

CCC-TAROT 02-08



Winding Road to Freedom

Part 16 of Song of Fates

A small community has arisen among the asymptomatic inhabitants of the Forbidden Zone which has brought much needed stability to the area. However, that peace is being threatened by a raving religious zealot. Can the two sides find common ground, or is the Forbidden Zone destined to erupt in barbarity once more?

A Two to Four-Hour Adventure for Tier 2 Characters. Optimized for APL 8.

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Adventure Primer

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 5-10-level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 8**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

This adventure occurs in Thentia.

Background

Many an adventurer has heard of the Deck of Many Things, which promises either great treasure or terrible ruin. Few have heard of a special deck, a mix of the original Deck and ancient Vistani magic, called the Tarot Cards of Fate. Each is unique in nature, and Fate had decreed the Cards separated and each lost to time. However, recent events have caused the cards to emerge, and two powerful beings to seek them out – the Ordines and Muma Padurii, who are competing for their ultimate power over the fate of mortals themselves.

The **SPORE PLAGUE** has ravaged Thentia as of late, causing the Harbor District to be converted into **THE FORBIDDEN ZONE**, a lawless piece of the city where the infected have been quarantined.

Over time, the Zone has become quieter and more orderly. While once crazed Talonites ruled the streets, now a community built on mutual cooperation has arisen known as **THE COLLECTIVE**. They have been making sure the food shipments into the Zone are fairly distributed and keeping the docile infected fed and healthy.

Overview

The adventure's story is spread over **three parts** and takes approximately **2 hours** to play. The adventure begins with a Call to Action scene. If

you're planning to play the entire adventure at once, you only need to introduce the Call to Action once. However, if you plan to play them over several sessions, you'll want to revisit the **Call to Action** each time you play.

- **Part 1: Name (Call to Action).** The adventurers meet with Isen Shadowcloak and encounter a happy, but weirdly conformist community with the Dock Ward / Forbidden Zone of Thentia.
- **Part 2: Name.** PCs seek out the religious zealot that has been harassing the community, seeing the changes to the Forbidden Zone as they pass. **Find the Madman (Story Objective A).**
- **Part 3: Fungal Bloom.** PCs fight with and then converse with the zealot. They learn from him about the true nature of the Collective and must **Make a Choice (Story Objective B).**
- **Bonus Objective A: Fungal Bloom.** PCs seek out the fungal bloom and eventually recover it (otherwise the Djinn has it)
- **Bonus Objective B: Mantle of Freedom.** PCs help the Djinn break its contract before it falls into the hands of an evil wizard.

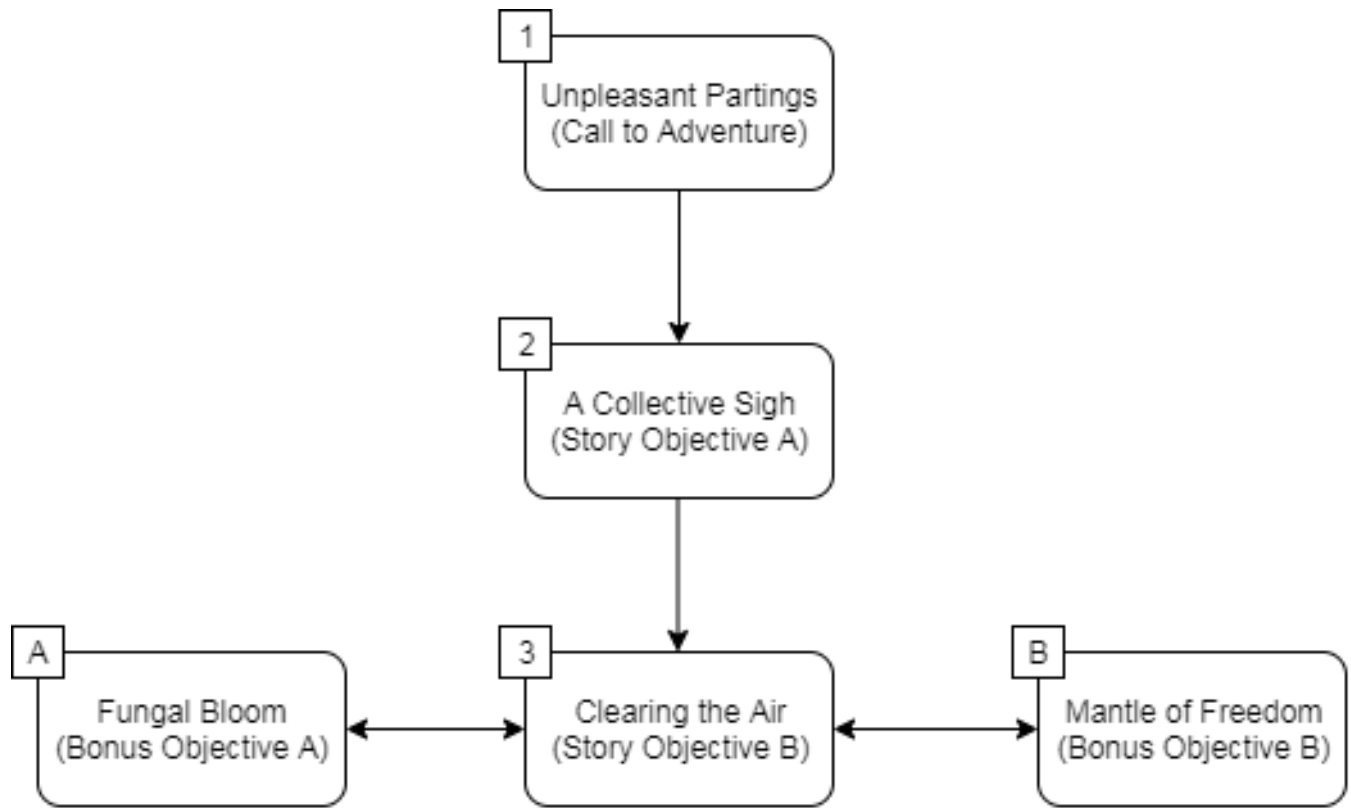
Adventure Hooks

Touched by Fate. Characters with this story award find themselves drawn to this adventure through some happenstance or compulsion.

