell apart three months ago, she has been more active in her clandestine role, as leader of the Obscurati's Golden Cell. Since the conspiracy's ritual (detailed in the *Zeitgeist Campaign Guide*) is all but ready to go, Lya has taken point on eliminating small, scattered threats to the group's plans.

Intelligent and open-minded, Lya has her doubts about the conspiracy's plans. She insists on maintaining high moral standards for herself and her followers, to balance out the distasteful but—as she sees them—necessary deceptions and murders they commit.



Avoiding the Railroad.

Players need to be free to drive the game in the direction of their choosing, so while a variety of possible scenes and challenges are presented here, don't feel limited to using them as presented. This module endeavors to provide enough information about the setting and NPCs so that GMs can simply reveal what the mission is, let the party discover their rivals, and then leave it to the players to figure out how to thwart them.

If the group ditches Glaucia and hits up military contacts to find Tinker (or at least his duplicant) without going through Shantus's challenge, the GM should have enough insight into everyone's motivation to determine how Ber and the Obscurati will react. The party still have to race to find the real Tinker under Pemberton's control, only they might be on the run from the Beran army and forced to take refuge with Cavallo or look for clues on the under-construction railroad.

Rather than let the plot as presented be constraining, consider how to chop up and remix the adventure to give players an adventure they'll enjoy and remember.

Tinker worked with experts in several fields to integrate the necessary components. He was particularly fascinated by the mind-maker, because the man insisted the colossus be capable of nuanced facial expressions so that it could interact and express itself. Tinker even mimicked elements of the little understood human endocrine and vascular systems to grant the colossus physical feedback of its emotions, the idea being to help it form attachments to normal people and feel loyalty, rather than mere obedience.

Of course, working on huge versions of microscopically tiny anatomy just made Tinker more enthralled with the small, and nervous about the massive. But he can rattle off three dozen locations on the colossus that a precise application of force or a specific variety of magic could debilitate it. For instance, while its exterior has magically reinforced adamantine plating, for budgetary reasons many joint components – analogous to ligaments – were made of traditional adamantine, which is vulnerable to rust magic. The witchoil furnace could be disrupted by a burst of positive energy, assuming a saboteur could get inside the colossus's torso. And the fuel feed piping to the lantern housing in the chest is insufficiently secure, so it could probably be breached by a 36-pound cannonball.

Tinker has one final secret – about the mindmaker and the steel-shaper – which will set the course for Adventure Seven, *Schism*

Adventure Layout.

The plot of *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman* has defined start and end points, but the route between them can take many different paths. We roughly divide events as follows:

- ▶ **Act One: A Civilized Country.** The party makes their way to Ber and earns an audience with the Bruse.
- ▶ **Act Two: Cheating Encouraged.** The party and Lya's group compete to get first access to Tinker. Then duplicants attack the court.
- ▶ **Act Three: The Dragon's Lair.** The party sails to Isla dolas Focas and frees Tinker from Pemberton's control.

Scene Layout.

Each scene is presented in a format of Title, keywords, and tagline. 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).

Key Locations.

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

Key Locations	Page
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Manhill	Act Two
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Aigotsura	Act Two
Negranha	Act Two
Cantabrilla Railroad	Act Two
Selestala Railroad	Act Two
Karch	Act Two

Slate: National capital of Risur, on the banks of the Great Delve River.

RHC Headquarters—Slate: The national headquarters of the Royal Homeland Constabulary. Directed by Nigel Price-Hill, housed in an ornate building of the classic Risuri style. The party can communicate via *sending* and receive aid via teleportation.

Seobriga: National capital of Ber. Its massive old buildings were sized for dragons, with high spires for them to perch. Factories lie on the western shore. Protests weekly by disgruntled citizens. Predominately orcish.

Summer Court: Fine royal land thirty miles north of Seobriga. Hundreds of petitioners wait outside the gates while Ber's ruler vacations.

Nimba: Small town one mile from the summer court. Near an artillery testing range.

Reo Pedresco: Western end of the Cantabrilla Railroad. Ber's second-largest city, and most racially-diverse.

Renza: Eastern end of the Cantabrilla Railroad. Small city originally ruled by dragons who warred with Seobriga. High walls. Key defense against unincorporated gnoll tribes to the south.

Abismo Condendado: Cursed wetlands near the Cantabrilla railroad. Source of odd wintry weather. Once domain of the white dragon Cheshimox. Its lair is now defended by the ghoulish lizardfolk that served him, but they only appear if accosted.

Citado Cavallo: Walled hillside city on the shores of Marrajado de Oro (the riven sea of gold). Ruled by Cavallo de Guerra. Bastion



of orc might, weak separatist desires against Bruse Shantus.

Manhill: Hillside fort on the Risur side of the riven sea. Still vigilant against orcish invasion, though none has happened in four decades. Peace has brought farms and villages along the coast.

Isla dolas Focas: Iron-rich volcanic island. Once the domain of the red dragon Gradiax. Defended by gnollish Cult of the Steel Lord. Now controlled by Gradiax again, in the guise of Benedict Pemberton.

Pezarillo: Fishing village. Near a new naval base where Tinker Oddcog's duplicant works. A few miles off shore are the ruins of the ziggurat of Mavisha.

Aigotsura: A "staging town" on the banks of a river 40 miles from the railhead of Liss Rail Construction. Surtan Liss manages from here. Supplies for the railroad are delivered on the river. Frontier town feel. Perfunctory amenities. Arid and hilly.

Negranha: The "staging town" nearest to the Griento railhead. Homey and wooded. Griento's wife and kids live here.

Cantabrilla Railroad: Route running 325 miles from Reo Pedresco, through the riverlands, to Renza. Nearly complete. Allows freight to bypass the south lands, where gnoll pirates are common.

Selestala Railroad: Route running 300 miles from Seobriga to Citado Cavallo. Construction delayed due to disputes between the Bruse and Cavallo de Guerra.

Karch: Gnoll city on the coast of Isla dolas Focas, with a population of ten thousand. Nestled amid a forest of short gnarled and spiny trees.

NPC Roster.

Detailed entries on the various NPCs are included throughout the adventure.

NPC Entry	Page
Alonsa Frolián, goliath beast trainer	Act Two
Benedict Pemberton, industrialist	5
Brakken of Heffanita, minotaur negotiator	19
Bruse Shantus, ruler of Ber	4
Cavallo de Guerra, Adalid del Marrajado de Oro	Act Two
Damata Griento	Act Two
Glauca Evora, Executore dola Liberta	18
Harkover Lee, Risur's Principal Minister	12
Kenna Vigilante, Minister of Dragon Affairs	24
Lauryn Cyneburg, RHC Director of Infiltration	11
Lord Inspector Nigel Price-Hill	12
Lya Jierre, Danor's Minister of Outsiders	6
Melissa Amarie, journalist	15
Merton Goncala	20
Pardo, Honorary Minister of Rebellion	24
Rush Munchausen	15
Stover Delft, Chief Inspector of the RHC	11
Surtan Liss, Chief of the Cantabrilla Railway	Act Two
Tinker Oddcog, gnome technologist	3
Wolfgang von Recklinghausen, life-tinkering doctor	Act Two
Zarkava Ssa'litt, vizier	24

Pacing and Leveling.

The adventure can take many routes, and we discourage precise XP tracking. The party starts this adventure at 9th level. We recommend that they reach 10th level after finishing Bruse Shantus's game, before they return to the court. They should reach 11th level by the end of the adventure.

Recurring Characters.

Of the villains in this adventure, only one has a major role later in the series. Benedict Pemberton returns as a secondary antagonist in adventures nine and twelve. We expect Lya Jierre, who has been a foe for several adventures, to not make it out of this alive, though the party might take her prisoner or perhaps even recruit her. The leadership of Ber can be allies in adventures ten through thirteen, but it doesn't particularly matter who's in charge. If anyone important dies, though, you can replace them with someone thematically similar.

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
Rochero "Stone" Abormuerto, orc cop	14
Rodrigo Anthrasio, goliath protester	14
Ludoso Alleron, orc mansion-chief	15
Rulio, orc witness	19
Foldero, orc witness	19
Heiliana, orc executora at Nimba	Act Two
Inez, Lya's teleporter	Act Two
Ulrik, Lya's luggage porter	Act Two
Jacale, Lya's mercenary enchantress	Act Two
Commodore Thrag Vidalia, patsy	Act Two
Ejeka, Dabo, and Tarro, the Griento family	Act Two
Corta Nariz de Guerra, heir of Cavallo	Act Two
Altiero de Guerra, Cavallo's grandson	Act Two
Babaro, Cavallo's second-in-command	Act Two
Perorroso, orc druid sea chief	Act Two
Danovio, rich orc sea chief	Act Two
Willigu, Fuego goblin shaman	Act Two

Rewards.

The party's Prestige ratings (see the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide*) likely won't increase during this adventure. However, if a PC keeps in touch with reporter Melissa Amarie, eventually that character's name, actions, and beliefs will become famous across the whole continent. This transforms the party's Flint Prestige into Populist Prestige, useful in any large population area.

The PCs should each have about 46,000 gp in equipment by the start of this adventure. Each PC gets a stipend of 16,000 gp after they have their briefing, then is granted a further stipend of 20,000 gp once they finish Bruse Shantus's game. Requisitioned materials can be delivered to the party's ship via teleportation.

List of Magic Items as Treasure.

New items are presented at the end of the adventure.

- ▶ *Tyrant's teeth*
- ▶ *Bracer of liberty*
- ▶ *Skull of Cheshimox*
- ▶ *Sonic staff*
- ▶ *Lya Jierre's razorbust rapier*
- ▶ *The Tyrant's Eye*
- ▶ *Godmind Urn* (artifact)

Character Themes in the Adventure.

Adventures Six, Seven, and Eight take the party far afield from Flint, so some character themes (detailed in the *ZEITGEIST Player's Guide*) have fewer obvious connections to the plot and setting. However, we plan to include several narrative threads that start to weave large social trends around the world into the cultural movements of Flint itself. We hope these will pay off when the party returns to Risur in Adventure Nine.

- **Dockers**—In Seobriga the party will be introduced to the Panoply, a similarly colorful organization with sympathetic ideals but a stronger movement geared toward mobilizing other sectors of society and in multiple nations. Docker characters who befriend Melissa Amarie have an opportunity to gain influence and fame across the world.
- **Eschatologists**—In addition to the philosophical interests of the Panoply, an eschatologist PC will be sought out by the vizier Zarkava for advice on preparing for Bruse Shantus's possible downfall. Lya Jierre will try to enlist the character as a double agent. Also, the skull of the dragon Cheshimox will hint at a coming doom for Drakr.
- **Gunsmiths**—Tinker's lair is riddled with experimental powerful firearms. Additionally, Cavallo de Guerra will be interested in using a gunsmith PC as an avenue to acquire better guns for his military, while Kenna Vigilante will mock the character for promoting weapons that forsake traditional ideals of heroism and martial prowess, potentially complicating negotiations with the Bruse.
- **Martial Scientists**—The Panoply value education and seek to disrupt military dogma, so will try to recruit martial scientist PCs to be figureheads for the unlikely synthesis of social

Final Word Before We Start.

After the tight schedule of Adventure Five, *Cauldron Born*, we've made an effort to present a scenario with more opportunities to explore the setting, and for the adventurers and the villains to find creative ways to harass each other. Also, remember that at this stage the party has the clout to call upon a swath of resources from their country (which is one reason we're sending them overseas, so they have their allies do all the work). Let them flex their creativity and have fun with their power.

populism and realistic military strategy. Kenna Vigilante, who trained at the Ursaliña College of Military History, can teach the Vigilante Sprint ability, from her thesis *How not to be Shot*.

