

Symbaroum



City Adventures

Kumuma's Conundrum

EVEN AMONGST A CAST of thousands, the briefest references can be enough to draw attention. Kumuma's significance arises solely from the briefest mention of his one-time career as a traveling entertainer, followed by a fresh piece of evidence taken from the map of Yndaros itself. The Game Master would do well to have Kumuma appear before the adventure begins and find some common ground with the player characters (something we will cover later in greater detail). The location doesn't matter as much as one might think, provided the site of Kumuma's Corner lies in a place with a diverse population and an Ambrian majority. The nature of the conundrum benefits from a melting pot of diversity, common enough in the *Symbaroum* setting, with a population housed in the midst, and on top, of the remnants of the past.

Introduction

READING ABOUT THE history of Yndaros and the troubled and complex past of Lindaros serves to set the scene for this adventure, which finds competing factions seeking access to a buried and forgotten treasure. Ongoing conflict due to the Ambrian occupation, mixed with the competing economies and rivalries amongst the civilized residents, serve to raise the tension and the prospect of violence. For some this means harsh words and acts of visible

aggression, while those of simpler motive fall more easily to the use of fist and sword.

The following section explains the contested state of the streets and alleyways in this seat of so-called civilization, before looking to the deeper (literally and figuratively) problem at hand.

Depending on the motivations of the characters and how they become ensnared in the unfolding events, the Game Master will need to adjust the interactions

and focus the sense of purpose and peril. It is hoped that they will feel compelled to take action out of plain decency and civility, rather than the base need for personal reward. However, if the player characters have a looser moral compass or no particular sense of civic responsibility, then the Game Master will need to improvise and find a way to engage them despite the lack of physical or monetary reward.

BACKGROUND

Imagine the underworld that lies beneath one of the many major cities of the civilized world you know, then transition that mental image to the world of Symbaroum. While Yndaros has nothing like the utilities, transportation and amenities linked together in criss-crossing layers beneath the surface, a comparable labyrinthine network of tunnels, passages, crawl spaces, burrows, barrows and causeways does exist. Like a squamous archaeological abscess, Yndaros rests on the overlapping detritus of myriad civilizations.

Part of the complexity of this queer existence upon a maze of ruin is that one set of tunnels and passages does not necessarily intersect with any other. One network may remain completely separate and distinct from another, unless some outside force or sheer accident causes them to become linked. If such links were more commonplace, Yndaros would have vanished long ago into a cyclopean sinkhole. Unlike the depths of Davokar, where the many layers beneath seem to pierce and sink beneath the surface with alarming regularity, Yndaros' underworld remains reassuringly static.

Amongst the many subterranean structures, one of which predates the existence of Lindaros, lie the remains of a spider, a Shelob, of gigantic proportions. The identity of the creature rests in the symbols and ciphers etched on many walls of the tunnels that surround it, but these have worn almost smooth with the passage of time. While these symbols are almost illegible, the remnants of the spider and those who once worshipped it have survived. Someone recently pieced together enough fragments to send them on a search to locate a way into the great chamber. If they succeed, they might harness a glimmer of the ancient power encapsulated in the desiccated arachnid shell.

The Great Spider

The hollow shell of the Great Spider has lain in this location for hundreds or perhaps thousands of years, silent and undisturbed. Long since robbed of life, its resting place has nevertheless remained a place of respite and worship for a horde of lesser spiders. The scuttling mass crisscrosses the endless tunnels of the underworld, squeezing through narrow cracks

and traversing perilous shafts. Perhaps they have a plan, some shared drive that sends them out day after day, in search of not only food, but also a new leader.

The shell of their one-time Shelob has become diaphanous, almost ghostly, and yet remains incredibly robust and resilient. Scaled with a rainbow of color, when light crosses her gigantic form it scintillates, hinting at impossible movement, as if life might yet leak back into the husk if only the path might be cleared for her spirit to return from the Yonderworld.

While her horde scuttles about in the darkness, sealed off from the surface by some ancient architect who sought to entomb the lot of them for all time, something has managed to escape – a hint of her existence, a whisper of her majesty, a promise of her power. Something has sparked anew in the darkness of the soul of humankind. Across the streets of Yndaros scuttle new followers, though upon two legs rather than eight. If they can find a way, they might harness the ageless threat – whether in spirit or by finding a way to allow the once great spider to scuttle forth and reclaim her rightful place of dominance and command.

Burn and Be Damned

In pursuit of forgotten lore, a fanatical cult of spider worshippers is set to find the location of a temple, or perhaps a mausoleum, hidden within, or beneath, the lost ruins of Lindaros. Their desperate search has led to increasingly savage and violent encounters, and things are about to get worse.

The cult leader, Ulstano, certain that this lost location must be accessible from somewhere on the surface, has strung together a network of contacts and informants, through influence and bribery. He has inveigled himself into the good favor of many influential citizens, including crafts people, engineers, architects and property developers. When the merest hint of a way down into the depths surfaces, a member of the cult visits the location in pursuit of the entrance to the underworld. Ulstano encourages his flock to avoid violence in their efforts, but perhaps he has done a little too well exciting their religious fervor.

Kumuma's Corner has become the next target. As Kumuma has rebuffed civil offers of money for the property, one cult member intends to turn to arson to drive the owner away. The plan is to raze the property to the ground in search of what might lie beneath, no matter the consequences or loss of life.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

The reasons that the player characters might get involved in the plight of Kumuma stem from a vested interest in the community. The hardship

experienced by much of the population of Yndaros tends to bring people together – though better still, the player characters could have a personal interest, given the strong connection Korim, Kumuma’s son, tends to develop with adventurous types.

On the other hand, the player characters might have an investment or stake in a property themselves, a business run on their behalf while they’re treasure-hunting or a simple dwelling rented out to make money to tide them over in the winter when exploration becomes too demanding. For those who are particularly contrary and wish to avoid getting involved, few things could pull on the heartstrings more firmly than the tearful face of a child in awe of a hero. Ultimately, the Game Master knows best what might pull player characters into the fray.

Friends of the Family

Kumuma has traveled a great deal in the past and it is possible that the player characters know him personally or by reputation, and have come to Yndaros to seek him out. As a friend, Kumuma always provides a warm welcome and his Corner offers basic accommodation that he will share without thought of compensation.

By reputation, Kumuma was a snake eater and an expert regarding matters of venom. The player characters could find themselves in a situation where one or more of them has suffered a wound infected with a poison no simple antidote can cure, stricken by a creeping sickness certain to kill them if not counteracted with precisely the right anti-venom.

Quality of the Highest Order

If the player characters have taken to finding items of rare quality or adding mastercrafted equipment to their inventory, the location of Kumuma’s Corner could currently house an artisan capable of providing the desired item. If that is the case, whatever they need isn’t immediately available – acquisition of materials takes time and Qualities are not instilled in any item without care – though payment must be made in advance.

Having made the arrangements, it becomes clear that all is not well when the artisan calls on the player characters to come back to check the progress of the work; or, perhaps the artisan made a request of them to locate a hard to find material and on coming back with their prize, they find the Corner ablaze and the artisan trapped on the upper floor.

Keepers of the Peace

The other possibility, lacking a compelling personal reason for involvement, would be for the player characters to have a vested interest driven by duty

and, if needs must, money. If they have a role as guards, soldiers or some reputation as investigators, the authorities might hire them to look into complaints by local residents and businesses about the heavy-handed tactics of property developers. There might even be some suggestion that the instigators are non-Ambrians; the sting of the turnaround in the fortunes of the dwarves since they were accepted into the community has rankled some members of the nobility and the administration.

In this instance, the player characters will get involved at arm’s length, speaking to members of the community to grasp the situation; but, as events cascade into violence and unrest, they may find themselves becoming involved for more personal reasons.

GROUPS & FACTIONS

Apart from Kumuma’s Corner, much of the immediate area seems to be in a state of flux and renewal. It is said that the city planners and cash-rich developers seek to gentrify the slum quarter, squeezing the existing residents into the lower east segment, while at the same time pushing the camps further away.

Many people who have called this area their home have packed up and left, or are even now piling hand carts high with their possessions and furnishings. Other properties have already been vacated and after short periods of construction or paintwork have been repurposed. For instance, many single family homes have been divided into multi-tenant dwellings. Indeed, the unscrupulous developers seem to have that approach as a their general plan, building upward and subdividing interiors.

Numerous buildings stand in a state of reconstruction, scaffolds of timber framing the outward faces as workers and artisans proceed with skillful renewal. Other buildings have vanished, demolition stripping them down to their foundations, leaving little more than holes in the ground. For those buildings that remain, it seems like only a matter of time before their owners sell off their deeds, the greedy hoping for a few thalers more – risking the possibility any offer might be withdrawn altogether.

More than one group has interests in the streets of Yndaros and the secrets they obscure. The three key factions – the dwarf Jerok, the barbarian Goldä and the minor noble Ulstano – are not the only concerns; the Game Master should feel free to improvise and expand the range of interested parties, including those personalities known within their campaign that possess the wealth and desire to invest in property.

Of course, these other factions will prove to be nothing more than red herrings, but a visit to one could reveal hints and hooks tying in to later adventures. However, don’t misdirect too hard for fear the

players might lose their way; if necessary, you can draw their attention back, short and sharp, with a sudden assault by minions associated with one of the key parties below. Player characters poking their noses into other people's business deserve to be reminded that there are stones best left unturned.

The Dwarf

When the Ambrians welcomed the dwarven families into Yndaros in Year 13, they had certain selfish hopes about the situation. Like all of the relationships they impressed upon the world about them, they wished to benefit with little, if any, reciprocity. As it happens, the dwarven families played them at their own game, with a certain swagger characteristic of fallen nobility.