A Job is a Job. Professional adventurers are in demand in Thentia as of late and the character has landed a job with one of Thentia's Riders that involves travel in The Forbidden Zone.

Adventure Flowchart

This section provides a basic understanding of not only the flow of the adventure, but also the outline of the different paths that your players may take in reaching their stated objective.



Part 1: Unpleasant Partings

Estimated Duration: 10-15 minutes

Call to Action

- The adventurers are tasked by Isen to deal with the zealot plaguing the community.
- They will need to seek out and subdue or trick him into ceasing his proselytizing.
- They should locate the missing community member if possible.

Scene 1A. Zone Gates

This scene is a briefing with Isen Shadowcloak as the adventurers prepare to pass through the gates to the Forbidden Zone. They will be examined by an apprentice and their things will be searched by the guards while Isen stands by and explains what needs doing.

Creature Information

This scene has the Thentian Rider **Isen Shadowcloak** and an **apprentice** and **guard** per adventurer.

Apprentices. The over-enthusiastic apprentices of the mage's guild have been studying the disease and are searching the adventurers for any signs of it. They may question adventurers about any interesting scars or physical oddities they possess.

Guards. Ponderous and disinterested, the guards are searching the adventurer's things to be compared against after they return to make certain they are not looting the Forbidden Zone. They are not particularly curious and even the most basic of secret pockets or compartments fool them.

Isen Shadowcloak. Isen is a Rider of Thentia and a paladin of Tyr. While the fate of Nestor, his lover, gnaws at him, he is boisterous and forthright, if a bit overworked.

What Does He Know? The chaos in The Forbidden Zone has recently given way to order and that is in no small part thanks to a group known as the Collective that has maintaining order. The city has been working with the Collective as of late, delivering supplies to them and to distribute to the population of the Zone at large. Weirdly, the group does not seem to have a leader so they have had dealings with various members over the past month.

Recently, another inhabitant of the Zone has been harassing the Collective, ranting religious doctrine at them, and recently one of the Collective's members went missing. They suspect the zealot must be responsible as they have not heard from him in a few days. The adventurers are to track down the zealot, retrieve the member, and convince him to stop harassing the community.

A Good Boy. If the characters have the **Sweet and Stupid** story award the foxhound will run up to Isen excitedly on first encountering him. He will pet the dog and mention it reminds him of the dog Nestor used to have. Canny adventurers might use *Speak with Animals* or the like and discover the foxhound actually was owned by Nestor in the past, having been let out shortly before he confessed to the crime of murdering Seireri Moongleam. (See TAROT01-03 for more information)

Part 2: A Collective Sigh

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Setting Information

Decay. The Forbidden Zone itself has decayed far more rapidly than it should have over a single season. Some buildings have obvious fallen due to violence, but many are crumbling or worn in ways that makes them unpredictable. Adventurers venturing into or climbing unattended buildings are risking the buildings collapsing on them.

Plants. While it might be tempting to say nature has reclaimed The Forbidden Zone it is more accurate to say it has been reclaimed by plants. The wall and buildings are covered in running vines. Buildings and walkways are split by trees, bushes and grass which seem to have grown through them.

Light. The adventurers are traveling during the day outdoors. The sun covers most of the city in bright light, though pockets of shadows from the buildings are ever present.

Sound. The Forbidden Zone is quiet, likely eerily so. Despite the plant life, the expected sounds of birds and insects are not present.

Story Objective A

Find the old zealot's location.

Scene 2A. The Golden Balance

This scene is intended to give the adventurers a chance to see the community the Collective has built and learn a bit about what has been going on. If you are in a time constrained setting, you should get them the necessary information quickly, otherwise let them drink in the sights.

The two key points they need to learn are:

- One of the Collective has gone missing while chopping wood.
- The old zealot lives near the water somewhere to the south.

Area Information

The area has the following features.

Sounds. The sound of dogs barking and playing stands out in the quiet Forbidden Zone. Adventurers can follow the sound to the dog pens.

The Golden Balance. This former trade house has been converted into a living residence for the Collective. There are twenty-nine beds (matching the number of members in the Collective) set up as bunks and yet no place to store personal goods (the Collective shares all goods among themselves and have no need).

A large number of supplies have been stored within in neat stacks. The Collective works hard to maintain the reserves, scavenging and requisitioning from the city as needed. Of particular need is firewood, which they chop from the odd trees that seem to grow everywhere.

Dog Pens. Close to the Golden Balance are a number of pens that house the rapidly re-domesticating dogs of the citizens of Thentia that were trapped in the Forbidden Zone. The dogs are mostly being kept out of trouble, but the Collective members do occasionally take one out to look for food.

Infected Pens. Next to the dog pens are a larger series of pens which house almost a thousand infected people. They are all very docile, sitting, leaning or lying against each other and the ground. If examined they have dark purple lesions, are obviously blind, but seem to possess enhance hearing and sense of touch.