- **Skyseers**—Glauca Evora seeks council about the future from a skyseer PC. Above Isla dolas Focas floats an island that contains a portal to the plane Avilona, hidden in an ancient ziggurat. Merely approaching the island will grant a vision of its role in later adventures.
- **Spirit Mediums**—Medium PCs will discover that they can notice the spiritual connections between duplicants and their imprinted person, though at first they won't know what it is they're sensing. They'll also be best-equipped to control the *Godmind Urn*.
- **Technologists**—Both Shantus and Cavallo would love the aid of someone who could help improve their industrial might. Tech-savvy PCs will have a chance to test their wits against Tinker and perhaps turn his devices against him. Plus in the aftermath they'll have the chance to spearhead new research for Risur.
- **Vekeshi Mystics**—Wary of the resurgence of tyranny, the Executores dola Liberta have sought divine guidance to find contacts with the Vekeshi Mystics. Glauca Evora offers an alliance between their groups, giving a vekeshi PC access to powerful agents and, in later adventures, a strong resistance force against the Obscurati.
- **Yerasol Veterans**—Military veterans will, like martial scientists, be drawn in two possible directions: they might support the Panoply as it pushes for international de-escalation, or they could aid either the Bruse or Cavallo's military endeavors.



Act One: A Civilized Country

IN THIS ACT, THE PARTY DEALS with Beran civil unrest as they pursue the gnome technologist Tinker Oddcog.

Meanwhile in the News...

While the party is in Ber, what's happening everywhere else?

- **Colossus.** The world reacts to news of the colossus attack in Flint. Archmissionary Cornelius Eboracum of the Clergy offers exorcism aid for evil spirits unleashed from Cauldron Hill. The Drakran military has ordered the production of extremely massive cannons to repel the colossus if it should make it to their shores. Beran peasants report local nature spirits wreaking havoc and mysterious massive footprints tracing a path from the Anthras Mountains toward Seobriga. The sovereign of Danor continues to express hope for peace with Risur, but in light of widespread accusations that his nation is to blame acknowledges that negotiations are indefinitely delayed.
- **Curses.** Cauldron Hill has been interdicted by the Risuri military. The side of the mountain is in flux, sometimes showing a hole that leads to the Bleak Gate, sometimes solid rock. Soldiers have been equipped with magical weapons from the nation's vaults to combat spectral monsters that emerge each night.
- **Sedition.** Sparse reports come from Danor of university students filing formal petitions against the government and even talking of repeating the riots of a generation ago. These protests come in response to a crackdown on broadsheet journalism. The leadership in Cherage has forbidden publication of conspiracy theories that link Danor to the colossus in Risur, and several writers have been thrown into oubliettes for undermining the sovereign's denials.
- **Shipwrights.** The city of Shale, once governed by the king's sister Ethelyn, has ordered a rapid increase in ship construction in preparation for possible war with Danor. Heightened logging activities throughout Risur have been stymied by fey activity. The city of Bole is suffering an encroachment of trees, which have been walking into the streets when people aren't looking.
- **Sibilance.** Colonists in Elfaivar talk of eerie whispers in the woods. Near the Sharavathi Falls, a site claimed to be sacred to the fallen high elf empire, several caravans have disappeared except for a single survivor each. All have reported their compatriots vanishing, hearing only whispers and seeing only foot prints of mighty jungle cats.

Operation Paperclip.

Exposition/Social. Real-Time. Level 13.

The RHC preps the party to track down and recruit an agent of the enemies.

More than two months have passed since the colossus rampaged through Flint. The RHC headquarters has had its security dramatically increased, and the party and other constables have been busy chasing leads and wrecking various Obscurati plots throughout Risur. All of them have been fairly minor—miners paid to smuggle adamant, druids using magic to keep local fey content and out of the real world, glaziers hired to craft replicas of the wayfarer's lantern (see *Adventure Four, Always on Time*), a collection of scholars recruited to collate every scrap of information on the fey titans, and so on.

Most groups were fairly forthcoming once word got out that the conspiracy gave its low-ranking members rings engraved with particular patterns as a means of identifying them. People who had no idea the Ob existed offered to help investigate, and the patriotic spirit is high after the catastrophe in Flint. Of course a few groups were leaning in opposition to Risur, such as cells of erudite soldiers preparing to take over from their more traditional commanders. But enough people were shocked at news of the colossus that they ratted out their allies, rather than be part of some group hostile to their homeland.

Leaving in a Hurry.

On the morning of the 1st of Summer, 501 A.O.V., Stover Delft calls the party to the RHC headquarters. The place is thick with heightened security. When the party arrives at Delft's office, he's chit-chatting with Lauryn Cyneburg, whose first words to the party sound like an insult.

"No one else will tell you this," she says, "but we're all kinda disappointed you let the colossus escape. Are you ready to clean up your mess?"

Delft smiles politely at the awkwardness. While he explains their mission, Lauryn begins studying coordinates on a map in preparation for teleportation.

"Being in a bit of a hurry: constables, this is Lauryn Cyneburg, Director of Infiltration. Lauryn, the constables."

Delft puts a hand to the side of his mouth, as if speaking in confidence, and whispers, "She doesn't care about your names."

Smiling again, Delft continues. "I figure you have about five minutes before she's ready to teleport us to Slate. A carriage is waiting to take us to the main headquarters. We'll be meeting with the Lord Inspector and a few others to plan this mission, but I imagine before sunset you'll be in Ber."

He hands over a sheet of newspaper.



Faster Opening.

We want to bring the party to Slate so they'll be more familiar with it for events in Adventure Nine, and to make it clear that they won't be sticking around Flint much anymore. But if you want to get the party to the mission sooner, you can just have Delft brief them. We suggest you have Harkover Lee present, to increase the likelihood they'll ask him later about Pemberton. Then they can teleport straight to Ber.

"This was published a few hours ago in Seobriga. We'd had the word out that we're looking for this gnome, Tinker, and a Beran contact got this to one of our agents. A few spells later, and I have a copy here. I wouldn't be surprised if the Ob have a copy in their hands too.

"Constables, we've been spending the past two months cleaning our own house, and it's good to feel safe we don't have any more traitors or secret plots in our midst." He raps his cane against the wood of his desk. "But this is our first real chance to figure out what in the hell they were planning to do with that 300-foot-tall wind-up toy. Tinker Oddcog helped build the thing, and when everything went crazy he didn't run to the Ob. He ran away. I hope that means he might be willing to talk, but we're going to need to find him before they do.

"Now grab anything you need from the quartermaster and be back in five. Anything you need later we'll ship with express delivery."

Show the party **Player Handout—Beran News Clipping**. When the adventurers are ready Lauryn teleports herself, the PCs, and Delft to Slate, the capital of Risur.

The City of Slate.

For people used to living in the bustle of Flint, the city of Slate appears stately, calm, and perhaps a bit doddering. The Great Delve River, with its steep banks turning it almost into a man-made channel, generally separates the city into the noble west bank and the common east bank.

Six antique castles sit along the inside of a wide bend on the river's west bank, arranged in a pattern originally designed to defend against invasion. These castles act as nexuses of communities of elite gated villas, and here live the nobles descended from the many kings and queens Risur has had throughout history. Today the district resembles an overly-manicured flower garden, more pretty than practical.

Across the shore lie dozens of less affluent neighborhoods surrounding the Grand Weft, a massive square where three highways intersect. Wealthy businesses clump along the Lowland Highway, which leads from the square to docks along the river. The king's residence, Torfield Palace, sits atop a broad grassy hill a mile south of the weft. It is symbolic of the government of Risur that the king lives with the people, and only once he steps down or dies does his family move to the west bank.

Teleportation Circle.

Banhaman Academy, Slate's foremost martial school, straddles the river north of the city center. Military barracks and a small base of river warships protect the city, though it has not been attacked in over five hundred years. The city's teleportation circle lies on the east side of the river, between the military base and the academy,

Keeping Things Moving.

Make sure to give the players an opportunity to offer suggestions and ask questions about the mission, but don't let the game bog down with over-planning. Make it clear that most of the work will be done once they get to Ber, and that anything they need will be provided for them. It's important for the players to have a sense of what they'll be doing, but we also want to get them to the part of the adventure where they're being challenged.

inside a fortified bunker guarded by a dozen soldiers and mages. Spells alert the base whenever people teleport in, and the base's wardmage immediately knows of any injuries or attacks made in the teleportation chamber.

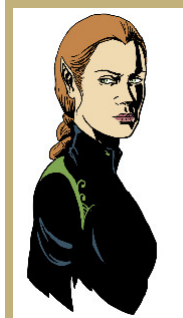
In the event of a suspected invasion, four quick axe-swipes can release a 3-ft. thick suspended wooden disk. The disk covers the teleportation circle, preventing anyone from traveling through it.

Non-hostile visitors are briefly searched, have to show papers (including teleportation passports if they are foreign), and then interviewed by a customs officer. If nothing looks suspicious they are cleared to leave the bunker, where carriages await to take them wherever they need to go. It is assumed that anyone who can afford to teleport is a V.I.P.



Stover Delft. A local Flinter in his early forties, Delft handles the logistical and political drudgery so the party can perform their heroics without too much backlash. Though normally rather easy-going, he gets squinty and condescending when people obstruct important affairs because of politics. 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.



Lauryn Cyneburg. Though over seventy years old, as a half-Elf Lauryn only betrays her age with the weariness of her eyes. She has traveled, almost literally, everywhere on the continent of Lanjyr. As the RHC's Director of Infiltration, her expertise in teleportation has seen her delivering agents to missions around the world, and she's tired of seeing them not return when things go wrong.

Lauryn carries herself with an odd mix of stiffness and informality. She'll never let her guard down or expose her own emotions, and she hates jokes because she hates laughing. But she's used to dealing with uncannily powerful individuals, and she has a knack for saying things that seem like insults, but only to people who fight monsters for a living and think they should be able to accomplish anything. Nigel Price-Hill enjoys keeping her around to remind him that his constables are real people, not mythic heroes.

Though she shows little respect for anyone, not even her superiors, she long ago decided that she had to pick something to care about, or else she'd just end up teleporting around to no purpose. So she chose Risur, because its people don't take themselves too seriously.



When the party arrives, everyone recognizes Lauryn Cyneburg, who comes through with great regularity. But it's likely the guards also recognize the party from news stories, and they're excited to meet the heroes of Flint. They're through the checkpoint with minimal hassle, and then a carriage takes them across a bridge, passes two castles, and stops at the gated compound of the national RHC headquarters.

Mission Briefing.

In an ornate conference room, the head of the RHC **Lord Inspector Nigel Price-Hill** awaits the party, and with him is the king's principal minister **Harkover Lee**, who is commonly believed to be the most powerful mage in Risur. A handful of aides handle maps and any necessary documents.

After introductions, the Lord Inspector explains that their mission is to go to Ber's capital Seobriga, find Tinker Oddcog, and get all information he has about the colossus and the Obscurati. However it would be even better if the party could recruit the gnome. Anyone who could design the colossus would be an immense asset to the nation, and the king is willing to offer quite a lot to secure Oddcog's talent.

Expected Complications.

Harkover Lee expects two main complications. Firstly, the Berans won't want to hand Tinker over, and Bruse Shantus has used his power as ruler to extend protection against divination magic to the gnome. Lee suspects that any hostile action taken against Oddcog

would alert the Bruse and might damage relations between Risur and Ber. They both think it is smarter to directly petition the Bruse and negotiate a trade, rather than waste time trying to find Tinker themselves.

Secondly, the Obscurati have also been searching for Oddcog. Shortly after the newspaper clipping was delivered to the RHC, spies reported that a Danoran warship, *Lux Profectusque*, had docked in Seobriga the day before. The party might recall that this was the ship that transported Lya Jierre when they handed control of Axis Island back over to Danor. The RHC has only the thinnest ideas of what the Ob's resources in Ber might include, but it appears they have a head start on the party.

As a final snag, the public in Seobriga has been staging weekly protests – called **Civilized Progressive Rallies** – and there's one happening today.

Resources.

Harkover Lee explains that the party's ship is being equipped with an experimental teleportation beacon. Normally such beacons must be stationary, but recent research in the wake of the Gidim incursion (see *Adventure Three, Digging for Lies*) has helped make this new device possible. The beacon will eliminate the chance of a mishap when teleporting to the ship, though they'll need to contact their crew first to find the ship's precise coordinates. Through teleportation, equipment and personnel can be delivered to and from their ship.

The RHC will provide the party with 8 scrolls of *teleport* and 30 scrolls of *sending*.