Jerok, brother to Patriarch Vikotzor Kalatra, seeks power and the protection of his own, looking for a way to gather strength enough to dethrone his sibling. His family means the world to him, though he would never tell them as much. He seeks to affirm his authority and significance through the acquisition of property and the expansion of his influence. To that end his sons, Voke and Bolen, manage these respective concerns; the former handling the negotiations with cash-strapped locals to acquire their land, the latter running The Golden Ram as a place where local business leaders come for good company, fine food and a puff of Jerok's personal stash of blackwash leaf.

Jerok possesses a slightly unhealthy paranoia that other businessmen of Yndaros are working against his interests, sharing whispers behind his back. His minions have a difficult time keeping up with his demands for information, walking the streets, checking in on the guilds and even working as attentive serving staff at the Ram.

The old dwarf believes Goldä to be his greatest competitor, but in truth that honor lies with his own son, Voke. As the younger of Jerok's children, Voke has a chip on his shoulder and an arrogance certain to be his undoing. He has made an agreement with Ulstano, a minor nobleman and (in secret) the head of the Spider Cult; Ulstano has promised support and influence in return for reports on new property acquired and unquestioned access to locations before renovation or resale.

The Barbarian

Within the walls of Old Kadizar, tales of sorrow outnumber the clay huts a hundred to one. Every member of the oppressed community claims to have woes greater than the next with a history beset by challenges no other can match. The Ambrians have a regular and very visible presence within the

walls, keeping the unwashed savages and heretics in order; if a single voice spoke up and brought coordination, the Queen might face a very real threat, but the rivalry of misery and misfortune serves to keep the barbarians at odds with one another.

Goldä certainly fits the mold, a masterful warrior and a rising voice amongst the people. He claims to be the last of a lesser tribe, one unheard of before he started with his boasts and stories. Goldä hopes to find proof of his heritage in the buried ruins, shattered passages and fractured caves that lie just beneath the surface of the old settlement.

While he holds court in his own clay-walled dwelling, lying amidst thick furs and picking at trays of sweetmeats, he tells tales of the sword his father owned, a mark of his clan and his birthright. Around the walls, Goldä hangs the favored weapons representative of the other clans, with a single space left open upon which to display his treasure.

In truth, Goldä has little influence beyond the cadre of his companions. Nobleman Dastan only tolerates him because the stories of ancient glories entertain him. Goldä might imagine himself a hero – and there's no doubt he has a keen mind, a savvy eye for investment and a strong hand – but Dastan knows him for what he is, a jester, a bard, an entertainer.

Goldä is completely oblivious to this and has been using his resources, a certain amount of physical leverage and some carefully secured funds to acquire property, making his investments based on a map he claims lays out the reach and structure of the old city, from the time when his people were in control. Goldä has a dozen warriors who would lay their lives down for him in a heartbeat, though the barbarian's indomitable certainty about his origin means he would rather handle any challenge personally, hand-to-hand, to first blood.

He might consider a collaboration of sorts with anyone capable of standing up to him, sharing some of his intelligence about the forgotten city in return for a blood promise that should they uncover his birthright they will relinquish it to him without question or reward.

The Spider Cult

The clans would laugh at Ulstano, middle child of the House Elandel, and his so-called cult, but that is not to say that they pose no threat to the unsuspecting populace of Yndaros. All of the cult members are Ambrian, many high-born and almost all of them bored with the existence they have been expected to endure in their new, wretched land. Ulstano would be banished back to his family's seat in New Berendoria were his connection to the cult uncovered, but he's more likely to burn out than fade away.

The Spider Cult dabbles in the esoteric lore of barbarian witchcraft mixed with access to common weapons and dress associated with the clans of northern Davokar. They seek out relics and lore associated with the barbarian cults and especially the witches, stealing glimpses of understanding however they can. Ulstano has instilled fervent loyalty in the thirty-or-so current members of the cult through a mix of drugs, mysticism and ritualistic gibberish. As a result, all of the cultists follow his every command to

the letter and in pursuit of their belief would willingly give up their lives, knowing that upon death they will become one with the offspring of the Spider God, Oroke.

There are members on the periphery of the cult who have not committed so deeply that they have severed ties with their ordinary lives – a couple of them might frequent social hangouts, like The Golden Ram. Ulstano recruits newcomers with caution, but it isn't unheard of for other members of the cult to make suggestions and introduce new inductees themselves.

Adventure Locations

KUMUMA'S CORNER

In some respects, Kumuma's life has been a fine example of a perfect society that doesn't exist in Ambria. He was born into the clan Odaiova, dwelling in the eaves of Davokar before raiders from Alberetor caused his people to swallow a bitter herb by choosing to surrender rather than be destroyed like the Jezites. He found a way to survive as an entertainer, traveling with other barbarians in a troupe along the fringes of the great forest. He met Halla, a free colonist, in one of the outlying settlements. They fell in love, with Korim the offspring of their union – but, tragically, Halla died of complications in the weeks after. For a time, Kumuma continued to entertain and raise his son, benefiting from the strength and cohesion of the community around him.

That sense of community has bloomed in his Corner of Yndaros. Kumuma's Corner serves as a place to meet, grab a hot meal and seek opportunity, away from less salubrious dens, taverns and meeting spots that litter the streets and alleys of the Slum Quarter. Kumuma welcomes everyone without prejudice, a quality that he has imbued in his son, who has become one of the first generation of children born to a new world of connected existence between Ambrians and barbarians.

Korim has a big heart and an ear for adventure, lapping up the tales of wonder that travelers bring to the Corner. Indeed, if the hook allows, Korim will have virtually adopted one of the player characters as an idealistic hero, despite personal shortcomings. Korim can only see the good in people; Kumuma knows better, but doesn't want to stop his son from developing his own world view. His is the world to come and his generation will be the one to face the consequences of this melting pot of invader and invaded.

The Ground Floor

The ground floor has a communal area on the left, with several mismatched tables and many chairs

– they look like they have been donated by various people from different locations. The room appears tidy and well-ordered, clearly a valued space for the community.

The area on the right serves as a kitchen with a fireplace where Kumuma prepares soups and stews, with a closed off stair leading down into the cellar. Here, Kumuma maintains a larder of foodstuff – and a back exit into a narrow L-shaped yard that hugs the side of the building. The yard contains a small stable for animals, a pile of firewood and a stack of hay.

The whole ground floor is lit only by lanterns and a few narrow slits in the walls, making for a warm, but smoky, environment. In the summer, Kumumu will have the doors open to let in some light and provide relief from the heat for those who gather there.

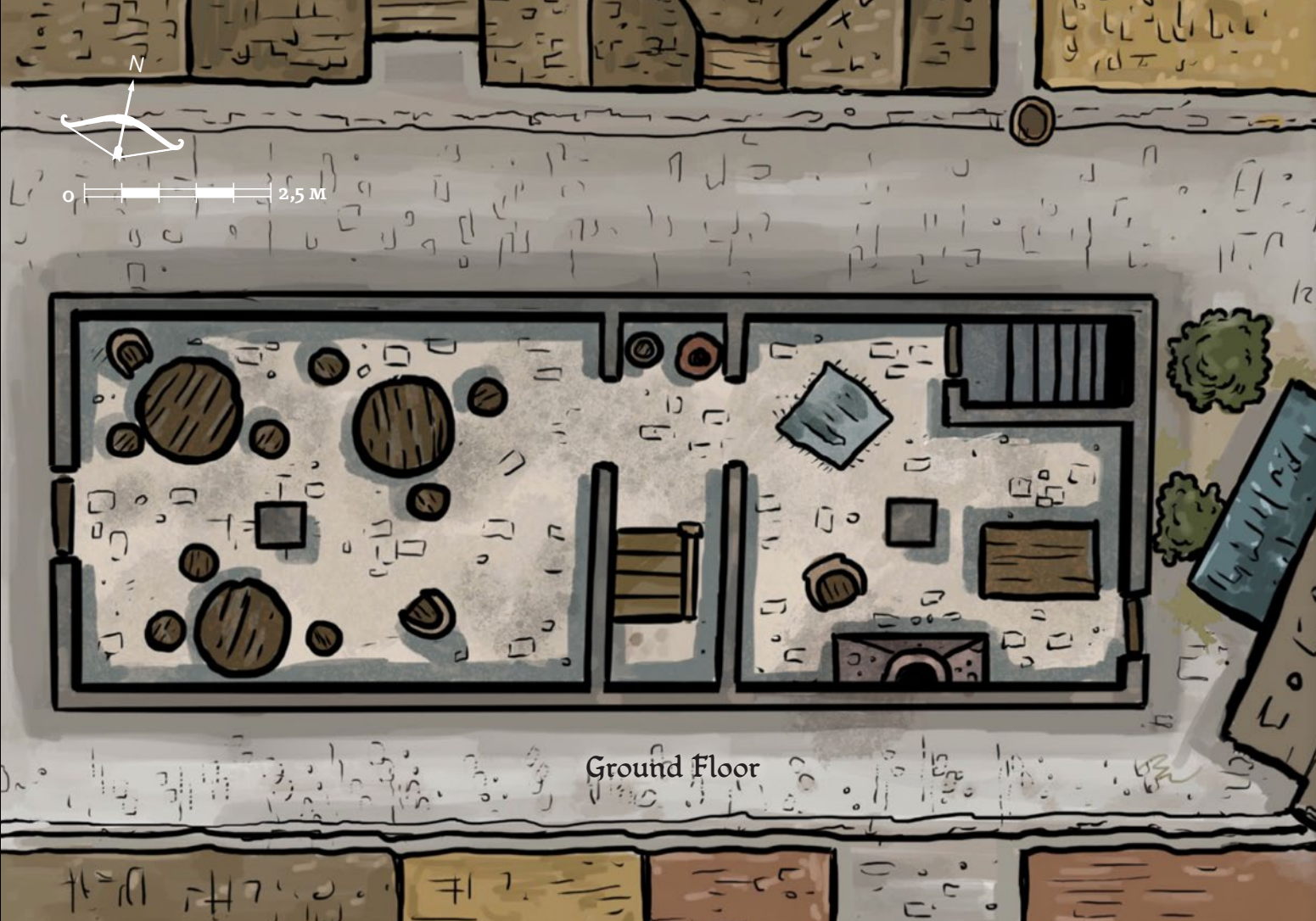
The Attic

Kumuma and Korim sleep in the attic, in separate rooms, as Korim wants to be considered more man than child, even at such a young age. However, Kumuma keeps a pallet for Korim in the front room because sometimes the boy has nightmares and he wants the reassuring presence of his father. At a pinch, Kumuma can offer the back room to someone in need of a bed; the furnishing is simple, but comfortable.