Creature Information

This scene includes all the residents of **the Collective**: The former rider **Wibke Huntsilver**, the bickering apprentices **Vera and Vigo**, and possibly **Edea Valkrana**.

The Collective. Asymptomatic carriers of the spore plague, the Collective formed after most of the infected had entered their dormant phase. They spend most of their time caring for the docile infected, preventing them from starving to death. Their bland, gray homespun clothing is the clearest sign of membership as they all seem to have adopted it as a sort of uniform.

They share a common empathic bond which makes them work together well, but is rather

odd to outsiders. Most of the Collective cannot recognize individual members, as they have lost the sense of separation between themselves. The members do not realize this bond exists, and consider themselves quite normal. Feel free to try to make the adventurers feel a little creeped out.

Wibke Huntsilver. Adventurers who played TAROT 02-01 will remember Wibke as a crazy old coot of a woman who threatened them with crossbows and traps. She is now a member of the Collective where she has abandoned her crossbow collection and now uses her mechanical knowledge to improve the lives of the Collective. Despite her former conspiratorial nuttiness, she has become quite subdued and urges characters to stay with the Collective. Her mechanical workshop, repurposed from her trap making, within the Golden Balance is almost certainly where she will be found.

Vera and Vigo. Vera and Vigo argue like an old married couple despite being quite young and quite unmarried. Adventurers may have helped these apprentices escape the Forbidden Zone once in TAROT 02-01. They saw the worst of the initial stages of the Spore Plague, their reports even won them the favor of their master. However, they were perhaps too successful and their master has sent them back to collect additional data.

Though they wear the large, poofy protective leather suits while in the Forbidden Zone, they are asymptomatic carriers like the rest of the Collective. Unlike the rest of the Collective they can discern individual members enough to continue arguing despite their empathic bond.

Edea Valkrana. [Only present if the characters have Tarot of Fate (Justice Inverted)] Edea was sent to the Forbidden Zone after being infected by Amy, her teenage ward. While she has integrated with the Collective, she doesn't share their empathic bond and the whole situation makes her uncomfortable.

Amy Yelrona. Characters that have played TAROT01-06 or TAROT02-05 might recognize this teenage girl as friend of Kaireri Moongleam or ward of Edea Valkrana. She has become completely overwhelmed with the disease and is quite docile. If Edea is present, she takes care of Amy, otherwise Amy is in the pens.

What Do They Know? The zealot has been a thorn in the Community's side for some time. He made frequent visits over the past month to deliver fiery sermons about freedom dedicated to a god none of the Collective recognized. The Collective did their best to ignore him and are unhelpful if the adventurers wish to know more about the content of his sermons.

He is described as an old man with white hair and dark skin in foreign clothes that carried an impressive looking trident. They are aware he always arrived from the south and suspect his home must be somewhere that direction on the water.

The Collective knows that one of their number has recently gone missing, but due to their difficulties perceiving differences between their members, their accounts of their appearance varies wildly. They believe he was taken by the zealot since he stopped visiting shortly before the member went missing, but have no proof. All they really know is that the member left one day to go looking for more firewood and did not return. (They were actually eaten by wildlife, see Scene C.)

Scene 2B. Book Woman

This scene has the adventurers assail the library and encounter the book woman who can provide them with some guidance in their quest.

The key point they need to learn is:

- The old zealot lives in a bait and tackle shop near the water.

Area Information

The area has the following features.

The Library. This thin, tall building sandwiched between two residences seems surprisingly clear of vines. It was once owned by a rich follower of Oghma, but after the quarantine it has been seized and looked after by Valda, an employee. It is three stories high.

First Floor. Characters find it easy to enter the library, but find the first floor stairs have been ripped up and the contents of the shelves have been looted. Climbing the wreckage of the stairs is somewhat dangerous due to the nails and splinters of wood. A **DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check** will allow the character to reach the second floor. They take **10 (3d6)** piercing damage on a failure. Canny adventurers might climb the outside which is safer, but more difficult. It requires a **DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check** and deals **7 (2d6)** bludgeoning damage on a failure.

Second and Third Floor. The rest of the floors are full of books, stacked and left open in various states as well as plates with fish bones on them and buckets of water collected from the roof. The primary topics of the books are linguistics, culture and ethnolinguistics, with a few on anthropology, and political science.

The Fair Meal. Characters that have a look around the area find this building, a ruined delicatessen which is where Valda has secreted her trash and waste. Adventurers who decide to go digging around in it will find a large number of fish bones. If asked, Valda mentions she didn't get along with the owner much.

Creature Information

This scene has only one creature: The book woman **Valda Nule** who resides within the library.

Valda Nule. A squirrely human woman who has used the chaos of the Forbidden Zone to finally find the time to read all the books she has been meaning to get to. Consider playing this character with a bit of levity.

She is quite aware of the potential dangers of the zone and has successfully protected herself so far. Familiars are likely to be hit by heavy books before they get a good look and she hides from open confrontation as best she can. When they reach the second floor, she will shout down at the adventurers from the third floor, threatening to hit them with the sizeable "Zuzar Zolo's 1389 Primer on the Chondathan Language".

What Does She Know? Once the adventurers have convinced Valda they mean no harm, they can question her about the area. Though she is grateful for any food they might give her to break up the monotony of fish, she is keen to have someone to talk to despite her shut-in ways.

If asked about the zealot, she knows his name is Yisfa the Vibrant and that he lives at Dorn's bait and tackle shop next to the water which she can direct them to. She regularly trades the books for fish with Yisfa, though she doesn't know what he uses them for.