The installation of the teleportation beacon should be complete in a few hours, and then their ship will sail with haste to Seobriga. The party will already have teleported there, so hopefully they won't need a ship for at least a few days.

Knowing the Right Person.

To have a chance of reaching the Bruse, the party must be escorted by someone with connections to the court. Toward that end Harkover Lee has contacted **Brakken of Heffanita**, the Beran ambassador to Risur, and asked him to meet the party at the Seobriga teleportation circle this morning.

Unbeknownst to Lee or the RHC, Lya Jierre's bodyguard Rush Munchausen has a small web of spies in Seobriga watching for the inevitable involvement of the RHC. Magical surveillance alerted him to the *sending* message, so he arranges for a pair of local orcs to get the ambassador arrested, which should slow the party up long enough for Rush's ally Merton to concoct a more dangerous roadblock.

Teleconferencing.

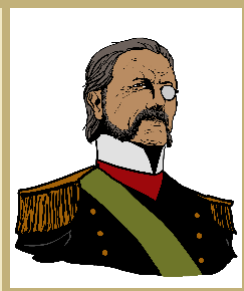
If the PCs think to ask, Harkover Lee will reveal that he has indeed tried using a *sending* spell to communicate with Tinker, to which the gnome responded: "Twenty-five words? Three, four, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, *thirty!* Behold, base five! I have thwarted your numerical orthodoxy!" And then there was a fit of laughter for a few seconds, which apparently counts as a single word.

If the PCs use *sending*, they'll receive the same reply.

Lord Inspector Nigel Price-Hill.

Viscount Price-Hill's family owns lands around the capital of Slate, so he could have lived in court, but he trained in the martial academies and fought in the Third Yerasol War. His career as an investigator began by rooting out profiteering during the war, and he later helped thwart several plots to embarrass the new king Aodhan. His most famous success, however, was defeating a group of Drakran necromancers who were trying to animate dragon corpses in the Anthras mountains.

The viscount is disdainful of corruption, but has been through enough to understand how men are tempted to it. He has on several occasions managed to catch low-level investigators taking their first steps toward abusing their power, and turn them back on the right path by giving them a second chance.



Harkover Lee.

Perhaps the most powerful mage in Risur, Lee acts as bodyguard and chief of staff to the king. Straight-backed and virile despite being in his sixties, Lee speaks crisply and passionately in a slight Ber-tinged accent, and was said to be quite the lady-killer in his youth. He always dresses in reds and golds and carries a solid gold orb tucked into his robes. He never eats or drinks in public. He was once known as the dragon tyrant Inacht the Hex-Eater, but he has abandoned that identity and is now loyal to Risur.





Calling in Favors.

Though the party's Prestige with Risur likely grants them a lot of leeway to call in favors, they're operating in foreign territory, so increase the effective level of any favor by 2. They can still get help, but it will take longer.

We haven't planned any particular allies for the party to contact, but feel free to trot out whatever old spy movie tropes you'd like. Perhaps when they need a ride in a hurry, a sympathetic half-giant named Carlos Diego can get them mighty stallions. And when they need someone to spy on the Ob group, they learn that the famous agent Lady Green is actually a quintet of green-skinned goblin women skilled at stealth and, believe it or not, seduction.

Leads.

Before the party leaves Seobriga and seeks out the Bruse, the Lord Viscount suggests they talk to the journalist, **Melissa Amarie**. They're less sure about actually trying to get access to the military facilities mentioned in the article and find Tinker's trail. There are dozens of military installations in Ber that might benefit from the gnome's talents, so simply stumbling across him is wildly unlikely.

If the party wants to ask around in Slate before they leave, such as to talk to some of Tinker's old contacts, the Lord Viscount doesn't recommend it. He could have some local constables handle that task, then pass along the information. Once they're ready, Lauryn Cyneburg begins studying maps in an adjacent room for another teleport, and they'll be in Seobriga ten minutes later.

Upgraded Ship.

Before the party teleports away, make sure they know that they have a ship that will back them up. The total cost of the ship should stay under 50,000 gp.

Welcome to Seobriga.

Exploration. Montage. Level 9.

The party might be in for some culture shock.

Usually when a nation falls it is after much war and bloodshed, but under the dragon tyrants most of the power was possessed by the rulers themselves. So when Widoreva, the female blue dragon who was the last ruler of Seobriga, died, the city was left mostly intact. Today the city is much as it was two centuries ago, full of massive squat buildings with dramatic spires that dragons once perched on. Where before a single dragon might treat several such buildings as his lair, now most of the old buildings serve as homes for multiple families.

The poor camps and hovels that surrounded the city were abandoned when the former subjects of the dragons realized they could move into their masters' abodes. Because the dragons preferred stone structures, even the worst of the riots and fires did relatively little damage. Only recently has there been a need for new construction, which the wealthier families have seen as a means to demonstrate their civility, hiring Danoran and Risuri architects and gardeners to create beautiful homes.

Of course, this has left the city center mostly to the poor, and as they have grown frustrated with the slow improvements they have



reverted more to old tribalism. Though the area around the city center is still safe and well-patrolled, there are pockets of neighborhoods where skull and hide totems mark territory that should not be violated unless you're willing to fight.

The city's harbor on its western shore has a few dozen factories, the most of any city in Ber but a pittance compared to Flint. The city is blessed by favorable winds, and since Berans were already so good at building spires, their smokestacks keep the soot and other foulness high above the city.

Industrial traffic keeps most docks busy, and Seobriga was never much for fishing anyway. Huge farms and ranches to the east, filled with five-foot-tall goats and bison the size of a small house, feed the city. Since Seobriga's lush peninsula has relatively few streams or freshwater wells, wine is the drink of choice, and vineyards are common to the north, where fog rolls through the hillside forests. The dragons trained their humanoid subjects to cultivate multiple levels of plant-life, so shade-grown berries share soil with massive sequoias that were grown for lumber. The greatest wooden structures are long gone now, but they rivaled anything men have ever built for sheer size.

Dotted through the city and the surrounding landscapes, monuments to the dragons remain, some defaced but many restored. The late Vairday Bruse likened it to mounting the heads of bears and deer, a pretty decoration and nothing more.

Panoply of Protests.

Ber's teleportation beacons are not defended like those in Risur, since they were originally built for dragons to greet and impress visitors. Those who teleport into Seobriga arrive in the center square of the city, surrounded only by a simple gazebo-like pavilion, guarded by a handful of soldiers. Lauryn Cyneburg is familiar with these details and typically disguises herself when she goes to Seobriga; she recommends as much to the party.



Where Is Tinker?

Players are notoriously curious about things that don't actually matter to the plot. Of course, they don't know what is important and what isn't. So while the point of the adventure is meant to be "compete with the Ob to get the right to talk to Tinker" and not "find Tinker's hiding place," it's likely that the players will try to find him.

Of course the real Tinker is on Isla dolas Focas working for Pemberton. About half his time he spends controlling his duplicant, through which he works in a military base two hundred miles north of Seobriga on a dry strip of land along the coast, near the village of Pezarillo. A recently uncovered portal to the plane of water (see Adventure Three, *Digging for Lies*) led to the establishment of a new naval base.

Tinker's job there is to oversee the development of new warships, which then do their field testing in the waters over the portal. The area has been labeled a hazard and is thus avoided by merchant traffic.

He works about 4 hours a day, is idle for 8, then "sleeps" for 12, during which he's actually busy in Pemberton's lair. During his idle time he plays with the desert foxes that have free run of the naval base.

Wild Goose Chases.

Ber has dozens of other military facilities the party could search. Be careful not to give them pointless "leads" to people or places that don't add anything to the mystery. There's a difference between a red herring—clues that lead to a false conclusion, sometimes laid by the villain to cover his tracks—and a wild goose chase—which is just a waste of time. If the party goes looking for Tinker at a dozen different military bases, it's probably best to relate the investigations as a montage unless you want to use the opportunity to forward some side plots or even invent useful leads applicable to the main mission.

The party likely arrives in the mid-morning, and they appear in full sight of hundreds of orcs, minotaurs, goblins, and half-giants out in protest against their ruler. People react with intense curiosity and invitations to join the protest.

This is an opportunity for a heavy "culture shock" moment, since despite the sweltering summer heat the protesters are almost all wearing wigs that were in vogue in Danor 10 years ago, and some are dressed in fancy, uncomfortable attire. Minotaur and half-giant students sweat into their frilly white collars while nearby a small herd of orc women in hoop skirts pump axes in the air to the beat of a protest song. The large swaths of orc men who make up the bulk of the protest shout to other orcs in swings that dangle off the roofs around the edges of the square, crooning out songs as they paint vibrant murals along the walls of buildings that were built for the proportions of dragons, not men.

The unifying force of the protest is the Panoply. While the middle of the square is chaotic, at its edges self-styled intellectuals talk to people as they arrive, figure out what their grievances are, and give them color-coded flags to wave. Poverty is black, violence is red, corruption is yellow, and so on. The most common color is white, meant to protest apathy of officials who should be promoting the revolution. Anyone clever enough to question the symbolism of hundreds of protesters waving white flags gets invited to more high-brow Panoply events later that evening.

Being Watched.

Starting the moment they arrive, the party is being watched by agents working for Lya Jierre. The two dozen orcs and half-giants are dispersed, some tailing the party while others report back to Rush Munchausen, Lya's *immovable-rod*-wielding bodyguard.

The party might notice the tails with a successful Wisdom (Insight) check (DC 20 in crowded areas, DC 15 once they move away from the city center) and possibly follow them back to a small (by local standards) house where Rush is waiting. Rush has 9 Obscurati allies present, and someone is always listening to a crystal totem (marked with some of Brakken of Heffanita's fur) that intercepts any *sendings* that include him. They have others primed, waiting for the chance to grab personal items of the PCs.

The tails have strict orders not to interact with the party, and to pretend to be pickpockets if they're confronted. Rush plans to ambush the party, and he expects they'll go to the journalist. If he gets word they're on the way to her, he and his men pack up and prepare an assault.

Lya's group has many more people on *Lux Profectusque*, but the ship is moored a half mile off shore. If the party decides to go after it, see Appendix Two (appearing in Part Two).

Testimony Requested.

Brakken is not present to greet the party, having been arrested a half hour earlier. When the PCs teleport in they're spotted by an orc policeman named **Rochero "Stone" Abormuerto**. Bedecked in a fine blue suit trimmed with gold epaulets and crowned by a grandiose feathered helmet, Stone shouts and waves for them to come over. If made to wait he pulls out a heavy iron rod—the Beran equivalent of a billy club—and shoves people out of the way to get to the party.

Stone has orders to wait for any visitors to come through the circle, then bring them to Glauca Evora's "courtroom." A muscular, intimidating orc, Stone is used to bossing around common workers and will treat the party with rude suspicion. He demands they come along, no questions, or else he'll throw them in jail. The crowd nearby responds with jeers and tries to get the party to join the protest.

If things get violent, a half-giant who was near the teleportation beacon comes by and yells in a booming voice for people to stop. The man, **Rodrigo Anthrasio**, realizes that the party could use some guidance and offers to show them around. He can answer any of their questions about the protest and the city.

Of course the party is free to go as they please. If they don't go with Stone, eventually Glauca herself will find the party.

Checking Tinker's Trail.

Following the info in Melissa Amarie's article, the party might check Drumalio Shipyard and the foundries in Piria Quarter. People there recollect the gnome's visit but have no clue where he is now. At the shipyard, they recount him snapping at a crane to make it move more smoothly. At the foundries, he crawled along the floor near the bellows whispering and sniffing, then gave a detailed report about everything in the building that was improperly assembled, broken, or likely to break soon.

He also complained about a steam engine schematic, saying it was primitive and would work better powered by lightning than coal.



Panoply Philosophy.

The Panoply started with professors who wondered what other cultures Ber should emulate in its revolution. Their nation wanted to become “civilized” and wanted to know what that meant, so the professors discovered numerous different ways to be civil, drawn from around the world. But as the leadership of Ber gravitated primarily toward a Danoran style of fancy clothes and regimented etiquette, these professors promoted a broader approach.