Next to Kumuma's chamber is a storage room in which he maintains a small collection of snakes, as well as scattered personal possessions, clothes and keepsakes.

The Middle Floor

Non-Guild artisans occupy the middle floor of the Corner, meticulous in both their specific craft and their paranoia about newcomers, ever cautious of the repercussions of being discovered. Their attitude means that any request to enter their rooms will meet with extreme caution – player characters will need to win them over simply to set foot inside the door. Going in, player characters will find tables and chests



Ground Floor

The Attic

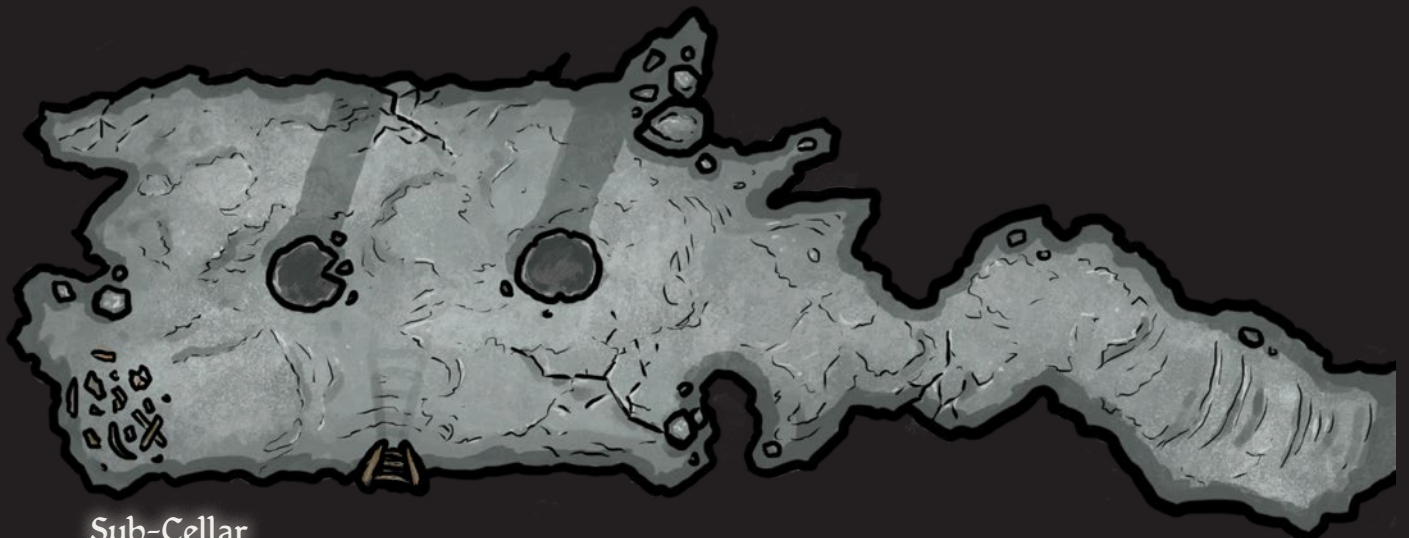




Middle Floor



Cellar



Sub-Cellar



hastily covered with blankets and rugs or made to look like uncomfortable chairs or precarious tables.

The middle floor also has a meeting room, with tables and chairs, a room in which locals can hold small functions or simply gather in private. Kumuma doesn't question them or expect payment, though he happily accepts donations of whatever they might offer.

The Cellar

The body of the cellar is heaped with supplies, food, barrels, shelves, and other items that Kumuma needs to keep either safe or cool. There is a concealed mechanism somewhere in this building (that does not need to appear specifically on the map) that opens an access way into the sub-cellar below.

An exquisitely crafted trapdoor in the ground provides egress into the depths - it either outstrips the masonry skills of Ambrian artisans or possibly uses some form of magic to open. Beneath, a carved stair runs down into a passageway that bears the scars of time and a partial collapse, beyond which lies a much bigger passage; this might have been a street of some ancient city now built over and forgotten. Following the passage leads further into the wider depths of Yndaros' Underworld.

THE GOLDEN RAM

In the midst of the Southern Artisans' District, with its buzzing, clamoring sounds of craftsfolk hard at work, lies the quiet and salubrious meeting place called The Golden Ram. A doorway sandwiched between a bakery and a silversmith leads up a shallow stepped stair to the opulent meeting place. Partitioned booths take up much of the space, with only a small central open area layered with thick carpets and a few comfortable chairs. A thin veil of sweet smelling smoke wafts close to the ceiling.

Jerok the Dwarf always occupies the booth opposite the entrance, providing him opportunity to assess all new arrivals. A dwarf of noble bearing, he has gray hair, a mess of old scars and a missing right arm. Day or night, Jerok always seems to be here - while the other clientele in the booth change constantly, engaged in subdued conversation. He welcomes newcomers, engages them in quizzing conversation and tries to glean more information than he offers in return. He possesses an unhealthy dose of paranoia, never accepting anything at face value.

GOLDÄ'S SEAT

Goldä's gray, clay roundhouse lies in the southern portion of Old Kadizar - and some would say in the shadow of the Old Tower, though rarely to his face. A dwelling of considerable size, the luxury

of the interior broadcasts Goldä's considerable wealth - though, again, others would suggest him a plaything of the Thief King, a bird in a gilded cage brought out only to entertain with song and story.

He offers comforts, food and copious amounts of black brew to those who can stomach the particularly harsh variety he favors - and claims is a recipe unique to his clan. Those who surround him remain vigilant and dutiful at all times, though one - Kias - is a plant inserted by Nobleman Dastan to keep his jester's grandstanding in check.

Whether he listens to the gossip or believes his own stories a little too much, Goldä acts like an emotional and embittered exile, speaking of the struggles and pain he has endured. He welcomes interest in the weapons he keeps on the walls representing the many clans, but reacts to the smallest slight or any question regarding his station. Goldä would claim the chip on his shoulder to be a battle wound if given the opportunity to tell the whole tale.

THE OLD TOWER

On the surface, Nobleman Dastan has turned the old tower into his omniscient seat, providing him with a view across the whole of Old Kadizar. However, for the purpose of this adventure, the greater interest lies beneath, in the tentative explorations of the Ordo Magica digs. The laborers beneath, paid handsomely by the wizards for their endurance

Trapdoor Mechanism

The mechanism for releasing the trapdoor in the cellar can be as simple as a concealed switch in the wall, or the Game Master can choose to make it more complicated. If the switch lies outside of the cellar, *Loremaster* will identify a marking that makes this clear and trigger a search. Mastery of that Ability finds markings suggestive of a Symbarian dialect. A more complex lock mechanism might require more ingenuity from the player characters:

- Scattered stones in the parts of the building recycled from a Lindarian structure show the tracery of characters akin to compass points or directions. Reaching the bricks requires the movement of furniture, access to the outside of the building, and the chipping away of plaster.
- The floor stone in the fireplace beneath the stewing pot depresses with sufficient weight applied. The space beneath the mantle limits access to easily apply such pressure without dismantling the wall.
- A player character entering the cellar feels a strange prickly heat across their skin; anyone of a mystical tradition will interpret the sensation as the presence of corruption. Generating a point of corruption in the cellar - whether by mystical ability, ritual, or other means - triggers the trapdoor.

and their still tongues, work ceaseless in the dirt and ruin. While it isn't clear what Ordo Magica seeks, Ulstano has wormed one of his followers into the ranks of the workers seeking a route into the underworld.

This serves as an alternate means for the player characters to uncover the cult. The work crew that engages in the grueling labor beneath the tower come from the Slum and Laborer Quarters, marshaled by

a clamorous alarm call struck upon a great bronze bell the wizards have installed at the center of Old Kadizar. The racket will inevitably draw attention and the player characters may chance to recognize either the cultist, Adero, or a telltale sign of body marking. Another possibility could involve Adero witnessing the player characters investigating matters key to the cult's interests - in which case, he will return with their descriptions to Ulstano.

Non-Player Characters

THE KEY INDIVIDUALS below are most likely to interact directly with the player characters

Kumuma

Equivalent to a Queen's Ranger (page 212 in the *Core Rulebook*) with the addition of *Poisoner* (novice) and three doses of *Poison* (moderate).

Jerok

Equivalent to Plunderer (page 215 in the *Core Rulebook*) with the *Trait Earth Bound*, the boons *Enterprise* and *Absolute Memory*, the burdens *Elderly* and *Pariah*, and *Retribution* (as an Ability, novice) instead of *Robust*.

Goldä

Equivalent to a Guard Warrior (page 216 in the *Core Rulebook*) with the equivalent of *Double Chainmail* (*Armor 4*, flexible) and a *Mastercraft Double-axe 9* (*Deep Impact*, *Blood-letting*).

Spider Cultists

Ulstano recruited the members of the cult from the lower echelons of the frustrated nobility, the lesser sons and daughters too far down the chain to inherit and with no drive or ideas of their own. He has manipulated them through promise of power, mind-altering drugs and the rhetoric of a mad man with a purpose.

All the members of the cult, including Ulstano, physically mark themselves as a sign of their devotion, sporting tattoos, piercings and scarification with a strong spider and web theme. While many of the street gangs and thugs that stalk the alleys and back roads of Yndaros ink their flesh, these spider designs are unique to the cult, mixing in certain interpretations

of Symbarian and barbarian runes that Ulstano has copied from ancient artefacts and scrolls.