She is also aware of the dangers present in the area: A portion of the zone has been overrun by forests and weird, spooky things seem to happen there; some of the infected have become active again and seem to have formed some sort of small community (they are territorial but not otherwise dangerous); and of particular note are the chuul that have come up from the sea to hunt and sun themselves in the zone.

Scene 2C. Dinner at Chuul's

This scene has the adventurers investigate the chuul's lair and discover the corpse of the missing member of the Collective, suggesting the zealot is not responsible for the disappearances.

Area Information

The area has the following features.

Lighting. Outside the building is bright sunlight while the inside is complete darkness.

Sounds. The chuul munching on and breaking the bones of their dead prey is quite easy to hear even from down the street.

The Tavern. This tavern once housed a number of residents who committed suicide during the early days of the quarantine. Adventurers who played TAROT02-01 will recognize it. It is now overrun with vines, even more than the surrounding buildings. Creatures within the tavern have full cover against creatures outside of it.

Vines. The vines are thick and difficult to destroy. Creatures passing through them give away their position to the inhabitants, though they can be moved aside just enough to peer inside without attracting too much attention. It takes a character's action to pass through the vines.

Bodies. The scraps of a vast number of bodies dot the area around and inside the tavern. A piece of gray homespun can be spied by the adventurers, hinting that given time they can turn up the remains of the missing member of the Collective.

Creature Information

This scene includes an **assassin vine** and a pair of **chuul**.

Chuul. Characters will likely hear the chuuls munching down on the dead bodies before they see them. The adventurers should suspect the chuul are the source of the dead bodies scattered around, as chuul are known for their cruelty and hatred of surface life, but they are working in symbiosis with an assassin vine.

Assassin Vine. The assassin vine is indistinguishable from the numerous vines around the tavern and strikes from wherever is most convenient. It was originally brought here by an adventurer looking to sell rare plants he collected in Chult, but managed to escape and create bloody fertilizer from the wandering infected.

Combat Tactics. The assassin vine initiates combat with surprise once the adventurers have passed into the building. Once the chuul are alerted, they move to grab any adventurers that escape from the assassin vine's reach and drag them back to it.

Adjusting the Encounter

Note: These adjustments are not cumulative

- Very Weak: A chuul runs from combat.
- Weak: A chuul runs from combat.
- Strong: Add 1 assassin vine and 1 chuul.
- Very Strong: Add 3 assassin vines and 2 chuul.

Part 3: Clearing the Air

Estimated Duration: 45 minutes

Setting Information

Sounds. The roar of the sea is ever present.

Story Objective B

Find out what is going on and make a decision to break the Collective's bond or preserve it.

Scene 3A. A Seaside Gale

This scene starts with a lot of angry shouting from the djinn and will likely elevate into a fight.

Area Information That's

The area has the following features.

Pier. This 20' wide, 100' long wooden pier connects Dorn's to the land. It is elevated 20' above the water and difficult to climb. Anyone attempting to reach the pier from the water must make a **DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check** each turn they use movement to climb or they fall into the water.

Water. The pier is surrounded by water. Any creature currently in the water finds creatures on the pier have three-fourths cover against their attacks.

Swarms of Fish. Yisfa has used his *trident of fish command* to make a deal with the local fish populations to swarm intruders. Non elemental creatures that start their turn in the water are attacked by swarms of fish that grapple and restrain them. The creature may attempt a **DC 18 grapple check** to escape.

Dorn's. At the end of the pier is Dorn's Bait and Tackle, a venerable institution of the fishermen of Thentia. The building stands impressively large and seems well constructed despite having been built on stilts over the water.

Inside Dorn's are a group of orphans who are watching the goings on intently. They remain mostly silent but might occasionally cheer for Yisfa. Opening the door to Dorn's during combat may result in a group of orphans piling on the offender.

Creature Information

This scene has the zealot **Yisfa The Vibrant (djinn)** and two **air elementals**.

Air Elementals. These air elementals look like giant parakeets sitting on top of Dorn's. They serve as lookouts and will detect any attempts to approach via air or the pier. They only engage in combat if necessary.

Yisfa The Vibrant, Faithful of Haku. See *Dramatis Personae* for more.

When the adventurers approach he appears and shouts at them to leave. Due to recent conflict, he believes they are servants of Karascht, and cannot easily be convinced otherwise. Should the adventurers fail to depart, he will initiate combat.

Combat Tactics. In truth, Yisfa really doesn't want to hurt the adventurers and will attempt to dissuade them at first by using his *Create Whirlwind* ability to throw any who approach into the water off the side of the pier. If the adventurers prove too persistent or hostile he will resort to stabbing them with his trident (*scimitar*).

Sweet words alone will not deter Yisfa. Adventurers that are brave but not hostile may earn a reprieve from violence. Laying aside their weapons and approaching despite being thrown off the bridge, for instance. He will also recognize their good nature if they make it to Dorn's despite his lashings and treat the orphans well.

While defending Dorn's Yisfa and his elementals gain advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma saves and ability checks.

Adjusting the Encounter

Note: These adjustments are not cumulative

- Very Weak: Yisfa waits, sending 1 air elemental.
- Weak: Yisfa waits, sending 2 air elementals.
- Strong: 1 air elemental attacks with Yisfa.
- Very Strong: 2 air elementals attack with Yisfa.

Scene 3B. The Orphanage

This scene lets Hisfa explain himself and presents the adventurers with choices as to what to do.

Area Information

The area has the following features.