Perhaps what contributed most to their popularity was that they also looked to the traditions of Ber’s own cultures, and they drew parallels between supposedly “primitive” customs and similar behaviors in the nations Berans were supposed to look toward. Many who were disgruntled with the accusatory tone of the core of the revolution were drawn to the Panoply’s inclusiveness, which helped keep many people at least within the fringe of the revolution when they might have been tempted to avoid it altogether and cling to their old ways.

When the foreman explained that they could not just produce lightning on command, Tinker glared at him like he was lying, then said nothing more. A week later a package arrived with detailed blueprints for a device that apparently can produce lightning, but would be too expensive for Ber to produce.

Investigating for the People.

Social. Real-Time. Level 3.

Journalist Melissa Amarie provides leads on Tinker Oddcog, plus other troubles afoot in her nation.

Whether by getting a guide, doing some footwork, or using divination magic, the party can find Melissa Amarie’s room in a huge mansion a half mile from the central square. She lives there with two dozen other members of the Panoply, many of them current or former students of the city’s nascent colleges. The “chieftain” of the building, who manages everyone’s affairs as if they were a wilderness clan, is **Ludoso Alleron**, a bespectacled orc who insists on greeting people at the door and handing them abridged copies of the writing of philosopher William Miller.

When the party arrives the little bohemian clan is debating the merits of going out to the protest. Melissa doesn’t want to, but Ludoso says that she has a role to play in eliminating ignorance and spreading knowledge, a classic if somewhat simplistic overview of Millerite philosophy.

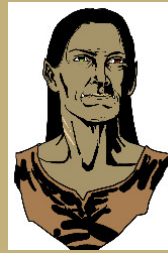
Melissa.

The night before (the 91st of Spring), Melissa was approached by Lya Jierre and her two bodyguards. They found her at a nearby winehouse and expressed interest in her article on Tinker, even though it had not yet even gone to press. Though suspicious, she shared everything she had about the gnome, which wasn’t much. The article on Tinker was incidental to a larger article she’s working on to reveal the cronyism of Bruse Shantus.

When the party shows up, Melissa is initially wary, but if they aren’t hiding their identities she quickly recognizes them, since she studied their exploits when researching Tinker. Her opinion of them depends more on their social connections than their combat

The implicit center of the disparate Panoply philosophies is that almost all customs and cultures have some merit, but that many social norms are not in their ideal form. Leading figures of the Panoply look to improve people’s lives by examining their cultures and suggesting improvements, often in the form of integrating aspects of other cultures. Those within the movement might be receptive to such recommendations, but many outsiders view the Panoply as meddlers.

More subtly, though, the Panoply also argues that some cultural norms are value-neutral, neither making life better or worse but simply give it flavor. Brave swordfighters in Crisillyir might wear gold jewelry as badges of honor, while minotaur warriors scar their faces in ornate patterns, and though the former might think the latter barbaric, as long as each is pursued of one’s own free will they are equally valid varieties of the same drive to have an identity. And in the view of the Panoply, variety is valuable in and of itself.



Melissa Amarie. A droll half-orc woman with mismatched eyes—one red, one green—Melissa operates independently as a journalist. The educated daughter of an orc sea captain who raided Risur for a wife across the Marrajado de Oro (see Cavallo de Guerra), Melissa attended the Dyal Revolutionary Institute in Seobriga and quickly found a home with the nascent Panoply movement. With their support she finds and interviews unusual individuals and delivers her reports to several newspapers around her country. Her dark sense of humor and casual writing style earned her an audience among common laborers, who will often gather when one of their literate coworkers gets a copy and reads it to the group.

Melissa lives prosperously and always has one or two boarders at her home, but never for more than a month at a time. She encourages people never to become static in social interactions, but in truth she just doesn’t have much patience for others. She loves to learn personal stories and the reasons why people act how they do, but that doesn’t mean she actually likes people. When she gets bored in conversation, she’ll start writing in a notebook.



Rush Munchausen. Wiry and scrappy with huge forearm muscles, Rush fits many classic adventurer clichés. An orphaned half-elf from Drakr, Rush got into constant fights growing up and was harassed for the discolored birthmark on his forehead. When he was old enough to swing a sword he signed on to monster hunts in the Malice Lands for quick cash, then parlayed that skill into expeditions to the trap-laden dungeons of Beran dragon lairs and Crisillyiri demon tombs.

In one of those tombs he found a damaged *immovable rod*. Intrigued, he commissioned a pair of weapon-ready *immovable rods* that he can easily activate or deactivate, and which can extend to be as long as staves. He developed his own unique fighting style and eventually stumbled into work with the Obscurati while exploring the Ancient ziggurat of Nem. He was transferred around a few times until being assigned as Lya Jierre’s bodyguard.

Rush practically breathes snark, and he loves nothing more than humbling people with big opinions of themselves. He self-deprecates easily and with much vulgarity, but is quite content despite realizing what a thoroughly awful person he is.



proWess. She generally assumes authority figures are dangerous and corrupt, but people with sympathetic philosophies intrigue her.

Melissa tries to gauge whether they're intelligent and well-spoken. She knows the Panoply organizers of the weekly Civilized Progressive Rallies, and knows they've been looking for foreign guest speakers. She's most curious to talk with docker PCs, who she thinks would be popular and good for the movement. After that, martial scientist or Yerasol veteran PCs get her attention, because the Panoply wants to entice more soldiers to join their movement.

Other PCs might interest her too if they seem possessed of reason and novel ideas, though she's leery of eschatologists since she shares the common misconception that they're obsessed with death.

If any PC seems suitable, she offers to arrange for them to speak at next week's Civilized Progressive Rally. If they're amenable, she can get the Panoply organizers to promote the event with grandiose portraits of the character painted on walls around the city, which should garner the PC an audience of thousands.

Let's Talk Tinker.

Aside from what she put in her article, she heard that Tinker carried a metal orb with him everywhere he went, though she couldn't find out what it was. She got a sense from everyone who interacted with Oddcog that the gnome simply was happy to be given tasks to solve, not that he was particularly wedded to the idea of working for Ber. And she got some rumblings from a contact in the court (she won't mention it, but she knows one of the Bruse's servers) that Shantus is receiving a lot of complaints about the gnome from the soldiers at whatever facility he's hidden in.

If treated nicely Melissa might also share her insight that Lya Jierre and her bodyguards were dressed for state business, which she thinks means the tiefling was headed to the summer court. Also, Lya gave her an address here in the city where she could find them if she got any more information. The address is the house where Rush is set up, though unless the party was very sneaky the man and his crew are already on the way.

Keeping in Touch.

Melissa doesn't play a key role in the rest of the adventure, but she offers an in for parties that want to find allies overseas. Similar to the way Thames Grimsley could help link the party to the docker movement in Flint, Melissa can be important or completely ignored after this point. But if the party protects her during Rush's attack (see below), she might tag along with the party for the sake of reporting what she expects to be momentous events.

In the long run, if a docker, martial scientist, or Yerasol veteran keeps in contact with her, she'll keep them in the news, first in Seobriga, then throughout Ber, and finally in publications across the continent. Random strangers in cities might recover the PC and either commend their opinions and actions or argue with them. This makes it difficult to be inconspicuous but converts the party's Flint Prestige into Populist Prestige (useful in any large population area).

Bum Rush.

Action. Tactical. Level II.

Rush and Obscurati henchmen attack the party.

Rush won't attack until he knows the party will be at a given spot for long enough for his men to get into position. Most likely he strikes at Melissa Amarie's residence, but he'll also move if it looks like the party is trying to catch a boat out to *Lux Profectusque*. He'd prefer to avoid the hassle of fighting anywhere with a lot of witnesses, but he has no qualms killing a few bystanders if necessary.

To be clear, Rush is making a bad decision here. He underestimates the party and hasn't considered the long-term consequences of giving the RHC a chance to save the life of a journalist. The narrative intent of the scene is to present Rush as an antagonist who can recur, giving the party more satisfaction as they compete against him in Act Two.

Rush's Forces.

- Rush Munchausen
- 1 Obscurati ambush mage
- 8 Obscurati skulks

Terrain.

It varies based on where the party goes, but if Rush attacks at Melissa's home it's a fairly open building, a hundred feet square and forty feet high, with a 60-ft. wide open-roofed inner courtyard. Stairs lead up 20 feet to a second floor balcony, then up another 20 feet to the roof. The courtyard is full of furniture for casual gatherings. A twenty-foot wide spire on the front of the building rises another sixty feet and is adorned with vines and flowers.

Tactics.

Once the party is inside, Rush sneaks to the front door and plants a one-use *immovable rod* to hold the massive double doors shut (an action and DC 30 Strength check push the doors open enough to slip through).

Then he and the rest of the team scale up to the roof and prepare ropes to descend through the courtyard's open ceiling, heard with a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check. They drink their magical potions that grant them darkvision 60 ft. for 1 hour and wait for the mage to cast *darkness*, then descend in the confusion. Four skulks each target a single PC while Rush drops beside whoever he thinks is the most dangerous melee opponent. The mage remains on the roof, targeting anyone who escapes the darkness.

Melissa and her two dozen innocent housemates run in a panic, trying to open the door and get out, hammering helplessly in the darkness. Some who were upstairs come out at the commotion, then cower in their rooms.

**Rush Manhausen**

Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral evil

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

Hit Points 130 (20d8+40)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover; must have *immovable rods*)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws STR +4, DEX +8, CON +6, INT +2, WIS +3, CHA +3

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +5, Intimidation +5, Perception +5, Stealth +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Elvish, Primordial

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Contingent Gatecrasher Charm. This one-use token triggers automatically when Rush drops below half of his hit points, or can be activated as an action. It transports its holder most of the way into the Bleak Gate, effectively removing them from the real world. Unless special magic completes their transition to the Bleak Gate, 5 minutes later they return to the real world, but they have time to move to a safer location. When activated, and again if he's pulled back to the real world, Rush takes 5d6 necrotic damage.

Dirty Trick (1/Round). A creature that Rush hits with a melee weapon attack makes a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or gains one of the following conditions until the end of its next turn: blinded, deafened, or poisoned.

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

Immovable Combat Style. Rush has trained extensively in a strange fighting style, wielding an *immovable rod* in each hand so much that they have practically become extensions of his own arms. On his turn, Rush can activate or deactivate *immovable rods* without spending any actions to do so, even able to gain a fly speed by rapidly brachiating through the air.

If subjected to an effect that forces him to move while he has an *immovable rod* in hand, Rush may choose to ignore it. As a bonus action when he hits an opponent with an *immovable rod*, he can anchor the target to the rod, preventing it from moving away from the rod. The target is not paralyzed or restrained; it simply cannot move from its location without first destroying the rod or using an action to make a successful DC 30 Strength check to move with the rod up to 10 feet. The rod remains motionless and cannot be used to attack while it is anchoring a creature. Rush cannot use this trait against amorphous or incorporeal targets.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Rush attacks four times with his immovable maces.

Immovable Maces. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) magical bludgeoning damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4+4) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

Possessions. Rush carries two *immovable rods* that double as +2 maces and a *contingent gatecrasher charm*.

New Magic Item.**Immovable Rod**

Rod, Uncommon

This flat iron rod has a button on one end. You can use an action to press the button, which causes the rod to become magically fixed in place. Until you or another creature uses an action to push the button again, the rod doesn't move, even if it is defying gravity. The rod can hold up to 8,000 pounds of weight. More weight causes the rod to deactivate and fall. A creature can use an action to make a DC 30 Strength check, moving the fixed rod up to 10 feet on a success.

Obscurati Skulk

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 16 (studded leather, shield)

Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws DEX +4, CON +4, CHA +1

Skills Athletics +5, Intimidation +3, Perception +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +6

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Evasion. If the Obscurati skulk is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the Obscurati skulk instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, the Obscurati skulk deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the Obscurati skulk that isn't incapacitated and the Obscurati skulk doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *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.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker that Obscurati skulk can see hits it with an attack, the Obscurati skulk can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage against it.

EQUIPMENT

Possessions. The Obscurati skulk carries a potion it can drink to gain darkvision 60 feet for 1 hour.