All cultists have the attributes and abilities of a Robber Chief (page 211 in the *Core Rulebook*), with the addition of a version of *Larvae Boil* called *Oroke's Hunger* (novice), which uses a handful of spiderlings and fills the target's body with sores riddled with live and hungry arachnids. As a result, all cult members have *Shadow - Gold* spotted with crimson bruises (corruption: 1). They also wear woven silk armor (2, flexible).

Ulstano and his lieutenants, Adero and Serif, also know *Witchcraft* and a version of *Entangling Vines* - the lieutenants at Adept and Ulstano at Master - which manifests as a mesh of spider webs swarming with biting and stinging spiders. Tactically, Ulstano favors others doing the hard work and putting their lives in danger, leveraging their loyalty to him and their common cause.

Finally, Ulstano has a ritual that he believes will allow him to summon forth the spirit of the great spider and unleash it anew upon the unsuspecting world. The Game Master has the option to play this facet of the story in any way, using whatever outcome would make the narrative the most satisfying. Ulstano may in fact have nothing more than words, in which case his ritual will fail, but he will seek escape. The ritual might be incomplete or only sufficient to release some ethereal manifestation, an entity with characteristics equal to a *Necromage* (page 232 in the *Core Rulebook*). In the worst case scenario, the ritual raises the Great Spider. In such a case, use stats for a *Shelob*, at minimum (page 147 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*), or perhaps something more legendary in stature and threat that cannot be fought, only contained.

Developments

THE KEY DRIVER of the Adventure Location revolves around Ulstano and the Spider Cult, spoiled children of the nobility to the last, steeped in unhealthy smatterings of the occult and driven

to acts of violent fanaticism by override egos and drugs. Misguided and damned, they dabble with forces they cannot control, imitating bloodlines and traditions they hardly understand. The Game

Master must simply engage the players in the turn of events, as one of the cult attempts to set fire to the Corner, putting lives at risk, and then spin out the wider background of pushy and forceful landowners and developers.

That part of the tale serves as either a red herring or a possible lead – but, no matter what, it should muddy the water and make the gaming group wonder whether this destructive act comes down to competitive greed by aggressive businesspeople or something more. Kumuma will point at Jerok, Jerok will point at Goldä and the barbarian will deny everything.

The Game Master should play up the personalities and attitudes, hinting at violence, ego trips and ulterior motives. Jerok and Goldä could be allies if the player characters can find a way to engage their interests and induce them with promises of what they might gain from such a venture. However, time spent in Jerok's company may also alert Voke, who will tell Ulstano if the player characters' actions challenge the purpose and intent of the cult, coincidentally putting the young dwarf's own plans in jeopardy.

RITUAL OF THE GREAT SPIDER

The cultists will break into the upper levels of the Corner during the day and start a fire, banking on the absence of witnesses upstairs to allow the flames to catch. However, Korim often spends time upstairs playing or simply hiding out – and he'll be in with his father's snakes when the arson attack starts. Once the player characters get involved, thwarting the arson attack, Kumuma will angrily suggest that the developers have pushed things too far.

During the course of their investigation about who might have taken this extreme action, they will cross paths with all parties, including Ulstano, potentially, in his guise as an ordinary noble. The player characters will find that tempers run high in Yndaros when it comes to matters of power, wealth and possession. They have the potential to make both allies and enemies as they progress, depending on how hard they push and what figurative toes they step on.

If the investigation falters, the Game Master might use a couple of tactics to nudge it along. The player characters might find themselves forcefully invited for a discussion, as either Jerok or Goldä tries to deduce what's going on. The other possibility would be a shadowy attack by cult members – at Ulstano's order or organized by friends or companions seeking revenge if the arsonist died at the hands of the player characters. The attackers will have the tattoos and markings borne by all spider cultists- and a *Vigilant* or *Loremaster* test will allow for an insight that a similar symbol is visible on the surface of a stone on the exterior of Kumuma's Corner.

The interest from all parties in acquiring Kumuma's Corner should encourage a more detailed exploration of the structure and its history. When the player characters finally find the trapdoor into the underworld, they will enter a great void thick with webs and littered with desiccated cocoons. In the backdrop, the sounds mix distant dripping with a strange percussive tapping or drumming – the sound of the many minor spiders foraging in the depths, certain to ambush the explorers at the first opportunity.

Searching the depths will ultimately reveal the presence of the great spider's remains – but what can the characters do about it and, having found the treasure the cultists so desperately seek, how long before Ulstano finds it too and sets to casting the fragmented ritual he hopes will return the monstrous creature from beyond?

ESCAPADES AND ERUPTIONS

Whether Ulstano finds the great spider and completes the ritual or not, the reveal of the trapdoor and finding a way down will be enough to start a timer ticking. Shelob or otherwise, the opening of the way allows the spiders to come to the surface, a horde starved of options and food now with a route into a very well-stocked larder. Use the many and varied spiders from the *Monster Codex*, *Wrath of the Warden* and the core rules to fill out the potential opponents – and think of all those monster driven B-movies and zombie films for your jump scares and ambushes.

If the Shelob has returned – whether in spirit form or reborn – she serves as both the driving force and the ideal target for the player characters as a way to take the horde down. As it poses a threat to the city, the player characters will not be alone in their fight, whatever the nature of the arachnid enemy; the people of the Slum District and the Refugee Camp to the south know hardship well enough to fight for themselves. Such an attack will garner attention from the guards and soldiers of the city in short order, as well as the barbarians of Old Kadizar – giving Goldä the opportunity to put one or two of his prize weapons to good use.

Kumuma's Corner provides an ideal means to both corral the flow of spiders from the outset, by defending the route up from the cellar and then holding one exit to force them out of the other. It should also have the potential to provide a means to stop the threat – as wrecking the supports on the upper floors can bring the whole building down and plug the route out of the underworld. It might prove bittersweet as a victory that the very place the player characters hoped to save should be destroyed by their hand – but, they should expect tough decisions by now.

Smothering the Torch

THE ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE *Smothering the Torch* is about the organization of youthful town criers who, standing on their bright red stools, are heard shouting about injustice and oppression in the segregated capital of Ambria. The girls and boys of the Torch have long instilled courage in the city's laborers and daythalers, or at least provided fodder for conversations about their masters' arrogance and depravity. The rulers themselves are not amused, but have so far dedicated few resources to combating the organization - maybe because it is not considered a priority when compared to other, more serious threats; maybe because attempting to silence the child criers' news might lead more people to believe them.

SURE, THERE HAVE been attempts to expose the leader of the Torch, by offended individuals as well as local and national authorities. So far all have failed to expose anything more than the middlemen who deliver news and leaflets to the town criers, and these have each given completely different accounts regarding who offered them

the job and paid for their services. But in the wake of the ever-deepening conflict between the Sun Church's two factions - the Curia Loyalists and the Reformists - the organization begins to crack in such a way that even its most closely guarded secrets might be exposed. Regarding the Torch, the player characters will have a say in what happens.

Introduction

TO UNDERSTAND WHY the Torch emerged, how its leader has managed to remain in the shadows, and why he now risks being brought to light, one must have a good understanding of Ambria in general

and the Sun Church in particular. This section addresses the adventure's background and plot, and describes how the player characters might be drawn into the unfolding events.

BACKGROUND

As an organization, the Torch was founded and is still led by Father Peonio, First Theurg at the Cathedral of Martyrs. The number of people involved is strictly limited and all members are sworn to secrecy. And they are well aware that even the slightest violation of that oath will bring down the wrath of Prios, First Theurg Peonio, and, by extension, even the First Father himself.

The reason why Peonio founded the Torch has to do with the Sun Church's ambition to turn the Ambrian kingdom into a theocracy, with the First Father as its regent. Stationed in the capital, he could see every day how deeply the people of Yndaros love and trust Queen Korinthia and her subordinates – something that obviously needed to change if the Curia's plans were ever to be realized. He decided to go behind Jeseebegai's back, not because he feared that the First Father would disapprove, but so as not to compromise him in case the clearly treasonous activities were ever exposed.

The purpose of the Torch is to sow discord between the people and the earthly rulers of Ambria: the Queen, her counts and barons, and officials within the realm's military, law enforcement and intelligence organizations. As spiritual adviser to the capital's elite, Peonio has always had easy access to compromising information; information which he has then distorted into exaggerated half-truths in order to shield himself from suspicion. For the same reason he has made sure that the Torch never comments on religious matters, but lately he has started making more and more exceptions to that principle. And this is precisely what might eventually be his downfall (see Plot below).

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE TORCH

The Torch's headquarters is located behind a secret door in the basement beneath the Pupil's Home at the Convent School of the Last Light. There Peonio and his two co-conspirators, the clerks Sigina and Manfeld, meet every Earth Day evening, as the First Theurg visits the convent school's pupils for spiritual conversations and weekly oral exams. They often spend no more than a quarter of an hour together, just long enough for Peonio to hand over and explain material for future news reports. Sometimes they do not meet at all, if there are reasons for extra caution. In any case, it is Sigina and Manfeld who formulate the short and effective headlines which will later echo across the eastern districts of Yndaros.

Between the clerks and the children there are always three to four middlemen, often daythalers

or senior citizens who welcome a few extra coins each week and will not bite the hand that feeds them. It is the changeling Sigina who seeks them out, always on different days, at different times, wearing different disguises; she teaches them the lines, which they then pass on to two children each, along with a silver shilling and a small bucket of red paint, enough to paint a stool or crate. Each time, new children are selected and contacted by the middlemen, who themselves are replaced every five or six weeks, sometimes less.

PLOT

The reason why the organization now risks being exposed is related to the conflict within the Sun Church. Despite the strict security measures and the limited number of initiates, there are actually two people who know about the town criers' source and who disapprove of the recent outcries against "heretics" – that is to say, influential people who supposedly sympathize with Father Sarvola and other Reformists.