Dorn's. The interior of Dorn's is strewn with all manner of fishing knick-knacks and curiosities: Fish are mounted on the walls, nets hang from the ceiling and novelty signs declare it is always fishing season on the Moonsea.

Creature Information

This scene has the zealot **Yisfa The Vibrant (djinn)** and twelve **orphans**.

Orphans. The orphans are a playful bunch and well-adjusted despite where they are living. There are a dozen children between the ages of six to ten. They are carriers of the spore plague.

Yisfa The Vibrant, Faithful of Haku. Yisfa, if he has been defeated, resides on the lip of a small glass bottle in miniature form.

What Does He Know? Yisfa was voluntarily bound by Kianne Amblecrown roughly half a year ago. She had a vision of an enslaved populace at the hands of the wizard Karascht and Yisfa, as a follower of Haku, God of Freedom, could not abide this.

After the quarantine began he was left to his own devices and used the *trident of fish command* to feed the hungry masses as best he could.

During the chaos he took in a few dozen children from various parents in distress. Some of these children fully turned, others proved asymptomatic. He realized quickly that these asymptomatic children had some sort of bond with one another and worked to find a way to

sever it. He managed to do so early in the infection process.

About a month ago he became aware of the Collective and made numerous trips there to try to convince the members to let him cure them of their empathic link, but they were resistant to his efforts. He sees the link as robbing the members of their own free will.

A week ago he arrived back at Dorn's to find a group of humanoids there who he parlayed with amicably, only to have them attempt to kidnap some of the children in his care overnight. Though he has no proof, he is certain this group was sent by Karascht (and he happens to be correct.) He assumed the adventurers were the same.

If you are doing **Bonus Objective A**, he needs the adventurers to travel into the eerie, dense forest that has grown in the Forbidden Zone to locate one of the oldest infected and to obtain a *fungus bloom* from them. He can use this fungus bloom to create a salve that will free all the members of the Collective from their empathic bonds.

If you are not doing the bonus objective, he instead has already made the salve after months of grueling work and gives it to the adventurers to do with as they wish.

Adventurers who wish to help Yisfa and the children learn of **Bonus Objective B**: There exists a *mantle of freedom* which Yisfa can use to free himself from his bondage. If it were to fall into the hands of servants of Karascht they would be able to force him to follow his commands. Yisfa is certain it rests in a building within the Forbidden Zone he cannot gain access to via the wards in place there.

Conclusion

Breaking the Link

The adventurers may now return to the Collective and either break their empathic link or not. Those that do receive the story award **Tarot of Fate (The Hierophant): Inverted**. Those that dispose of the salve or otherwise refuse to break the bond receive **Tarot of Fate (The Hierophant): Upright**.

Creature Information

This section primarily addresses the effects on the members of the Collective if the bond is broken.

The Collective. The generic members of the Collective have varying responses to the freedom granted by the salve. Most commonly they become confused and spend time trying to collect themselves. A few will grab as many supplies as possible and leave, while others may simply bolt off into the Forbidden Zone.

Eventually the remaining Collective members will talk and some will argue over what to do. When all is said and done, nineteen will remain and attempt to keep their community going.

Wibke Huntsilver. Breaking Wibke's link without properly preparing her for the experience is likely to be chaotic. She will reach into her workbench and produce a crossbow from a hidden compartment which she immediately starts pointing at people. Yelling is likely to ensue with her demanding everyone

else leave as she has "squatter's rights" to the building. She only commits to violence in the most extreme cases.

Adventurers who ease her into the change will find her surprisingly reasonable. Though a crazy coot, she doesn't really want to see people harmed and might be convinced to let people stay.

Vigo and Vera. Vigo and Vera will be difficult to apply the slave to through their isolation suits. They either need to be tricked or the suit needs to be damaged for the bond to be broken. Once it is, they immediately fall into discussing the experience and documenting as much as they can. The terror they experience from being amid the diseased is suppressed as long as they remain focused on academic pursuits.

Edea Valkrana. [Only present if the characters have Tarot of Fate (Justice) Inverted] Edea is not a member of the Collective and applying the salve has no effect.

Amy Yelrona. Amy is just a normal infected and the salve has no effect on her.

Treasure

Characters that promise to free the Collective are given Yisfa's *trident of fish command*. If they obtained the *mantle of freedom*, Yisfa uses it to free himself and then offers it to the adventurers as a *cloak of billowing*.

Rewards

At the **end of the session**, the characters receive rewards based upon their accomplishments.

Player Rewards

The characters can earn the following rewards:

Advancement and Treasure Checkpoints

The characters receive **2 advancement** and **2 treasure checkpoint** for each story objective that they complete, as follows:

- **Story Objective A:** Find the old zealot's location.
- **Story Objective B:** Find out what is going on and make a decision to break the Collective's bond or preserve it.

The characters receive **1 advancement** and **1 treasure checkpoint** for each bonus objective that they complete, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A:** Obtain the fungal bloom from the oldest infected.
- **Bonus Objective B:** Obtain the mantle of freedom.

Magic Item Unlock

The characters unlock the following magic item(s) for **completing the adventure**:

Trident of Fish Command. This beautiful trident seems bafflingly made from pure pearl, likely carved from the treasure of a massive oyster. Delicate lines along the weapon's shaft and head seem to blend imagery of strong winds and calm seas. This item is described in **Appendix 5**.

Story Award

The characters playing the adventure may earn:

Tarot of Fate (The Hierophant): Upright / Inverted. Please indicate which orientation you received. This story award is described in **Appendix 6**.

Upright: You did not remove the empathic link binding the Collective together. They will continue to a harmonious unit, even during the dark days to come.