Obscurati Ambush Mage

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 16 (mage armor, ring of protection)

Hit Points 65 (10d8+20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws STR +0, DEX +6, CON +6, INT +5, WIS +6, CHA +2

Skills Arcana +7, History +7, Perception +8, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 18

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elvish, Primordial

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Feat: War Magic. The Obscurati ambush mage has advantage when it is concentrating on a spell and has to make a Constitution saving throw from taking damage, it can wield weapons or a shield in both hands and still make somatic components for spellcasting, and the Obscurati ambush mage can use its reaction to cast a spell (maximum casting time: 1 action) at a creature that provokes an opportunity attack from it.

Spellcasting. The Obscurati ambush mage is a 7th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The Obscurati ambush mage has the following spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will):** *chill touch, light, mage hand, shocking grasp*
- 1st level (4 slots):** *detect magic, disguise self, mage armor, unseen servant*
- 2nd level (3 slots):** *blindness/deafness, darkness, invisibility, knock, mirror image*
- 3rd level (3 slots):** *dispel magic, displacement, lightning bolt, vampiric touch*
- 4th level (2 slots):** *black tentacles, dimension door*

ACTIONS

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

The Cops!

If the party refused to go with the police officer Stone earlier, Glaucia Evora decides to take matters into her own hands, and goes to find the party. Her timing coincides closely with Rush's group. Indeed at the start of the third round, the mage (if he is on the roof) spots the approach of Glaucia and a cadre of police. The mage shouts down that the cops are coming, but Rush orders his team to keep fighting.

On the 10th round, Glaucia arrives. It takes half a dozen police officers to yank the *immovable rod* from its spot so they can open the door. Glaucia banishes the *darkness* with a *dispel magic*, then orders everyone to drop their weapons. The officers with her begin manacling everyone present, while Glaucia tries to save the lives of those dying from their wounds.

There are plenty of witnesses who will testify that the PCs were defending themselves against an ambush. Glaucia will send word to the police to try to investigate more, then will take the party to her courtroom. She is a judge, after all, not a detective, and her job is meting out justice, not running down criminals.

Aftermath.

Only Rush has an escape plan; his one-use *contingent gatecrasher charm* pops him into the Bleak Gate when he drops below half of his hit points, giving him 5 minutes to get distance from the party and treat his wounds, after which he'll return to the real world and hurriedly find a horse. He'll ride to the summer court and link up with Lya, alerting Merton along the way to have his own ambush ready. If he lasts long enough for Glaucia to show up, he triggers the charm himself.

Captured Ob members don't know anything the party already doesn't, except perhaps the resources aboard *Lux Profectusque*. They're loyal to Lya, though, and are willing to die for the mission.

Judge, Jury, Executioner.

Social. Real-Time. Level 9.

Glaucia Evora wants the party involved with the trial of Brakken.

The party might find their way to Glaucia on their own or in the company of the orc police officer Stone, or they might be tracked down by an impatient Glaucia, likely at Melissa Amarie's residence.

The unforgiving gnoll is severely dressed in her judge's livery: gray robes and a coppery stole adorned with rearing dragons. The broken-chain badge of an Executore dola Liberta shines on her chest, and six gold rings adorn one of her ears. She carries a plain staff that appears to bear fresh blood stains. Glaucia moves and speaks slowly and deliberately, and her blue eyes watch inscrutably those with whom she speaks.

If the party provokes a fight with Glaucia, her stats are listed in Appendix Three: Berans (see Part Three). Even if they are likely to prevail, however, it's a terrible idea: Glaucia is such a well known and highly respected Executore that the party will find the whole city turning against them if they should be so crass as to initiate combat. Diplomacy is the only reasonable approach here.

Glaucia Evora. A female gnoll from the unincorporated southern tribes, Glaucia joined Executores dola Liberta fifteen years ago after gnolls in the Cult of the Steel Lord attacked her village and tried to kidnap the children to convert them. Her mate died in the fighting, and she was cornered with her pups. When the leader of the raid party reached out for her youngest son, Glaucia stabbed the boy in his heart and vowed that her family would die before it would be made slaves. As the raid leader tried to decide what to do, she placed the knife to her next child's throat. The raiders let her family go with the justification that she would tell of the cult's might.

Instead, she trained herself and her surviving children to defend themselves. She pledged herself to the Executores and was bestowed with divine power. Among the notoriously hierarchy-adverse sisterhood of the Executores, Glaucia is one of the most respected, famous for her piercing blue eyes and her lack of sympathy for those who let themselves be controlled.





How Often Do Adventurers Get Subpoenaed?

Glaucia introduces herself and explains that during the Bruse's absence for summer, she has taken it upon herself to act as extemporaneous judge in Seobriga for complaints of sufficient merit. This is an unusual role for an Executore, but permitted by her powers. Those familiar with Beran culture that make a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check or know its legal system and make a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check recognize that in this context she is performing a role normally required of the Bruse, which is in a way an indictment of the Bruse's behavior. The party would be well served to be careful of the politics here.

She tells the party that she requests they testify at Brakken's trial. She understands that as outsiders they aren't familiar with Ber's system, so she explains that the trial will be fast, and that by making the request she is just being polite, because if they refuse they'll be held for contempt for a day, at least.

Glaucia assumes the party is here for international business reasons, and has no inkling they're interested in Tinker Oddcog. But she does know that a Danoran warship arrived yesterday, and that Lya Jierre is at the summer court now. She has a hunch that this situation is trouble for Ber, and so after the trial she offers to accompany the party to the court, assuming they have not given her reason to arrest them. Again, her offer is just being polite; they cannot legally decline.

Expedited Trials.

Glaucia's "courtoom" is an old building missing most of its roof and parts of its walls. It was at this spot that the dragon Widoreva collapsed when she died. The people of Seobriga have treated the building as a monument of their victory, maintaining the damaged structure and guarding the bones of the dragon.

Glaucia uses the snout of the dragon's skull as her desk, and the entire face is covered in layers of old candle wax. The suspect on trial is required to stand in a cage made of the dragon's ribs. Soldiers guard the perimeter of the skeleton, and hundreds of people pack the room to watch the trial, shushing each other so they can hear witnesses speak.

A few other trials have occurred today, mostly tenants complaining about their landlords or workers about their bosses. The floor just outside the ribcage is spattered with blood from the beatings of those found guilty.

Favorable Treatment.

Impartiality is Glaucia's foremost goal in her duty as judge, but if any PCs are Vekeshi mystics she feels a bit of kinship. Before the trial she spares a moment with the PC to discuss how she expects to rule, and what the party will have to do if they want to help Brakken. She hopes the PC won't disappoint her.

Indeed, if a Vekeshi PC comports herself well – or mentions that the party defeated two known Beran criminals (the lizardfolk arsonists in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*) – Glaucia will encourage continued collaboration. She personally finds the fey affinities of the Vekeshi distasteful, but she's willing to exchange information and work toward common goals. This pays off in later adventures but can be ignored if the PC is not interested.

The People vs. Brakken.

When the party arrives, they're directed to benches at the front of the audience. Brakken is brought out from a cell in another part of the building and escorted to the cage. Glaucia takes her seat and explains the proceedings for the sake of the outsiders.

The plaintiffs will provide their side of the story. The defendant will state his. Physical witnesses will testify. Then character witnesses may speak. Then each group can have a few minutes of discussion and argument – without, she stresses, any physical contact or violence – after which she'll lay her sentence.

Brakken is a man of high rank, but unlike in most countries, here that actually affords him fewer protections rather than more. The common folk love the opportunity to see a powerful figure brought low, and Executores go out of their way to ensure authority figures don't abuse their powers. The trial, brief though it is, has drawn a large crowd. Vendors at the edges offer dried meats and roasted corn dipped in butter and cheese.

Trial by Fire.

There is one additional element, a power Glaucia possesses that makes her one of Ber's most prized judges. She traces a ring of brimstone on the ground and whispers to it, causing it to flicker with dim fire. Anyone who testifies is required to stand in the ring. If they tell a lie within the ring, the flames flare and they take 1 point of fire damage.

When each person stands in the brimstone, Glaucia asks them their name, asks them what day it is, then asks them to answer what day it is again, but to lie this time. This test shows to the audience and Glaucia that the magic is active, and deters superfluous witnesses from testifying.

Unruly Folderol.

Brakken's arrest happened after a small scuffle this morning. Hired by Rush Munchausen, a pair of orcs named **Rulio** and **Foldero** concocted a fight. Knowing they'd have to answer truthfully they even devised a reason for the fight: they waited for Brakken to pass by on his way to the teleportation circle, and then Rulio spilled a jug of wine on Foldero's shirt.

Foldero yelled, they started pushing each other, and then Rulio shoved Foldero into the ambassador. Foldero elbowed Brakken in



Brakken of Heffanita. The minotaur ambassador from Ber to Risur, the outwardly serene Brakken was tapped by the rulers of Risur and Danor to mediate their peace talks, which ultimately failed. Canny yet outgoing, his mere presence tamps down on people's baser instincts. He once even got a raging bear to back down with a single disapproving glare.

Brakken secretly is a telepath, and has had such success in negotiations because he can hear the surface thoughts and, if necessary, nudge people toward compromise. He's genuinely driven by a desire to help people live in harmony, though raising his own prestige is certainly a bonus.

He dresses in simple tribal clothing and refuses to travel without his most trusted friend, a dire bear named Feroz.



Consequences.

An intelligent defense of Brakken earns Glaucia's respect, which she will mention to Bruse Shantus and his advisors in Act Two. If they can pin the fake accusations on Rush, it will also hurt Lya's standing when it comes time for the Bruse to vote on who should get access to Tinker.

his snout, knocking out a tooth, and then grabbed him and tried to shove him at Rulio, who was planning to aim a punch at Foldero then "miss" and hit Brakken.

Brakken possesses psychic powers, and so rather than be pummeled he simply manifested a calming aura and told the men to stop fighting. He's done this dozens of times, and people never realize they've been magically influenced. But Rush warned the two orcs of Brakken's power, and so while they did indeed stop fighting, they still had the presence of mind to shout that Brakken had used magic on their minds.

Mind control is seen as one of the worst possible crimes in Ber, where stealing someone's freedom is anathema to the revolution. The accusation whipped up a frenzy in the crowds gathered for the day's protest, and a small mob dragged Brakken to Glaucia, threatening to slit his throat if he used his magic on them.

Testimonies.

Rulio and Foldero take turns telling about the same story. They got into a fight after Rulio spilled his wine, and while they admit they didn't need to fight, they claim that Brakken's crime is far, far worse than the minor ruckus they caused. Rulio adds that everyone's heard of how Brakken stared down a bear once, and he thinks Brakken used magic then too, making him a fraud.

Brakken tells the story from his perspective, which was just that these two men started fighting and fell into him, and then he was getting hit, so he yelled at them to stop. Glaucia presses, asking if he used magic. Brakken glares at her, since they both know his admission might ruin his career. Then he answers, "I did no harm to them. In fact, I spared them further injury. But yes, I used magic to calm them. Once I passed they would have been free to keep fighting. I did not steal their liberty."

Merton Goncala. This half-deaf half-orc has taken an odd course in his life. After serving briefly in the military as a beast-trainer, Merton one day saw a Danoran performer showcasing various acoustic tricks, including shattering a wine glass with her voice. Fascinated, Merton offered to travel with the woman and take care of the horses that pulled her carriage in exchange for lessons. He slowly moved from tutor to tutor, acquiring a variety of novel skills until five years later he assembled a sonic weapon. Though Ber's military was interested, it could not afford to produce the weapon, so Merton went to Danor, where he caught the attention of Lya Jierre.

Today Merton, who has lost most of his hearing from his experiments, travels with Lya as bodyguard (and occasional animal handler). He comes across a bit dim-witted, but he's just absent-minded. He occasionally questions Lya's orders when she requires him to harm people, but he trusts her judgment.



The audience jeers. Glaucia asks for a list of powers he possesses, and follows up by asking if he left any out. Then she asks who he has used these powers on; he refuses to answer, saying that he only ever used his power to bring peace.