Sigina has been by Peonio's side since the beginning, but Brother Manfeld (also a teacher at the school) was initiated roughly two years ago, after the changeling's previous colleague went astray during a journey in the Titans, contracted a terrible disease, and was forcefully admitted to Anchorage Asylum. Permanently silencing the aged and infirm Brother Algal was never an option, for moral reasons and in the belief that his loyalty would never waver. What Peonio and Sigina did not take into account was Algal's rapidly progressing dementia.

Nowadays the increasingly unwell and delirious friar has become withdrawn, but there is nothing wrong with his speech. Day and night, he raves about his love for Prios, about his childhood in Alberetor, about friends and foes, and about the Torch. Only two people have listened to enough of his incoherent tirades to realize both that Algal has been contributing to the Torch's activities and that the organization in question is led by a senior member of the Sun Church. One of these is his personal nurse, Sister Ina; the other is his only living relative, his niece Onan. The former is not a problem – Sister Ina is loyal to the Curia and would never break her vow of silence anyway. His niece, on the other hand...

The orphan Onan grew up with her uncle in Yndaros. She has never been a member of the Black Cloaks, but is deeply religious and interested in spiritual matters. What is more: she has abandoned the Curia's Lawgiver, also known as the Prios of War, in favor of the interpretation of the Sun God's laws being spread by the Reformists. As long as the Torch avoided

Treason!

The serious crime of which the person is accused can be one of the following:

- Selling secret/harmful information to a hostile power (e.g. the Realm of the Order, the Sovereign's Oath, the Elves, some Robber Chief, or even the Dark Lords)
- Being the undercover agent of a hostile faction or power
- Participating in a blood cult worshipping the Eternal Night
- Murdering a beloved patriot or hero

commenting on matters of religion, Onan was able to hold her tongue, but as more and more prominent sympathizers of the Reformists are branded heretics, the courage to speak out grows in her chest.

Naturally she is terrified of being targeted by the black cloaks' witch hunters, or even worse: being hunted by the enforcers of Dead Priors. But maybe she will not have to act alone; maybe she will not have to come forth at all, but simply point others in the right direction...

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

The idea is that you and your gaming group should be able to play this adventure with any player characters you like. The only requirement is that they are in contact with some relatively high-ranking member of one of the city's powerful factions, or that they themselves have attained such prominent positions that the Torch has reason to target them in a besmirching report.

As for resistance, it can easily be adjusted to challenge more experienced player characters. If the characters are relatively new, the adventure should be playable without any modifications, but gaming groups at a more advanced stage may face tougher opponents. For example, one would imagine that the clearer the conflict within the Sun Church becomes, and the greater the schism between the church and the Queen, the heavier the security will be around the holy places and activities of the Curia. In the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* you can find stats for Experienced Black Cloak (page 134) which can be used to strengthen the convent school's guard force. And if even tougher resistance is needed, the same book offers stats for both Experienced Templar and Theurg.

Regarding the player characters' entry into the scenario, there are two main suggestions to consider – based on one of the player characters, or a contact of theirs, being seriously smeared by

the Torch. In addition, we present an additional idea to build on, should the main alternatives not seem suitable or appealing enough.

In Hot Water

It will probably be most interesting if one of the player characters is so prominent that he or she can be made a target of the Torch's smears. The character could be famous for some act of heroism, hold a top position within the army or the government, or be a member of some noble house.

Regardless of whether the target is a player character or a friend/contact (as described below), the allegations must be difficult to disprove and severe enough to cause problems for the career and reputation of the accused. Think about whether the character has met someone or done something in a context which is known to more than those closest to him/her, and that could clearly be seen as incriminating. Perhaps one of the character's acquaintances was recently caught selling information to the Realm of the Order or the Sovereign's Oath? Perhaps someone has reason to hate the person and is spreading malicious rumors about him/her being a blood cultist, a spy for the elves, or worse? The Game Master must create this "news" depending on who is being targeted.

Contact in Distress

If none of the player characters seems like a suitable candidate, the Torch's news could instead be about one of their contacts, friends or family members. The box *Treason!* offers some suggestions on what that person might be accused of.

In this case, the characters could initially (see *Game Opening*, page 15) be asked to escort the still unwitting target to an important and potentially violent meeting, and later be offered the job of investigating the leads in the letter which the target receives from Onan. Their reward could be thaler, favors or future missions within the target's faction.

The Niece's Dilemma

A completely different entry into the adventure can be Onan acting instead of reacting. In this case, she decides to personally contact a group of problem solvers to find out the truth about the Torch. From the very beginning her intention will be to expose the leader of the organization, in the hope of stopping the defamation of other Reformists. If the player characters manage to uncover the truth, and then decide not to pass on what they have learned (see *Aftermath*, page 24), it will be up to them to either lie to Onan or convince her that the Torch is doing more good than harm.

Game Opening

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS are in the Queen's capital, perhaps to rest after some adventure or search for their next mission. If the gaming group is playing the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*, *Smothering the Torch* may very well take place prior to *The Darkest Star*, when the characters have come to Yndaros to find the remains of the Guardian's Favored (see *Yndaros - the Darkest Star*, page 88).

Regardless of whether the player characters are alone or have been asked to escort one of their more famous friends, we suggest that their walk through the city is interrupted as they stumble into a really unpleasant situation.

BADMOUTHING

The player characters find themselves in east Yndaos, possibly accompanied by the person they are escorting. With a successful *Vigilant* test they quickly become aware of more and more people throwing dark glances at them. They can either stay put, or turn around and seek shelter until the cause of the threatening atmosphere has been determined.

If the group proceeds, they soon notice that the number of people stopping and glaring at them keeps increasing. Conversations go silent; people move aside or hurry into nearby alleys so that the characters are soon walking down a street lined with hateful faces and figures in tense restraint.

The first stones come flying from behind. All characters who have not expressly stated that they are on guard for attacks, or fail a *Vigilant* test, count as *Surprised* and risk being hit by one stone each (*Defense* ±0, 1D4 damage, plus any bonuses for *Advantage*).

With the first stones being thrown, the street erupts into chaos. Some escape the turmoil, but many remain, yelling insults like "traitor scum," "heretics" or "sorcerers." More and more people reach for stones to throw; all player characters must roll *Defense* tests against 1D3 stones per turn.

It is of course possible to escape, into buildings or down the streets. But in every direction, there are menacing people which they must get past (if stats are required, use *Robber* on page 211 in the *Core Rulebook*). The characters should easily be able to fight their way through, but if they hurt or even kill a few people, it will inevitably make their situation worse – their acts of violence will be viewed as evidence that the allegations against the target are true!

Should the player characters take a defensive approach and simply defend themselves against the attacks, a City Watch patrol (reinforced by a young Pansar) will show up three turns after the

first stones are thrown, or whenever the Game Master deems fit. The crowd is dispersed and order is restored.

WHAT IS GOING ON

If the player characters chose to stay and defend themselves, the leader of the guard patrol can of course answer their questions about what is going on – she has been patrolling through both the slum district and the refugee camp, where she heard the Torch's latest news. She also informs them that no formal charges have been filed and no arrest warrant issued against the accused, but that the City Watch can escort them to the nearest jail if they so wish, for their own protection of course.

Player characters who instead choose to escape the mob will not be pursued for long, although they can hear profanities and allegations echoing behind them. First they will probably get themselves to safety; rumor of the alleged "traitor" and the violent incident spreads quickly throughout the city, which is why they better not be seen in public.

Identifying the reason behind the attack is not very difficult, but it must be handled with a certain degree of discretion. Everyone who participated in fighting their way through the crowd is now considered an accomplice, so even if only one or two of them go searching for information, they will need a good disguise and must exercise great caution. Should they talk to someone or act in a way that draws attention, one or multiple *Discreet* tests might be in order.

THE REPENTANT

What the characters do next is difficult to say. If the targeted individual is a quest giver, that person wants to return as soon as possible to a place where he or she feels safe – more likely a well-guarded workplace than at home. The characters must then escort the person through a city where everyone will soon know about the allegations (and possibly about the violence in the slum district as well).

On the other hand, if it is a player character who is being slandered, it would be best for them to keep a low profile for a day or two, preferably someplace that cannot be directly connected to them. After only a day the situation ought to have calmed down enough for the mob, who initially went to the accused's home, inn or equivalent abode to express their indignation, to have lost interest. The characters can return, or at least visit the place to check on it, patch up broken windows, fetch equipment and so on.



The Obvious Lead

Should the characters search out one or more of the children who cried out the allegations against the target, they are relatively easy to find. Likewise, the middlemen who paid them and taught them what phrases to shout can be identified. But there the trail ends – the middlemen describe vastly different people (thanks to Sigina's shapeshifting ability), and none of them know anything about their contact besides his/her looks



No matter how the adventure develops around your gaming table, the alleged traitor (player character or contact) soon receives an anonymous message. Its author is of course Onan, who sees in the targeted individual a person with the power and ability to expose the leaders of the Torch and bring them to justice. The message reads as follows:

*Dear victim,
Having been targeted by its slanderous lies, perhaps you think, as I do, that the Torch must be smothered. Perhaps you, unlike me, have the power and courage to act on such beliefs.*

I don't know who is responsible for the Torch's fabrications, but I know someone who might. His name is Algal, and he is a patient at Anchorage Asylum. I have heard him ramble, words and fragments suggesting that he knows something.

A word of caution: be careful about who you're talking to, and what you're saying. My fears are most likely justified. You should be afraid, too, but hopefully your courage and will to seek justice are strong enough to overcome this dread.

The message is written on simple paper in simple ink, and was apparently delivered by a goblin girl who ran away as soon as she had named the intended recipient. Tracking down the sender is therefore not an option (unless the Game Master wishes otherwise); what is left to decide is whether to accept the challenge or not!

VISIT TO ANCHORAGE ASYLUM

Getting into Anchorage Asylum is not entirely uncomplicated, mostly out of concern for the visitors' safety. Sure, it is said that the spiritually and physically infirm who are cared for there are quite harmless and very rarely infected by darkness, but that is not completely true: inside the magnificent building of dark gray stone, raised as a pleasure palace in the time of Lindaros, there are also patients (and research subjects) suffering from advanced stigmatization. One of these is Brother Algal.