Inverted: You freed the Collective from their empathic bond. There will be increasing strife among the community in the near future, but it will be freely chosen strife.

Dungeon Master Rewards

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn **advancement** and **treasure checkpoints** for the characters' completion of objectives, above.

You may complete DM Quests for running this adventure. See the ALDMG (*Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*) for more information about DM Quests.

Appendix 1: Dramatis Personae

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure.

- **Isen Shadowcloak (EYE-sen).** Paladin of Tyr and Rider of Thentia. He is just here to give the adventurers their mission.

Personality: *I protect the city the best I can, though I am stretched thin.*

Ideal: *We must uphold Truth before all else.*

Bond: *I recently lost the one I love most.*

Flaw: *Those dear to me cause me to sway from my righteous path.*

- **Wibke Huntsilver (VEEB-kuh).** Female human. Wibke is a former Rider of Thentia and a local legend for her trap-making skills. She has become a part of the Collective, which has subdued her paranoia and distrust of others.

Personality: *I just want to be left alone, though I might be tempted to tell you just one more war story.*

Ideal: *Planning and preparation can overcome any opposition.*

Bond: *My crossbows will never betray me.*

Flaw: *The government is out to get me.*

- **Vigo and Vera (VEE-go and VER-ah).** A male and female apprentice. Constantly together, but bicker and repartee back and forth. Becoming Collective members has helped their unease with the situation, but they still mostly act the same as always.

Personality: *We have to find out all we can about the disease so we can advance in our Master's eyes.*

Ideal: *Knowledge is best gained in a hands-on manner.*

Bond: *We trust one another implicitly.*

Flaw: *We can't agree on anything.*

- **Edea Valkrana (eh-DEA VAL-krana).** A 200-year old elven woman who has managed and owned the Valkrana tile factory for decades. She may be present with the Collective if she herself became infected, but she is not a member. She does not regret her decision.

Personality: *I'm here to represent the common people and interest.*

Ideal: *Everyone matters!*

Bond: *My ward is everything to me.*

Flaw: *I will do anything to protect loved ones.*

- **Valda Nule (VAL-da NOOL).** A squirrely human woman who has used the chaos of the Forbidden Zone to finally find the time to read all the books she has been meaning to get to.

Personality: *I just want to read my books in peace.*

Ideal: *Knowledge is worthwhile for its own sake.*

Bond: *I will defend my library with everything up to my life.*

Flaw: *I never forget a slight.*

- **Yisfa (YISS-fah) The Vibrant, Faithful of Haku.** A djinn who originally agreed to be bound by Kianne Amblecrown, but been left to his own devices. He is a paladin of the Zakhara deity Haku, the god of freedom, and takes his religious leaning seriously.

Yisfa has the djinn ability to shape change and uses that to look like an inhabitant of Zakhara with dark skin and bright orange robes. He has mostly been hiding his djinn form to avoid being targeted by the local wizard population.

Though he does not realize it, Yisfa is under the effect of the Heirophant card which has made him more irrational and combative to suit the Collective's perception of him.

Personality: *I must protect the innocent, but they must choose that protection.*

Ideal: *It is better to die on your feet than live on your knees.*

Bond: *The children I have taken in must not be harmed.*

Flaw: *I am bullheaded about my beliefs.*

- **Kianne Amblecrown (KEY-an-ee).** Referenced in this module, but not present. A good divination wizard who works to oppose evil within the city. Sweet, understanding and protective of her apprentices.

- ***Karasht Silverflame (kuh-RAHST).***

Referenced in this module, but not present. A fire gensai wizard famed for his ill temper and transmutation magics. Currently conspiring to use a object of power, the woad heart, to control the infected.

Appendix 2: Creature Statistics

Air Elemental

Large elemental, neutral

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 90 (12d10 + 24)

Speed fly 90 ft (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances lighting, thunder, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons.

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Auran

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Air Form. The elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing..

Actions

Multiattack. The elemental makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Whirlwind. Each creature in the elemental's space must make a DC 13 Strength saving throw. On a failure, a target takes 15 (3d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage and is flung up 20 feet away from the elemental in a random direction and knocked prone. If a thrown target strikes an object, such as a wall or floor, the target takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it was thrown. If the target is thrown at another creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take the same damage and be knocked prone.

If the saving throw is successful, the target takes half the bludgeoning damage and isn't flung away or knocked prone.

Assassin Vine

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 5 ft, climb 5 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances cold, fire

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, prone

Senses blindsight 30ft., passive Perception 10

Languages –

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

False Appearance. While the assassin vine remains motionless it is indistinguishable from a normal plant.

Actions

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 20 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target takes 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and it is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and it takes 21 (6d8) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The vine can constrict only one target at a time.

Entangling Vines. The assassin vine can animate normal vines and roots on the ground in a 15-foot square within 30 feet of it. These plants turn the ground in that area into difficult terrain. A creature in that area when the effect begins must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be restrained by entangling vines and roots. A creature restrained by the plants can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check, free itself on a successful check. The effect ends after 1 minute or when the assassin vine dies or uses Entangling Vines again.

Chuul

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)

Speed 30 ft, swim 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Resistances poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages understands Deep Speech but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Amphibious. The chuul can breathe air and water.

Sense Magic. The chuul senses magic within 120 feet of it at will. This trait otherwise works like the detect magic spell but isn't itself magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The chuul makes two pincer attacks. If the chuul is grappling a creature, the chuul can also use its tentacles once.