A pair of witnesses corroborate the orcs' story of the fight, and they make an effort to talk up their role in dragging the minotaur to justice. Then Glaucia gives the party an opportunity to defend Brakken's character. She asks if they were aware of his psychic power, what their past history is with them, and why they were meeting him. Law-savvy PCs can tell she's fishing for information, which is not pertinent to the current trial.

Cross-Examination.

Rulio and Foldero think the case is settled, so they don't bother to ask any questions. Glaucia doesn't suspect any sort of foul play, so she doesn't press the two. But the party can fairly easily cut through their stories with the right questions, especially if they think the timing is a little too convenient. If they can force the two orcs to admit they were put up to the fight by a foreigner, it will help things for Brakken.

If the party wants Brakken to be spared ridicule and ostracization, they can try to defend the morality of what he did and convince the crowd that he's innocent. While Berans in general hate being told what to do, the party might compare what Brakken did to a musician singing a calming song, or a shaman rallying his people with a rousing sermon. If they can earn enough good will from the audience, they might be able to then point out that the goal of the revolution is to civilize the nation of Ber. It's risky, but with the right build-up it's possible to turn the audience's loathing of Brakken into admiration.

Sentencing.

If the party doesn't make any headway in defending Brakken, Glaucia sentences the minotaur to a moderate beating, and instructs the audience to spread the word of their ambassador's abuse of power. She orders Brakken to come forth, then proceeds to wallop him with her staff for thirty seconds. This knocks him to the ground and leaves him broken and bleeding, but he'll heal eventually. With a glance at the party, she tells the guards to hold Brakken in a cell until he's well enough to leave on his own. She then adjourns the court and walks over to the party, ready to accompany them.

If the party discovers that the orcs were put up to this, Glaucia only sentences Brakken to a light beating, lasting a few seconds. Brakken's reputation might still be ruined, but he'll be able to accompany the party. Glaucia still tags along.

If the party clears Brakken's name, Glaucia sentences him to a perfunctory beating, because he did break the letter of the law. He has to hold his hands out, and she strikes him painfully across the knuckles. But she tells the audience to speak no ill words about the ambassador. He maintains his honor in Ber, but word will eventually spread, making foreign dignitaries unwilling to work alongside him. He'll have to find a new position.

As for Rulio and Foldero, if their ploy is uncovered, Glaucia sentences them to at least a light beating, and possibly a moderate beating if it's clear their goal was to harm Brakken. No one here has done anything worthy of a savage beating.



Monument Road.

Exploration. Montage. Level 3.

The lands outside Seobriga, dotted with relics of the dragon tyrants, are generally safe.

The days are long in summer, so if the party finishes the trial before mid afternoon they should have enough time to complete the 30-mile journey to the Bruse's summer court by nightfall. Glaucia can see to them receiving sturdy horses and if necessary a carriage.

The highway that leads to the summer court is known as Monument Road for the hundreds of statues that line it, each representing a different ally of Vairday Bruse at the founding of Ber. The five nearest to the gates of Seobriga each have a shaded park surrounding them, and depict the leaders who unified the five major races of Ber.

- ▶ Cavallo de Guerra, who united the orcs.
- ▶ Shantus, who united the minotaurs.
- ▶ Aitch, who united the lizardfolk.
- ▶ Llanachita, who united the half-giants.
- ▶ Geeba, who united the goblins.

Right beside the city gates is, of course, Vairday Bruse, who united the nation.

Local Color.

Further from the city, the party passes farmland and pastures, and they can see herds of huge short-haired goats as big as bison being wrangled by ranchers. The goatherds ride on normal-sized horses, but rely on trained bears to keep their stock under control.

The terrain gets rougher and rolling, and the road heads uphill into a forest of truly massive sequoias. This was once a hunting ground of the dragon tyrants, where workers tended to vineyards and tried not to be eaten by the tyrants' pets that roamed the woods. The forest is mostly uninhabited now, though ranchers sometimes roam here and let their herds graze in the shade.

Petitioning a Vision.

Glaucia will talk if the party engages her, but she's content to ride in silence at first. When the horses take a break after an hour or so, she poses a question to the group.

Risur's skyseers are famous for predicting the future. Glaucia is curious about the nature of prophecy, and whether future events are predetermined. She believes they cannot be, or else no one would have free will. She expresses that she would like someone to tell her a vision of her own future, just so she'd be able to prove her freedom by denying that future.

In particular, she wants to know whether she will ever have her revenge against the gnolls that attacked her village, and what dangers await her. This provides an opportunity to work in Glaucia's own backstory, which establishes the Cult of the Steel Lord to telegraph their later involvement in the plot.

If the skyseer PC obliges Glaucia's request, we leave it to you to determine what vision to share, since some groups are more amenable to having NPCs tag along than others. By default, though, we assume Glaucia will want to be involved in the fight against the cult, perhaps leading forces on Isla dolas Focas, even if she's not present in battle with the party.

Rexes in the Vineyard.

Action. Tactical. Level 12.

An out-of-control tyrannosaur provokes a stampede of megafauna toward the party.

Lya Jierre's second bodyguard, Merton Goncala, has word of the party's travel. If they take the direct route to the summer court, he prepares an ambush. His custom-built sonic staff helps him drive and command animals by creating noises audible only to them.

He has managed to get under his control a pair of tyrannosaurs, giant reptilian predators bred by Ber's ancient dragon tyrants as pets and symbols of might. Specimens of this breed of tyrant lizard have some mild magical powers due to their affinity with their long-dead draconic masters. The beasts are rare, especially so close to major cities, but Merton has a knack for finding and befriending dangerous animals.

Bestial Ambush.

The road here weaves through a sequoia forest. The trees, which grow 200 feet or higher, make it difficult to see much beyond 100 feet. Hedgerows, 10 feet high, separate the road from an abandoned vineyard. One tree has fallen across the road, but it was sawed in two, so the way ahead passes between the two 20-foot wide cross-sections of its rings.

Just before the tree are a pair of arches marking a crossroad. Merton has magically excavated and masterfully concealed a pit trap between the arches, which can be noticed only with a successful DC 23 Wisdom (Perception) check or passive Perception 20 or higher. Enough creatures entering the area at once causes the whole 20-foot by 20-foot area to collapse. This is caused by a single Large or larger creature like a horse, or three or more Medium creatures. The pit drops 20 feet, enough to slow the party down but not threaten their lives. A DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check is needed climb out of the pit. However, the fall probably breaks the leg of any horse that falls in.

As soon as someone falls in the pit, or when it becomes apparent they won't fall for the trap, the party's horses begin bucking and flailing their heads as if in pain. Simultaneously a pair of monstrous roars erupt from the north, and suddenly the ground begins to tremble.

Merton hides in the branches of a toppled sequoia, 50 feet south from the road and noticed only with a successful DC 26 Wisdom (Perception) check, and he has used his *sonic staff* to panic the horses with noises inaudible to most humanoids. The noise is also the cue for his two pet tyrannosaurs to spook a nearby herd of large goats, driving them toward the party.

Each about a PC must either dismount or spend a bonus action to try to stay on their horse. Those PCs who wish to stay mounted take a -2 penalty to their attack rolls, and they must succeed a DC 5 Strength (Athletics) check or be flung off and fall prone. A horse with no rider simply bolts and flees down the road.

A PC can make a DC 17 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check as an action to calm a horse so it will behave normally, even in the face of the soon-to-arrive danger.

The party might be accompanied by Glaucia or Brakken, whose stats appear in Appendix Three: Berans (see Part Three).



Sequoia Vineyard

= 10 feet



Merton's Ambush.

- 2 king-bred tyrannosaurs
- 1 stampede of Beran goats (see "Stampede" below)
- Merton Goncala

King-Bred Tyrannosaurus

Gargantuan beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 203 (14d20+56)

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws INT +0, WIS +5, CHA +4

Skills Perception +9

Senses passive Perception 19

Languages —

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Elemental Affinity. When the tyrannosaurus takes energy damage, until the end of its next turn its attacks deal an extra 1d6 points of energy damage of the same type. If it is damaged by multiple energy types, it only deals extra damage of the most recent type.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The tyrannosaurus makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail. It can't make both attacks against the same target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 34 (5d10+7) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 18). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the tyrannosaurus can't bite another target. On a critical hit, the tyrannosaurus causes a bleeding wound. A creature with a bleeding wound takes 7 (2d6) damage at the end of each of its turns. Any creature can take an action to stanch the wound with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check. The wound also closes if the target receives magical healing.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 25 (4d8+7) bludgeoning damage.

Stampede.

If you're using a battle map, get 100 **goat tokens** handy. Each goat token should be Large size, so if you're using coins just place them on the central vertex of four squares.

At initiative count 0 on the first round, the party spots the first of the panicked goats to the north, at the edge of the map. Place 16 **goat tokens** at the northern edge of the map in a 2 × 8 token rectangle so the tokens fill an area measuring 20 feet west-to-east and 80 feet north-to-south.

These goat tokens are an abstraction – instead of individual goats they represent the area through which the stampede is flowing, and in a given round a dozen goats might move through each "stampede space." Other goats are certainly running about as well, but they aren't clumped together, and they simply dodge out of the way of obstacles like PCs.

Adding Goats.

Each round thereafter at initiative count 0, place additional goat tokens at the rate listed on the next page using these guidelines.

Merton Goncala

Medium humanoid (half-orc), lawful neutral

Armor Class 19 (+1 *platemail*)

Hit Points 97 (13d8+39)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws DEX +3, CON +6, WIS +4, CHA +2

Skills Animal Handling +4, Arcana +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Giant, Orc

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Contingent Gatecrasher Charm. This one-use token triggers automatically when Merton drops below half of his hit points, or can be activated as an action. It transports its holder most of the way into the Bleak Gate, effectively removing them from the real world. Unless special magic completes their transition to the Bleak Gate, 5 minutes later they return to the real world, but they have time to move to a safer location. When activated, and again if he's pulled back to the real world, Merton takes 5d6 necrotic damage.

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

Felling Staff. When Merton uses Power Attack and successfully hits, or when he successfully hits with an opportunity attack, his target must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Relentless Endurance (1/Long Rest). When Merton is reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright, he can drop to 1 hit point instead.

Savage Attacks. When Merton scores a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, he can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Merton attacks twice.

Sonic Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 8 (1d6+5) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) thunder damage, or 9 (1d8+5) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) thunder damage if wielded with two hands.

Resonance Bomb. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 20/40 ft., multiple targets (all targets in a 20-foot radius).

Hit: 14 (4d6) thunder damage. Objects in the area take double damage. A successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw halves this damage.

EQUIPMENT

Possessions. Merton carries a *contingent gatecrasher charm*, *resonance bomb*, and *sonic staff* (page 31).

- (1) Each new goat token must be placed near another goat token.
- (2) Focus first on completing a line across the whole map from north to south, but keep the herd at least two tokens wide.
- (3) Use any spare tokens to thicken the herd or branch off in new arteries.
- (4) Since the tyrannosaurs are driving the herd toward the party, you should aim the herd at the group.
- (5) The goats avoid trees, but



Zarkava Ssa'litt. While Shantus is the head of state and final arbiter, most of the daily affairs of Ber are run by this female lizardfolk. She has a cool reptilian demeanor, and pursues her duties with no tenderness or sympathy. However, she neither feels any great pride or ambition, and so she holds fairly stark views on the role of Ber's government, believing its foremost role is to protect the citizens from death.



She cares not for workers' comfort, for landowners' wealth, or for tribes' honor, except in how these encourage or discourage the security of the nation. However, she thinks Bruse Shantus is a poor ruler likely to provoke apathy and slow the growth of Ber's might, so she'd like to see him either re-energized toward the revolution or replaced.

Kenna Vigilante. A half-dragon general in the Beran army, Kenna assumed the political position of Minister of Dragon Affairs with Shantus's rise to the Brusedom. Her ministry was originally tasked with handling groups who still identified with the dragon tyrants, but over four decades it has morphed into a responsibility for the treasures of rediscovered dragon lairs, and today is mostly just the nation's official bank. Still, all members of the ministry are given ceremonial training in historical dragon-slaying tactics.