For many years the former black cloak lived incognito in Yndaros, posing as a janitor and handyman at a number of establishments and properties. His mission was to gather information about the enemies of Prios, or potential ones – cultists, heretics, sorcerers and other agents of the Eternal Night. Apart from a few trips to the Twilight Monastery in the Titans, Algal spent his entire adult life in the capital and was thus able to take care of his niece Onan.

Meeting with Algal

Alga's room is located on the second story of the building's three floors above ground – he is ill enough to be kept away from the mildly afflicted on the ground floor, but not deemed contagious or dangerous enough to be given a place on the top floor, or even worse, in the basement cells. What Algal endured after getting lost in the mountains is not relevant to this adventure, nor has he any memory of what happened. But he clearly does not have long to live – his skin is growing thinner, more transparent, and oozes some kind of greenish-yellow secretion at a pace which continues to accelerate. Soon the secretions will be so abundant that he will die from dehydration, no matter how much water his caretakers pour down his throat. He is unable to stand, or even sit, and his thoughts will soon be as murky as the secretion covering his body.

There are two main ways in which the player characters can gain access to the patient. The easiest one is to go through some contact within Ordo Magica. Those who have not attained Master level themselves (in *Wizardry*, or *Loremaster* if having had most of their schooling within Ordo Magica) require a letter from a Master of the Order. Perhaps the player characters have such a contact, be it a friend or mere acquaintance; that person will then demand something in return, most likely help solving a problem or a favor to call in at an appropriate time (that is, when the Game Master has transformed the agreement into the start of a suitable adventure).

Another approach can be to acquire information about exactly where in the building Algal is being held, for example by bribing one of the hospital's staff (a caretaker, cleaner or similar employee). They must then lie or sneak their way inside, or make clever use of powers like *Shapeshift* and *Teleport*. We also suggest that there are a couple of sewer tunnels leading out into the Doudram River, for gaming groups with a preference for stealthy maneuvers.

Regardless of how they go about it, the player characters will hopefully get to talk to Brother Algal. He is fully aware of them and seems to understand what he is told. However, with his foggy memories and disorganized thoughts, he has trouble providing clear answers. If the characters mention the Torch, his gurgling voice can express the following before the conversation is interrupted (either by the caretakers or because the patient loses consciousness):

The... Torch. Secret! Important! None can see, none can hear. The cellar. Wait thirty heart... beats,

*in silence, in the shadow of the stairs, then... open.
I am important, of... is... important! For the cause!*

*Danger! He is trouble. Dangerous!
Stole, he did. He... Valke, the baker... only
bakes bread. Only! Alimer's Alley. There...
Dangerous! But not evil. Warned... I just
warned. Disobedient. Refused to obey...*

*Kill! Discover, expose, punish. Kiiill... Master
Hubart, blind master Hubart. Deaf! Didn't see
me, didn't hear. Fooled... Hihhi, foooled.*

*Eyes glittering. Now only mu- mucus. And the
sun fading. Fading, fading... But lives... Like acid...*

Apart from the first tirade, which can help the characters locate the secret entrance to the Torch's headquarters, the second and third one is of course of utmost importance: they can lead them to the people described in the next section, and by extension to the convent school. Provided that they did not lie or sneak their way inside, they may also want to ask Sister Ina a few questions before leaving Anchorage.

Investigations

THE CONVERSATIONS WITH Algal and Ina should point the player characters toward five possible sources of information. Only two of these can lead them onward, namely the ones which after a bit of thinking should emerge from the sick man's incoherent ramblings.

THE BANDIT CAPTAIN

Valke was never a baker, but merely a helper at a bakery. Near Alimer's Alley southeast of the Monger's Square lies Erno's Bread, just as it did five years ago when Algal bumped into the shop assistant. But much has happened since then.

Valke was hired as a middleman between Sigina and the town criers, but it was a mistake right from the start - he drank too much, bragged too much and grossly neglected his duties. After the second meeting, when he had used his considerable thieving skills to snatch Sigina's pendant, the setting sun of Prios, Peonio made a quick decision: Valke must be silenced!

The task fell upon Algal, who as a witch hunter was used to handling such errands. But once they faced each other, eye to eye, the black cloak could not bring himself to go through with his mission; Valke was certainly a sinner, but he was neither a heretic, a cultist, nor beyond redemption. As

Questioning Ina

Algal's nurse is a middle-aged woman called Ina. She studied with Ordo Magica, but lacked the drive to get past the novice level, largely because she thinks she has found her true calling in life - helping the helpless, easing the suffering of those in pain, and protecting the dignity of the sickly who to her superiors are nothing more than faceless research subjects. She lives for her patients, and if it was up to her, no outsiders would be allowed to bother Algal and the others.

Getting her to answer, or even listen to, questions requires something extra from the player characters. Arguments about the security of the realm or the city, or something other than Algal's well-being, are pointless. The only thing that might help is a financial donation which Ina can use to make the sick man's last days in life as comfortable as possible. Only after receiving at least twenty thaler is she prepared to answer one single question, and she decides what the question will be: who else has been visiting Algal?

Her answer is terse and testy: "*Onan, his niece. Veola, his former landlady. Sometimes... Ensgar, is his name. A youngster.*"

soon as the pendant had been returned, Algal let the intended victim go with a warning that Valke remembers to this day.

Locating him is not a problem. The baker, Erno, remembers his former assistant very well and knows where to find him - at a shabby tavern called The Block & Tackle near the Sharp Stream (the Game Master decides its exact location). He can also inform the characters that Valke has made a name for himself in the city's underworld, and advises them not to go there.

The Block & Tackle

Having been threatened by Algal, Valke abandoned his brief attempt at an honest life and returned to his foster mother, the bandit queen Merandra. He worked hard to regain her trust, and did so well that he can now call himself Captain of one of her larger groups of pickpockets, extortionists and hardened hoodlums. Lately he has also toyed with the idea of overthrowing the aged queen, who is clearly losing her status and power over other criminals.

Captain Valke and his thugs can indeed be found at the Block & Tackle - a seedy tavern whose already scarce regulars are growing fewer and fewer. Whether or not the bandits are there when the player characters arrive is for the Game Master

to decide; if not, they will simply have to keep an eye on the building and wait.

The good captain will hardly let himself be intimidated, not while he has a bunch of obedient brutes standing between him and the threatening guests. Furthermore, his ambition to assume leadership drives him to show strength and resolve, forcing the characters to make a choice: either to obey Valke's order to leave the tavern, or defend against the attack which will otherwise ensue. The Game Master will have to adjust the number of bandits according to the capacity of the player characters. Their base stats are those of a Robber and Robber Chief respectively (page 211 in the *Core Rulebook*), but tougher alternatives can be found on page 138 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* (Thug and Pickpocket) or page 120 in *Yndaros - The Darkest Star* (Dwarven Thug, minus the Earthbound trait).

The fight should be more action-packed than challenging, and once it is over Valke raises his hands in surrender. With a mixture of anger and fear he agrees to tell them what he knows:

- His time as the Torch's middleman did not last more than ten days or so.
- The person he met with looked like any other person: a woman under thirty, dressed in simple, scruffy clothes. At first he describes her hair as short and brown, then changes his mind, claiming it was probably quite fair and kept in a ponytail - he does not remember that well; it was a long time ago.
- The reason it did not last very long was that he could not keep his hands to himself - he stole her necklace, including the pendant. The pendant turned out to be a sun symbol, but not of wood or stone, but of silver, with golden details (a gift from Algal).
- Shortly thereafter he was attacked by a man in an alley. Valke was convinced he was going to die, but the man hesitated, and finally lowered his sword. Instead he demanded the necklace back and explained that Valke's time as an associate of the Torch was over.
- The man ended with a threat which Valke will never forget: "*By Prios, the Lawgiver, the One, I swear I will burn you as a blight-stricken cultist if you ever mention the Torch or your meetings with us. Now get out of my sight, and pray we never meet again.*"

The truth about the different hairstyles is of course that Sigina messed up when using the *Shapeshifter* trait: her hair was in fact a different length and color during one of their meetings. Otherwise this

conversation mainly leads to the insight that the Torch is probably connected to the Sun Church, or more specifically to the Black Cloaks.

MASTER HUBART

Identifying and locating "Master Hubart" should not be a problem for our bold problem solvers. If they visit the landlady Veola, she can immediately explain that he was Algal's employer, and tell them where to find his combined office and residence near the Dome. But Hubart is also known to just about everyone who owns a plot of land or an establishment in Yndaros; even those who never enlisted his service have surely heard of him from someone else, either as a recommendation or a warning.

Master Hubart runs a business that hires out service personnel (such as cleaners, dishwasher, and janitors) to the city's wealthier residents - those who can afford to let others deal with lowly strangers and waste time on job interviews and proficiency tests. Aside from ten long term employees, Hubart has a list of fifty or so reliable daythalers who are always ready to do whatever is asked of them for very meager wages. This operation has made him rich, but while the vaults in his cellar are being filled with sack upon sack of coins, he still lives in his tall, narrow three-story building on the border between the Laborers' District and the Artisans' District.

Master Hubart does not want any visitors, which is explained quite emphatically by the maid opening the door. But if the player characters introduce themselves as potential clients, he will happily receive them, sitting at his desk in the office on the ground floor. The scrawny, almost emaciated Hubart is proud, haughty and greedy - he will not answer a single question without getting something in return (ten thaler per question, in advance)! The following is what he has to say about Algal:

- Algal was good at most things and a very diligent worker; he often worked overtime and made every effort to do a good job, without giving customers any cause for complaint.
- But he sure was pig-headed! Once he had proven his worth, he started demanding to pick and choose among the assignments which Hubart had to offer. Hubart refused, but changed his mind when Algal agreed to have his wages reduced by half.
- Algal mostly took jobs as a janitor or gardener. If Hubart remembers correctly, he had a handful of jobs which he worked on for many years - taking care of the city residences

of Houses Kaldel and Dardall, renovating Fortress Doudram's courtyard, and tending to the Convent School's and the trading house Melion's gardens.