Pincer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 14) if it is a Large or smaller creature and the chuul doesn't have two other creatures grappled.

Tentacles. One creature grappled by the chuul must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. Until this poison ends, the target is paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Dark Tide Knight

Medium humanoid, lawful evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (0)	11 (+0)	101(0)

Skills Athletics +7, Stealth +7

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Bonded Mount. The knight is magically bound to a beast with an innate swimming speed trained to serve as its mount. While mounted on this beast, the knight gains the beast's senses and ability to breathe underwater. The bonded mount obeys the knight's commands. If its mount dies, the knight can train a new beast to serve as its bonded mount, a process requiring a month.

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

Actions

Multiattack. The knight makes two shortsword attacks.

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

Lance. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d12 + 3) piercing damage.

Reactions

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker the knight can see hits it with an attack, the knight can halve the damage against it.

Illusionist

Medium humanoid, lawful evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)

Speed 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +2

Skills Arcana +5, History +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spellcasting. The illusionist is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The illusionist has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights, mage hand, minor illusion, poison spray*

1st level (4 slots): *color spray*, disguise self*, mage armor, magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility*, mirror image*, phantasmal force**

3rd level (3 slots): *major image*, phantom steed**

4th level (1 slot): *phantasmal killer**

*illusion spell of 1st level or higher

Displacement (Recharges after the Illusionist casts an illusion spell of 1st level or higher). As a bonus action, the illusionist projects an illusion that makes the illusionist appear to be standing a few inches from its actual location, causing any creature to have disadvantage on attack rolls against the illusionist. The effect ends if the illusionist takes damage, is incapacitated, or its speed becomes 0.

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2(1d6 - 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3(1d8 - 1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

Priest

Medium humanoid, any alignment

Armor Class 13 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 25 ft

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

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +4

Languages any two languages

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, the priest can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, guiding bolt, sanctuary*

2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic, spirit guardians*

Actions

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

Veteran

Medium humanoid, any alignment

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (0)	11 (+0)	10 (0)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

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

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

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

Yisfa the Vibrant (Djinni)

Large elemental, chaotic good

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 161 (14d10 + 84)

Speed 30 ft., fly 90 ft (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	15 (+2)	22 (+6)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +7, Cha +9

Damage Immunities lightning, thunder

Senses darkvision 120 ft.

Languages Auran

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Elemental Demise. If the djinni dies, its body disintegrates into a warm breeze, leaving behind only equipment the djinni was wearing or carrying.

Innate Spellcasting. The djinni's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect evil and good, detect magic, thunderwave*
3/day each: *create food and water (can create wine instead of water), tongues, wind walk*

1/day each: *conjure elemental (air elemental only), creation, gaseous form, invisibility, major image, plane shift*

Actions

Multiattack. The djinni makes three scimitar attacks.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) lightning or thunder damage (djinni's choice).

Create Whirlwind. A 5-foot-radius, 30-foot-tall cylinder of swirling air magically forms on a point the djinni can see within 120 feet of it. The whirlwind lasts as long as the djinni maintains concentration (as if concentrating on a spell). Any creature but the djinni that enters the whirlwind must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be restrained by it. The djinni can move the whirlwind up to 60 feet as an action, and creatures restrained by the whirlwind move with it. The whirlwind ends if the djinni loses sight of it.

A creature can use its action to free a creature restrained by the whirlwind, including itself, by succeeding on a DC 18 Strength check. If the check succeeds, the creature is no longer restrained and moves to the nearest space outside the whirlwind.

Zombie Swarm (Girallon Zombie)

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 59 (7d10 + 21)

Speed 30 ft, climb 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	7 (-2)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages --

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the zombie can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The zombie makes five attacks: one with its bite and four with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Appendix 3: Fungal Bloom (Bonus Objective A).

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Bonus Objective A

Obtain the *fungal bloom* from the oldest infected.

Scene A. Infected Collective

This scene sees the adventurers enter the infected compound and find a grim mockery of the Collective. Combat is an almost certainty, but try to build up a tense atmosphere leading up to it.

Area Information

The area has the following features.

Canopy. The dense canopy of the forest blocks out light, covering the area in complete darkness.

Central Building. While the original purpose of the large building in the center of the compound is unclear, it seems to serve a central residence for the infected here. Inside are a number of oldest infected who sit on their beds amid the mess of broken and rotting “supplies” filling the building.

Dog Pens. These pens are a gruesome sight. They contain dead city dwelling animals of all types, but of particular abundance seem to be dogs and rats. About half seem to have died from the infected, while the other half died from other causes. The infected use these corpses as a food source.

Infected Pens. A hundred infected or so roam around listlessly in these pens. They are harmless when originally encountered unless attacked, though they will stand up to all manner of prodding, yelling and poking. These are where most of the zombies making up the zombie swarms dwell.

Creature Information

This scene includes a half dozen **oldest infected** and five **zombie swarms (girallion zombies)**

Oldest Infected. The oldest of the infected were those humanoids that came from outside the city, bringing the plague from the orc encampments where it originated. They remain docile, but have begun sprouting rock-like protrusions from their bodies where the purple lesions had once been. These are the fungal blooms that Yisfa requires for his antidote.

Zombie Swarms. When the adventurers reach the oldest infected, the swarms spring into action, hurling themselves down the avenues of the compound in giant balls. The zombies have no real sense of self preservation and work together in surprisingly orderly groups in ways no normal humanoid could. Feel free to have fun with this.

If needed, they can stack themselves up in a tower to the canopy to reach flying creatures or take on any other formation necessary to pester the adventurers.