Kenna still has close ties to the military and is pushing Shantus to make military service more encouraging. She admires the structure and loyalty it instills. She would like to acquire military trainers from either Risur or Danor, as well as modern cannons and firearms. Every morning she and several of the court's bodyguards go for fitness runs outdoors, from the summer court to the nearby military base. She's still somewhat plump because she constantly grazes on the court's various fine foods.

Pardo. The current leader of the Cult of the Steel Lord, this gnoll teaches his followers that mortal flesh is weak, and to achieve the strength of the great dragons of old they must live pure. Though he fervently believes his own faith, Pardo is a consummate liar and manipulator, which he sees as just another example of having inner strength despite outer corruption.



Pardo wears simple clothes with no decorations. He refuses to use metal tools, and carries a handkerchief for things like door knobs. He represents the unincorporated tribes as honorary Minister of Rebellion, and so often has secretive meetings near the court with people from around the country. Though everyone expects him to scheme, the court views it as a mark of their openness and opposition to tyranny that they promote their own enemies.

Pardo secretly is a duplicant—his real body is on Isla dolas Focas—and so he is incredibly strong and resilient. He waits for a chance to strike against Bruse Shantus, but until then sticks to talking, not fighting.

they plow through vines and hedges. (6) Don't place any goats within 10 feet of where Merton is hidden.

- ▶ **Round 2.** Add 24 goat tokens.
- ▶ **Round 3.** Add 40 goat tokens.
- ▶ **Round 4.** Add 20 goat tokens. Place the two tyrannosaurs on the map.
- ▶ **Round 5.** Remove 16 goat tokens, starting from those closest to the tyrannosaurs.
- ▶ **Round 6.** As above, but remove 24 goat tokens.
- ▶ **Round 7.** As above, but remove 40.
- ▶ **Round 8.** Remove 20.

Trampling and Deflecting.

If a goat token is placed in a space that a Large or smaller creature occupies, that creature takes 1d6 damage. Whenever a creature ends its turn in a space with a goat token it takes another 1d6 damage and makes either a Strength (Athletics) check or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (creature's choice) against DC 13. On a failure, the creature is knocked prone and takes 2d6 damage.

Goat tokens can be attacked (AC 11, 19 HP). Spells and effects that affect an area do half again as much damage (+50%). If an attack does 20 or more points of damage, remove that goat token entirely. An attacker that does insufficient damage can instead remove the goat token and place it in some other space adjacent to the edge of the herd. The open space is safe for this round; do not refill it at the next initiative count 0, but the turn afterward it will probably fill back up.

Spaces with goat tokens are considered difficult terrain.

Terrain.

The fallen tree's branches are dense, requiring a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check to climb through. The hedges are effectively impassable terrain and the vine bushes difficult terrain. The standing trees are not readily climbable but far more difficult since the lowest branches are at least 50 feet up, requiring DC 17 Strength (Athletics) checks.

Timber!

If Merton uses his *resonance bomb* to annihilate part of the base of a tree, the tree makes a DC 8 Constitution saving throw each round at the start of Merton's turn. The tree has a save bonus of +0, with a -1 penalty for each square it is missing from its cross-section as viewed from above. On a failure, the tree topples. Determine the most likely direction for it to fall, then roll 2d4 to determine scatter:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| 2–45° clockwise | 6–15° counterclockwise |
| 3–30° clockwise | 7–30° counterclockwise |
| 4–15° clockwise | 8–45° counterclockwise |
| 5—on target | |

Creatures in a 20-square long path of the falling tree take 28 (8d6) damage and are knocked prone, but can make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to reduce the damage by half. At the GM's discretion, certain types of obstacles can adjust the fall. If a PC is standing beside a 20-ft. tall T-Rex that gets thwomped, for instance, the tree won't be able to hit that PC.



Tactics.

Once the tyrannosaurs spot the party they work as a pair if possible. When one has a target bitten and grappled, the other will try to also get a hold. If a creature is grappled by both tyrannosaurs, at the start of its turn it makes a Strength saving throw against a DC equal to the damage dealt by the last tyrannosaur that bit it as they rip it apart. On a success, the creature loses one arm or leg of its choice. On a failure, the creature loses two random limbs and takes 20 extra slashing damage.

If the party looks like they might manage to keep their horses under control and escape, Merton appears and tries to lure them into attacking him long enough for the tyrannosaurs to close. He's confident his *contingent gatecrasher charm* will get him to safety but if the party is scrambling to hide from the stampede, he'll wait for his pets to engage the party and then he'll attack stragglers. He prefers to push foes into the stampede.

If the party tries to hide from the tyrannosaurs in the pit, Merton happily tosses his bomb in with them.

As long as Merton has his *sonic staff*, the stampede swerves around him without harming him, though he still treats the spaces as difficult terrain.

Allies.

Glaucia shouts for people to take cover and she moves into the fallen tree's branches. If Brakken is present it's marginally safer to stay nearby him because he will use *calm emotions* to gain advantage on checks made to resist being trampled by affected goats, but he also tries to run and hide behind a tree.

Aftermath.

Unless the party can thwart his planar travel, Merton likely makes good his escape once bloodied, or he activates his charm manually if both tyrannosaurs go down. If captured, Merton suggests the party talk to Lya before they do anything rash like killing him.

If the party manages to kill a tyrannosaur, Glaucia insists they wait after combat long enough for her to rip numerous teeth out of the mouth of one of the reptiles. She explains that these beasts are as close as one can get to a dragon these days and their bodies are valuable. During the rest of the trip to the summer court she crafts a heavy, primitive-looking necklace; then she offers it as a gift to the party. See the *tyrant's teeth* (page 31).

She keeps just one of the 6-inch teeth for herself.

Summer Court.

Exposition/Social. Montage. Level 9.

Bruse Shantus tries very hard to enjoy his vacation from running his country.

It is likely near nightfall when the party reaches the summer court. Lines of tents stretch down the highway for half a mile from the court to the nearest village, **Nimba**. Citizens wishing to petition the Bruse have camped out for weeks, with only a handful being seen per day. Mostly they get along, and people play music throughout the day as they work alongside the local townsfolk in the farms and ranches.

Occasionally fights break out, and sometimes soldiers from the court cause trouble when the Bruse complains about noise ruining his vacation. Every day at noon, local military test ordnance at the artillery range at the edge of the town's farms, but no one wants to be out farming at the hottest part of the day anyway.

A low-ranking orc Executore, **Heiliana**, helps keep the peace and makes sure that troublemakers are efficiently banished.

Court Facilities.

The Bruse stays in a small fort with a hedge maze on the side (see *Adulthood Challenge*, below). Beautiful if somewhat arid wilderness sprawls out for miles, dotted with cottages and tents, and everything is patrolled by soldiers and bloodhounds. There are fields for sport, a river with lush ponds fed by artificial waterfalls, and countless other amenities of the fabulously wealthy.

At any given time a few dozen VIPs reside in these buildings, plus hundreds of retainers and courtiers and as many soldiers. A nearby military base can field another few thousand, and the vizier, **Zarkava Ssa'litt**, can easily view any location on the grounds unless the Bruse chooses to shield it. In an emergency, elite guards can defend the Bruse long enough for Zarkava to teleport him to safety.

The Labyrinth.

Shantus sees petitioners at his leisure, and prefers to spend his days riding fine steeds, hunting in the wilderness, and watching plays put on by foreign troupes. But he makes exceptions for the *Adulthood Challenge*.

Ber has many traditions of proving one's worth through violence. One of Shantus's few popular reforms once he came to power was to encourage the creation of *Adulthood Challenges* – mazes with obstacles and some tough but non-lethal animals, beasts against which would-be warriors could pass from childhood to adulthood without having to cave in the skull of someone from the next valley over.

The nation's grandest such maze is at the Bruse's summer court, and Shantus has proclaimed that anyone who passes the challenge can have an audience with him. He has courtiers who make rounds through the crowds outside, looking for people who either have truly urgent requests or who would make for a good show. Those petitioners are encouraged to undertake the test, and the rest of the gathered petitioners are invited to watch.

Challenges are always attempted at night. The Bruse, his attendants, and the audience watch from bleachers that rise 40 or more feet above the ground, accessible by stairs (guards, of course, keep the commoners from getting close to the members of the court). Those taking the test are required to wear brightly glowing crowns so their locations in the maze can be tracked by those in the bleachers. And the trained bears, which make up the primary threat of the maze, have red crowns.

The bears have had their claws filed down, and they wear muzzles and are trained just to knock down and pin people, not maul them. But they don't react well to being stabbed. The number of bears varies based on how hard the Bruse wants to make it for a petitioner to get through, and sometimes he just sends a person in with a glowing red crown to pose as a bear, but avoid the petitioner. No one likes seeing kindly grandmothers be mauled.



Seeing the Bruse.

Glaucia or Brakken can direct the party to the right courtier, and then they can ask to take the Adulthood Challenge to gain an audience with Shantus. Both Glaucia and Brakken already have access to the Bruse, but the party's entrance to the court grounds will be barred until they prove themselves.

The Bruse is already hosting Lya Jierre, who has warned that others might come seeking Tinker Oddcog, so he's initially opposed to letting the party in. They'll have a chance to face the maze, but he intends to offer an insurmountable challenge, not realizing the party's prowess. If the party goes through the right channels, they can get their crack at the maze tonight.

Adulthood Challenge.

Social. Real-Time. Level 12.

The party must brave a rigged labyrinth game to meet the minotaur.

Word goes out among the petitioners that a gang of foreigners have come to see the king, and rumor is the king isn't happy to see them. That means a good show, so hundreds of common folk leave the makeshift camp on the highway and tromp up the stairs to the bleachers around the labyrinth. A space is reserved atop the south wall for the PCs to stand, but etiquette requires they say nothing to the dignitaries. They can talk to the crowd all they want, though.

Around 8 p.m., the Bruse's guests file into the northern edge of seats. These include Lya Jierre, plus Merton and Rush unless the party managed to thwart their escape. Then the Bruse comes out, along with two of his current concubines. He is flanked by his vizier Zarkava Ssa'litt, his minister of dragon affairs **Kenna Vigilante**, and the honorary minister of rebellion **Pardo**.

An announcer proclaims the names of the PCs and what matter they wish to bring before the Bruse. Then the PCs are ushered downstairs to the south entrance while the announcer reads out the rules of the challenge.

Rules of the Game.

- ▶ **Crowns.** Each petitioner (PC) must wear a crown that glows a different color—orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, or white. Defenders of the labyrinth wear red crowns. To pass the challenge and enter the Summer Court, a petitioner must have a crown on as he passes through the northern gate of the maze (the glow keeps the petitioner from hiding, but its light is projected upward and can easily be seen by people in the bleachers, providing just dim illumination out to 5 feet).
- ▶ **Exits.** A petitioner who passes through the south gate of the maze admits defeat, as does any petitioner who climbs high enough to see above the hedge walls. Since the hedges are 40 feet tall, this is hard to do accidentally.
- ▶ **Magic and Technology.** This is a test of bravery and cunning, not of power. Using magic or technology to pass through hedge walls or other obstacles may be grounds for disqualification. The Bruse and the audience are arbiters of what is acceptable.

- ▶ **Security.** Do not attack anyone in the audience. Do not attempt to approach the Bruse. **DO NOT SET THE LABYRINTH ON FIRE.**
- ▶ **Risks.** If a petitioner becomes too injured to move on his own, he will be retrieved eventually once the danger from any creatures within passes. He assumes the risk that he might die. If a co-petitioner carries him through the north gate, he can still count as a victor as long as he has his crown.
- ▶ **Adulthood.** This is the Adulthood Challenge. Children complain. Adults solve their problems.

When the rules have been read, courtiers fit the PCs with their crowns, which are made of copper. Then the portcullis at the south of the labyrinth raises, and the party may enter. The gate remains up in case they wish to leave. Overhead they hear the announcer shout, "Release the bears!"

Labyrinth Defenders.

- 1 B.E.A.R. (Battle Enhanced Animalistic Robot)
- 10 Beran bears
- 8 teleportation pit traps (numbered squares on map)

B.E.A.R.