The most important thing for the player characters to remember is the latter – Algal's more permanent assignments. Combined with Valke's testimony, this should point them toward the Convent School of the Last Light, and if asked specifically about this, Hubart briefly replies: *"First day of each week, in summer and winter alike, year after year; raking, trimming, planting, and sometimes... well, shoveling snow."*

DEAD ENDS

Aside from those mentioned above, the characters can try to contact the three individuals named by Sister Ina. As for Onan, she has left Yndaros for a while, afraid of being sought out by the person who received her letter and getting drawn into the hunt for the Torch. Conversations with her neighbors in the Bohemian District reveal that she has not been seen for two or three days, which is unusual – she is almost always home, when she is not working as a waitress at the Depths of the Titans or visiting her ailing father (actually her uncle).

Mistress Veola was widowed during the war against the Jezites and still lives in the five-room loft where Algal used to lodge, along with Onan. She describes him as handy and handsome, albeit quiet and hard-working to a fault – she often had to look after the girl while her uncle worked until late at night. Truth be told, she was quite fond of her lodger, and made it clear to him on a few occasions, without any reaction from him whatsoever (which of course was due to his sacred vow as a brother of the Black Cloaks).

And finally, Ensgar, whom the player characters can find by asking around in the districts south of the cargo dock. He has a pretty interesting story to tell, about how as a young man in the Refugee Camp he was abducted by an older woman and taken to an underground dungeon to be killed as part of some dark ceremony. How Algal managed to find the cultists' lair, defeat them all, and free Ensgar is something they never talked about, but his savior let him strip the cultists' hideout of valuables before setting it on fire – items which turned a tidy profit, allowing him to leave the misery and squalor behind. They used to see each other once in a while, to talk about Ensgar and how he was doing, but otherwise they spoke very little. He does not know anything that might be useful to the player characters in their search for the Torch.

Internal affair

Regardless of when and how Peonio learns that someone is digging into the truth about the Torch, he decides to discontinue the entire operation. The risk of getting caught is not one worth taking as long as there are other ways to serve the Lawgiver and spread the fear of god among the Ambrian people!

The Convent School of the Last Light

HAVING SPOKEN TO Valke and Master Hubart, the player characters' suspicion should be aimed at the Convent School of the Last Light. How the adventure develops from here is impossible to say, as it depends entirely on the characters' actions.

This section contains information and descriptions for the Game Master to build on, based on some potential strategies which the players and their characters might adopt. However, the Game Master must be ready to improvise in case the adventure develops in a completely different direction. This adventure is the story of two conflicts of great significance to the city; the one between the rulers and the populace, and the one between Curia Loyalists and Reformists within the Sun Church – nothing says that the story must have a certain, predetermined ending! In other words: let the players describe the goals and tactics of their characters, and use those to design appropriate challenges.


THE LAME ARM OF THE LAW

Should the player characters report their suspicions to the City Watch, to Alvo Steelneck or one of his captains, they will most likely be disappointed. Without irrefutable evidence there is nothing they

can do. Even under normal circumstances, they are ordered to be very careful about accusing the Sun Church or its representatives of criminal activities of any kind; in the current situation, when the tensions between the Queen and the First Father are becoming more and more apparent and serious, this principle has been accentuated. What they can do is pass on their suspicions to the Royal Sekretorium, but the likelihood of them taking the information seriously without hard evidence is practically zero.

Should the characters actually manage to find such proof, the forehead of whoever they are talking will no doubt crease into a deep frown. The report that high-ranking members of the Sun Church are behind the Torch's attacks on the worldly rulers of the realm is a political bomb; revealing it will have incalculable consequences. The evidence and information must be taken higher up in the hierarchy, first to the Sekretorium, then probably to the Queen's council where a decision will be made. Shaking his or her head, the City Watch officer admits that the information will probably not reach the public any time soon, if ever.

As Game Master you must decide which approach Korinthia Nightbane will take on this issue,



Assistance from contacts

The player characters might turn to one of their contacts within the Ambrian elite. Like the City Watch, these contacts will of course require clear evidence before reacting in any way whatsoever; the difference is that they are willing to aid the characters in their hunt for such evidence, with knowledge, abilities and resources. That said, they will all be very careful not to be associated with the characters' activities, at least until they have gotten results, one way or another!

based upon the game world that has developed around your particular table. It seems likely for her to handle the matter without public disclosure, by informing Abelena Loramon of the situation and forcing her to put an end to the Torch's activities (see the box Internal Affair).

It is also the Game Master's job to determine what happens if the player characters decide to make their discoveries known to the public. We suggest that the news spreads explosively, causing turmoil and vandalism, but quickly dies out as the Sun Church and the Queen together dismiss the whole thing as a malicious rumor, planted by "enemies of the realm" (for example the Realm of the Order, the Sovereign's Oath or the Iron Pact).

THE CONVENT SCHOOL

Except for the Sun Temple, all buildings on the plot, including the wall, were built in the days of Lindaros, retrofitted to suit the needs of today. The convent school is run by the Black Cloak Mother Abelena Loramon, and has been for the last four years. Much of the daily operation is handled by Sister Adila, Brother Odelard, and their four initiates (one of whom is the Torch-affiliated Brother Manfeld), but Abelena alone decides everything from admissions and educational content to punishments for students who misbehave. She also begins every school morning with a joint prayer session and ends every day with an evening song at the temple.

In addition to these people, there are six guards on the grounds, who also reside in the Teachers' Villa in what used to be guest rooms for traveling Black Cloaks. The leader of the guard force is Brother Berto, who has long served as the school's night watchman. There are two guards posted at the ground's entrance at all times; the only people allowed on the premises are teachers, students, recurring visitors (such as Peonio) and, on Abelena's orders, guests who have been specially invited. The security inside the walls is a single Black Cloak during the day and a two-man patrol at night.

The convent school currently has twenty-nine students – seventeen Ambrians and six barbarian orphans aged five to fourteen, and six goblins. These spend their days learning to read, write and count, with complementing lessons in the holy book of Prios, the Lightbringer, as well as Ambrian law and the Curia's rules of conduct. They also attend joint mass at the temple three times a day. What little downtime the students have after finishing their individual studies is mostly spent on producing crafts in the workshop or the studio (see below).

Overview

The Convent School of the Last Light is situated on a corner plot in the east end of the Temple District. The plot is surrounded by an almost two-meter-high stone wall topped by half-meter-high metal bars shaped to resemble Prios' symbol, the setting sun, in a long line, their rays sharpened into pointy spearheads.

Inside the wall are three main buildings and a chapel large enough to hold the school's students, teachers, abbess, and invited guests. To the left, inside the wall's only gate, is the Teachers' Villa, which Abbess Abelena Loramon shares with the four novice and two veteran Black Cloaks who together are responsible for teaching, fostering, and, when needs be, disciplining the students – the latter mostly to keep the six young goblins in line during their stay at the school.

Near the back wall of the plot stands the School House and the Pupil's Home – two single-story buildings, the former containing classrooms and a small library. There is no basement in the School House, only an attic with a sloping ceiling where discarded old furniture is kept along with books and other unused material.

The building relevant to this adventure is the Pupil's Home, which is therefore described in greater detail.

1. Lobby

An open hall with a staircase leading down into the basement, and doors to the dining hall and sleeping alcoves. Besides closets and coat hangers there is a chamber containing winter clothing, oilskin coats, wide-brimmed hats, and spare sets of clothes for the students.