Adjusting the Encounter

Note: These adjustments are not cumulative

- Very Weak: Remove 3 zombie swarms.
- Weak: Remove 2 zombie swarms.
- Strong: Add 2 zombie swarms.
- Very Strong: Add 5 zombie swarms.

Treasure

Any adventurers that casts *detect magic* or digs through the accumulated junk in the central building finds a *potion of heroism*.

Appendix 4: Mantle of Freedom (Bonus Objective B).

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Bonus Objective B

Obtain the *mantle of freedom*.

Scene A. House of Mirror

Area Information

The area has the following features.

Amblecrown's Abode. This small 40' x 40' house is where Amblecrown conducted secret research away from the prying eyes of the other archwizards of Thentia. It is covered in wards that prevent sound and light from leaving the house as well as preventing teleportation and extraplanar creatures from entering or existing.

Front Door. While the house would be normally quite difficult to gain access to, Amblecrown has foreseen the adventurers' arrival and has left the door unlocked for them. When they enter it slams shut and seals itself until they complete the mantle.

Mantle of Freedom. When the characters enter the house they see a partially completed *mantle of freedom* is present on a tailoring form. It is a beautiful cloak that seems to imitate wings, but is clearly missing five feathers. These can be obtained via the mirror.

Mirror. A large, indestructible mirror rests against one of the walls of the house. Looking into it while it is on this wall reveals oddly distorted versions of the adventurers, but it cannot be otherwise interacted with. Oddly, the mirror always seems to completely mirror the entire room it is located in. Close examination reveals the mirror can be moved.

With a bit of hefting, the mirror can be moved which causes it to stop reflecting. It can be placed on a wall or hung on the ceiling or floor, which it sticks to with surprising ease. Anyone looking into the mirror while wearing the mantle reveals an additional feather specific to that orientation. (If the adventurers have already obtained two feathers, the mirror shows a third on the mantle)

When the mirror is located on any wall other than the original one, adventurers can, as an

action press against the mirror. They are sucked through into the reflected room and their mirror image comes out the other side. The mirror images then all attack.

Obtaining Feathers. To fill out the mantle, the adventurers must obtain the reflected cloak while it is on a mirror image and bring it to the original side. They must then move the mirror to a different surface (wall, floor or ceiling) and do so again until they have placed it on all surfaces and the mantle is complete.

Creature Information

This scene has creatures that serve as mirror images of the adventurers. Use your best judgment as to which creature works best, or replace them entirely if you think a different creature works better.

Mirror Images. The mirror images seem different from the characters in notable ways, serving as inverted caricatures. A dumb barbarian may see his mirror image wearing comically thick glasses, for instance.

If a mirror image is hurt, the mirrored creature feels the injury but takes no damage. If the mirror image is reduced to 0 hit points, the mirrored creature does as well.

Dark Tide Knight. Rogues see this mirror.

Illusionist. Arcane caster's mirror image.

Priest. Divine casters are mirrored as this.

Veteran. Burly fighter types are mirrored as this.

Adjusting the Scene

Consider making changes to the scene to keep it fresh for players that have played the module previously:

- The mirror images can pass freely through the mirror and try to take the cloak back en masse.
- Any effects or damage applied to the mirror creatures is applied to the mirrored adventurer as well.
- The mirror must be held against the walls and ceiling by a strong adventurer, making them unable to assist in any fighting.

You are empowered to use your own ideas here, but try to keep things from dragging. Once the adventurers have a system in place, let them move on.

Appendix 5: Magic Items

Characters completing this adventure's objective unlock this magic item.

Trident of Fish Command

Trident, uncommon (requires attunement)

This beautiful trident seems bafflingly made from pure pearl, likely carved from the treasure of a massive oyster. Delicate lines along the weapon's shaft and head seem to blend imagery of strong winds and calm seas. This item can be found on Magic Item Table F.

Mantle of Freedom (Cloak of Billowing)

Wondrous item, common

This cloak is made of stark white silk embroidered with golden thread in the shape of two grand wings. Those with arcane ability might note it appears to be the result of a failed attempt at creating wings of flying.

Appendix 6: Story Awards

Characters completing this adventure gain the following story award.

Tarot of Fate (The Hierophant):

Upright / Inverted

Please indicate which orientation you received.

Upright: You did not remove the empathic link binding the Collective together. They will continue to a harmonious unit, even during the dark days to come.

Inverted: You freed the Collective from their empathic bond. There will be increasing strife among the community in the near future, but it will be freely chosen strife.

Appendix 7: Dungeon Master Tips

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character within the adventure’s level range (see Adventure Primer). Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can’t return** to the first if outside its level range.

New to D&D Adventurers League?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/playevents/organized-play>

New to the Annual Storyline?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/story/waterdeep>

<http://dndadventurersleague.org/storyline-seasons/waterdeep-adventures/>

Preparing the Adventure

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you’d like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you’d like to portray an NPC or a tactic you’d like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure’s appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you’d like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character’s adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer) with their starting values for advancement and treasure checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These are updated at the conclusion of the session. The adventure information and

your information is added at the end of the adventure session—whether the completed the adventure or not.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player’s character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the D&D Adventurers League Players Guide for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it’s the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters’ spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

Adjusting This Adventure

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group’s average party level (APL). To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party	Strength
3-4 characters,	APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters,	APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters,	APL greater than	Average
5 characters,	APL less than	Weak
5 characters,	APL equivalent	Average
5 characters,	APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters,	APL less than	Average
6-7 characters,	APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters,	APL greater than	Very strong