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 95 (10d10+40)

Speed 40 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	18 (+4)	19 (+4)	2 (-4)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +11, Survival +7

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from weapons that are not adamantine

Damage Immunities poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 21

Languages —

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bear attacks five times: four times with its claws and once with its bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 10 (1d8+6) piercing.




Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

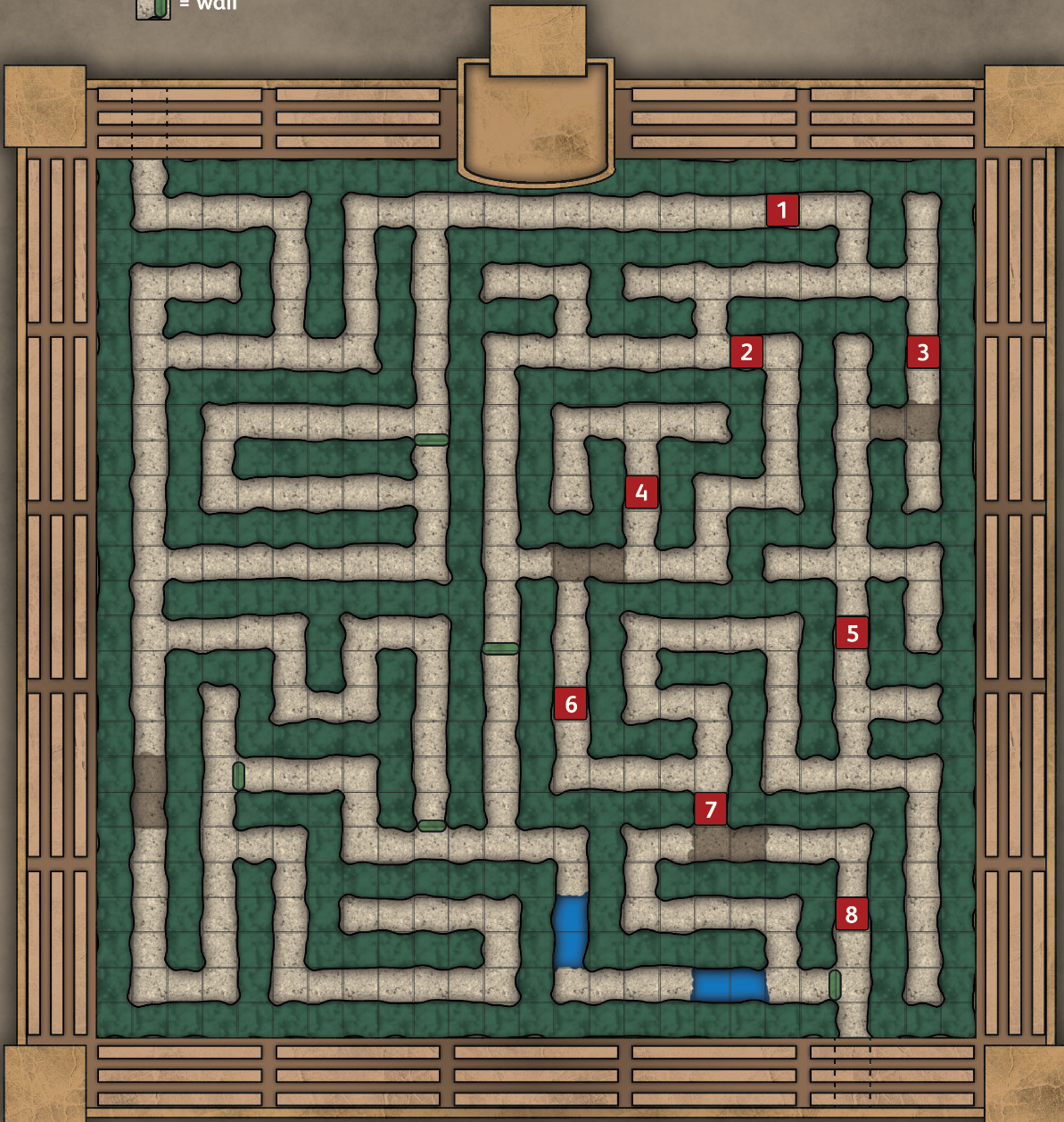
Hit: 13 (2d6+6) slashing damage and if the target is a creature is grappled (escape DC 18).

Superior Design (Recharge 5–6). B.E.A.R. leaps into the air with a mechanical clank and a burst of steam. B.E.A.R. travels 20 feet vertically and up to 20 feet horizontally, making a bite attack and a claw attack at any point during this movement.



Labyrinth

 = pool
 = grease pit
 = wall



□ = 10 feet

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Beran Bear

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d10+32)

Speed 40 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws DEX +5

Skills Perception +4, Survival +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Filed Claws. The bear's claws have been clipped, and it's been trained to knock down and pin its foes.

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

ACTIONS

Multitack. The bear makes four attacks with its claws (and unless de-muzzled cannot bite).

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 9 (1d8+5) piercing.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 12 (2d6+5) bludgeoning damage and if the target is a creature is grappled (escape DC 16). A creature dropped to less than 0 hit points is knocked unconscious (not dying).



Terrain.

The hedge walls are 40 feet high. Climbing the stiff branches is possible with a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check, but deal 1 point of damage each round to those not wearing gloves and shoes. Pressing through a hedge is impossible although a narrow passage can be hacked through by dealing 200 points of damage.

Hazards.

Stone walls, 20-ft. high and painted green, offer some shortcuts but are practically sheer, making them nearly impossible to climb—requiring a DC 28 Strength (Athletics) check. Smart petitioners climb the adjacent hedge, then hop down.

The two pools of water stretch 20 feet long and are only 10 feet deep. The other pools have a 1-foot deep layer of water on the surface, then 9 feet of grease beneath. A creature must succeed on a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check to swim through the grease, albeit at half speed. Failing by 5 or more causes a creature to sink chest deep into the viscous substance. It's too thick to fully sink and drown in unless a creature falls in face first.

Pit Traps.

The numbered spaces are complex pit traps, cunningly hidden and noticed only with a successful DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check. Each pit has two counter-weighted flaps linked by chains that run through a rolling mechanism along the side of the pit wall. If a Medium or smaller creature moves across the pit, the flap beneath it drops and the ground behind it tilts up, dumping it into the pit where it takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall (making a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw allows a creature to jump out of the way, avoiding the trap entirely). If a Large creature moves across it,

it distributes its weight enough so that each flap only opens a little. The pit covers count as difficult terrain to Large-sized creatures, who are too large to fall in.

The pits are 20 feet deep and enchanted with bright *light* spells at the bottom so that when a pit opens, a column of illumination rises into the night sky. The crowd usually cheers, knowing what the light means. A creature that falls in triggers teleportation magic that sends it to a random pit. Roll 1d8 to determine which pit it ends up in, possibly even the same pit. Creatures get no obvious indication that any magic has transported them. Creatures wearing gold rings or loops are not teleported.

Ladders lead up from the pit floor, and the flaps can be pulled open from below.

Endless Loop.

A creature that goes through the north gate without wearing a crown teleports to the south entrance. The translocation is obvious but goes only one way. Some petitioners try to head back the way they came and end up exiting the maze, forfeiting.


Tactics.

Two bears enter the labyrinth each round, generally heading in different directions looking for prey. Once all ten bears are inside, the mechanical B.E.A.R. (a gift from Benedict Pemberton) emerges and waits near the north exit. Its superior design lets it leap high to drag down clever climbers who try to bypass all the maze's challenges.

If the party looks, Lya's group watches nervously but she keeps her bodyguards from trying anything rash.

Aftermath.

If the party breaks the rules or fails, the Bruse has them escorted out. The next afternoon he'll bring them into his court and give them the rules of his little game (see Act Two), but the Obscurati will have a half-day's head start.

If at least one PC makes it through with his crown on, the Bruse is so impressed that he decides to give the party a fair crack at Tinker. He drags them to his temporary throne room while they're still messy from the challenge, and grants them an audience with him while the audience outside is still cheering. 



BERAN NEWS CLIPPING

(Translated from Beran)

...en, though, construction continues apace, with Oriento Railways commanding a solid lead over Liss Rail Construction. It remains to be seen if Mr. Pemberton's "steam drivers" will make a difference fast enough to justify their exorbitant expense, or if the lizardfolk of the Doches Swamp will listen to their scaled brother who joked, "My father always said his two favorite foods were manflesh and oreflesh. I bet the two taste great together."

—Hermesto Novahombre, *Cantabrilla Railroad staff writer*



Bruse Bringing Bad News to Ber?

BRUSE SHANTUS HAS A NEW SECRET PLAN TO IMPROVE BER'S INDUSTRIAL competitiveness, say reliable sources in the army. This plan is to hand over leadership of our military research to a gnome named Tinker Oddcog, said to be a genius with machines. But our investigation shows that this gnome might have *dangerous connections* that could spell trouble for our nation.

On the 15th of Spring, the ship *Shore Thing* departed from the Risuri city of Flint, and it arrived in Seobriga on the 21st of Spring. Witnesses report seeing the gnome at the palace as early as the 26th, traveling in the company of Enforcer of Freedom Glauca Evora who is currently acting as extemporaneous judge in Nakkard Quarter.

The gnome has not appeared publicly since, but sources report him visiting *several military installations* over the past two months, including the Drumalio Shipyards and the foundries in Piria Quarter. By all accounts, the gnome's visit yielded marked improvements in the functioning of those facilities' production machinery, and word is that the gnome can *magically speak to technology*.

So what worries us? Astute readers might have noticed that the date of Mr. Oddcog's departure from Flint was the same day as the release of a giant metal creation that *rampaged through the city*. Moreover, before that very day Tinker Oddcog had not been seen since nearly ten years earlier. And that last appearance was marred by *disasters* that included the deaths of two coworkers: one was crushed by a crane that witnesses said "came alive and moved on its own," the other was a victim of an unlikely train derailment that killed twenty.

While we will not posit the gnome is bad luck — for it is against the spirit of our glorious revolution to indulge in such superstition — we intend to keep investigating this gnome for evidence of malice or negligence.

As other recent stories have reported, members of Risur's military claim that the rampaging metal "colossus" was the work of a conspiracy that posed as legitimate military activities *endorsed by the king of Risur*. Might this gnome be attempting a similar subversion in our own nation?

Unfortunately we were unable to contact Mr. Oddcog for an interview, as the Bruse is keeping his location and movements a *state secret*. We sent a request to the Bruse's summer court, but at last report our messenger is 1,465th in line for an audience.

—Melissa Amarie, *freelancer*





LABYRINTH PLAYERS' MAP

Labyrinth

- = pool
- = grease pit
- = wall

= 10 feet

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Appendix One: Magic Items

Razorbust 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, threatening 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.

Sonic Staff

Weapon (quarterstaff), very rare

This metal polearm has complex flanged baffles along its haft and ends with a faintly glowing two-tined cap not unlike a tuning fork. When struck it reverberates near-deafeningly and by adjusting its components you can tune it to the destructive resonance of an object.

You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. It constantly emits a high-pitched whine that is uncomfortable to animals. Animals do not willingly approach within 10 feet of the staff without a successful DC 22 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. Attacks with this weapon deal double damage against doors and other objects.

Once per day, you can use an action to slam it against the ground and generate a wave of thunder and force, either in a 10-foot radius burst centered on you or in 30-foot cone. Creatures in the area take 10 (3d6) thunder damage and are pushed 15 feet away. This effect cannot penetrate a *silence* spell (or any similar magical silence effect).

Tyrant's Teeth

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Dagger-sharp fangs ripped from the skull of a tyrant lizard clatter around this necklace's cord. When you attack while wearing it, a ghostly reptilian head appears and snaps down on your target. You can only attune to this item if you have survived being bitten by a Huge or larger reptile or dragon.

While wearing this item your footsteps make the ground tremble slightly and you have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

When you take energy damage, your attacks deal an extra 1d6 damage of the same type until the end of your next turn. If you are damaged by multiple energy types, you only deal bonus damage of the most recent type.

Once per day, when you hit an opponent with a melee attack, you can use a bonus action to cause a spectral tyrannosaur to appear and bite the target, dealing 4d6 force damage.