2. Dining hall

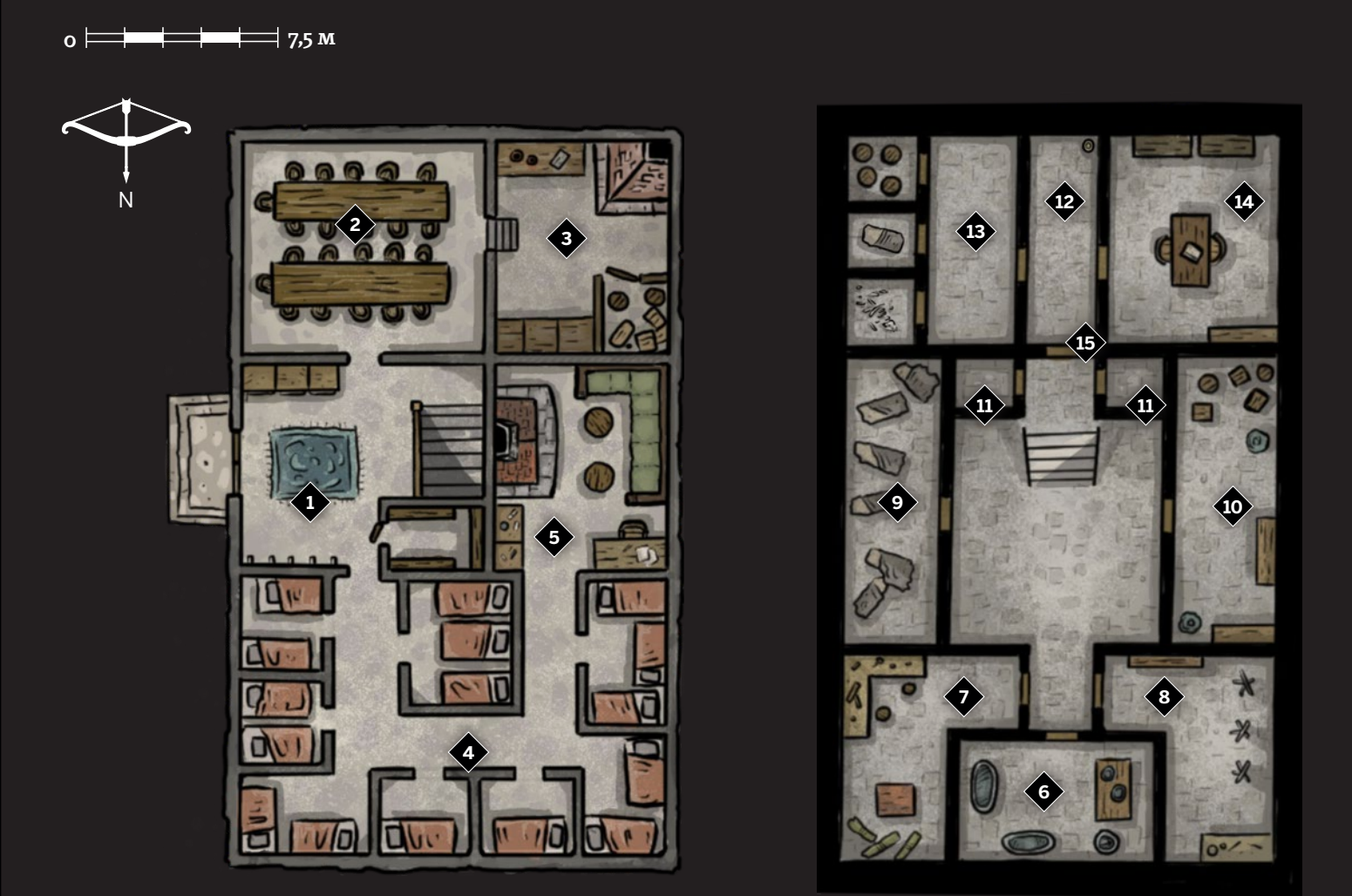
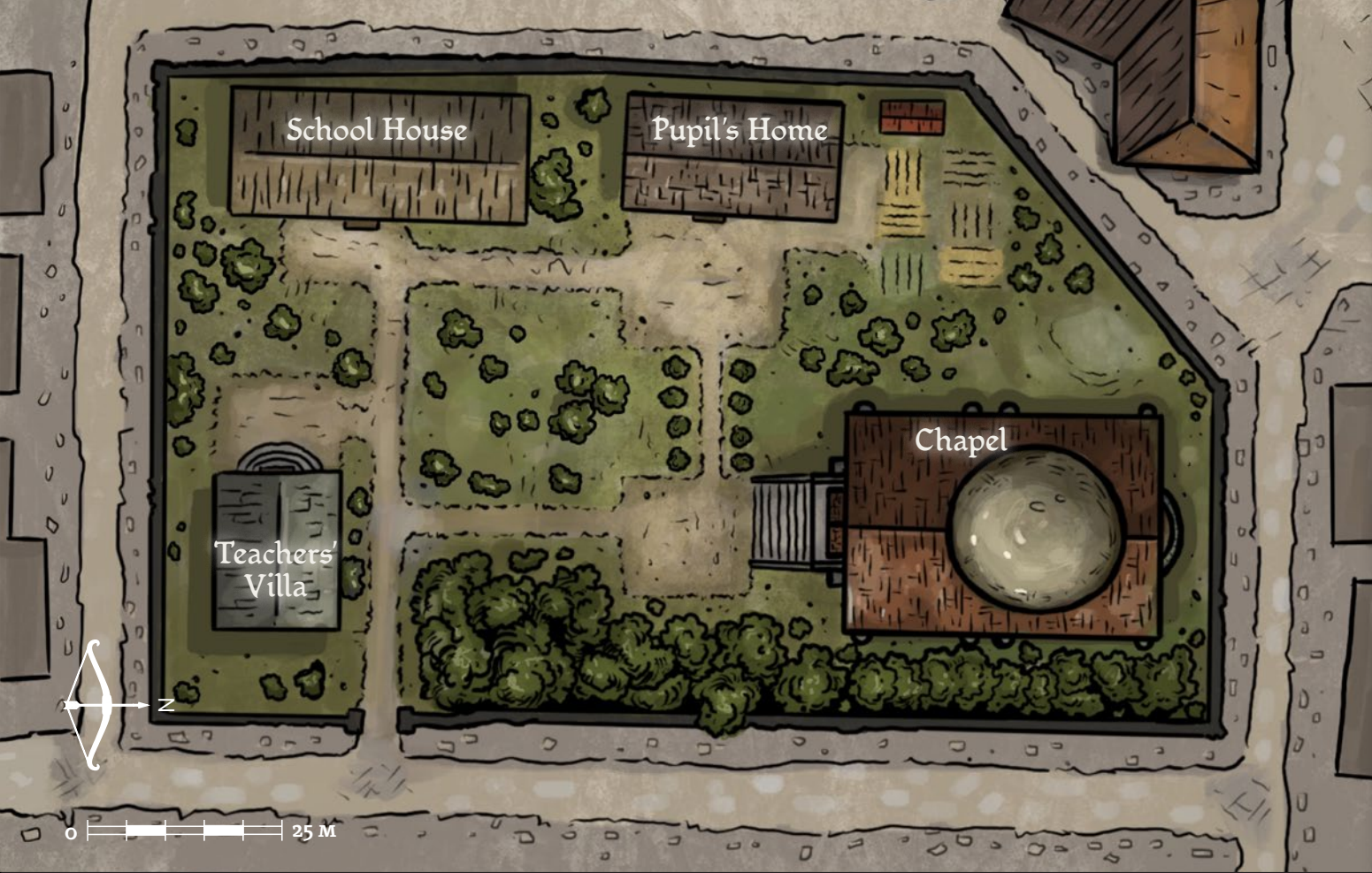
The close to thirty students take turns eating at these two trestle tables. First the youngest, then the older ones, and lastly the goblins, who are served special food and require stricter rules. Attempts have been made to integrate the goblins with the other pupils, with highly questionable outcomes...

3. Kitchen

This is where the cook Alda works, cooking food as nourishing as possible within the boundaries of her meager budget. The students take turns assisting in the kitchen, including a couple of the most temperate young goblins.

4. Dormitory

The dormitory has sixteen bunk beds for the young ones. Apart from the chamber pots there is a small wooden box (without locks) beneath each bed,





Witchsight

Even outside the secret door, a player character with the *Witchsight* ability can detect the presence of the holy guardians. If the *Vigilant* test fails, it will only result in a momentary vision of a swirling, snow-white, menacing figure; if it succeeds, the following quote may be used as inspiration: *"The darkness beyond the door is scattered by first one, then a second, flare of blue-white light, soon taking shape, burning hotter and hotter until your inner field of vision is painfully consumed by a blinding whiteness. Two blazing bolts of lightning cut through the vision, and all goes black once more."*

where students keep their clothes and what few personal possessions they have.

5. Common room

The students spend most of their downtime in bed or on the grounds outside, but in bad weather they can stay indoors. This common room is not large enough for all of them, but the younger ones usually do their best to cram together on the wooden corner couch. There is also a place for study, with a table, chair, and lamp – for students who have fallen behind and are allowed to catch up at night.

6. Laundry

It is the children who do the laundry. Besides their own and the teachers' clothes, they wash table cloths, bed sheets, towels and other textiles. Water is fetched from the well in a nearby square, poured through the water pipes on the outside of the building, and heated in a tub over a fire. When everything is clean the tub drain opens and the water swirls down a floor drain (a possible way in, perhaps, if the Game Master so wishes).

7. Workshop

The most important thing for a follower of Prios to learn is how to cultivate the Sun God's gifts. After school and individual studies, all students are allowed to use the workshop and studio in the basement. The former is equipped for sewing as well as woodwork, and though the raw material is not of the highest quality, many boys and girls spend hour upon hour down here. Hardly surprising, given that every finished and approved piece of handicraft is rewarded with a sweet almond cookie during Feast Day's evening song!

8. Studio

The pious artist strives to depict the Lawgiver's gifts, but in a way that highlights their divine luster. The students love spending time in the studio, even though many color powders often run out and the low-quality leads have a tendency to crack. On the other hand, a lovely confection awaits those who manage to produce an acceptable depiction.

9. The Goblin Crib

The room in the basement where the goblin students basically spend all their spare time is always messy, filthy and smelly – no matter how hard they try to keep it tidy. Jokingly called the Goblin Crib, the room has enough space for twelve sleeping pelts on the floor, though the convent school can rarely stand taking in more than a handful of goblins at a time.

10. Storeroom

This is where the convent school keeps its clean textiles, as well as some food products and other things related to the kitchen and dining hall. In the northern corner there are two bookcases with a selection of students' carvings, embroideries, and paintings on display. Worth noting is that the only goblin-made object is an embroidered handkerchief signed Garm Wormwriggler.

11. The Cells of Shame

These tiny cells are where students are sent after breaking school rules, sometimes right away, other times after repeated misdemeanors. Minor but common transgressions include spilling at the dinner table, disruptive bodily noises during lessons or prayer, and unwashed hands or ears. Violations immediately resulting in a one-to-three hour incarceration in the windowless cells are, among other things, late arrival, bedwetting, and sleeping during lessons or prayer sessions.

12. Hallway

A simple hallway with one door on each side. In a niche halfway up the wall on the south end of the room, hidden behind a tapestry depicting Olandan the Lightbringer on horseback, stands the funeral urns of the holy guardians Gabriol and Mikelas. The saints are described on page 25 and have orders to attack any uninvited guests (except Peonio, Sigina and Manfeld) trying to pass through the door to the headquarters (room #14). Their task is to permanently silence the sinner!

13. Cells and storage

Which Lindarian builder constructed this building, and why he or she installed the secret basement section with three barred cells, is shrouded in mystery. It is clear, however, that Peonio and his associates do not have much use for the room; in the innermost cell there are three barrels of red paint and two wooden crates – one with simple paintbrushes and the other with small ceramic jugs in which the paint is poured before being handed over to the town criers. The cell to the left inside the door contains the skeletal remains of what appears to have been a horned cat-beast with unnaturally long fangs (remnants from the time before the fall of Lindaros which the new owners found so curious that they were left untouched).

The middle cell contains a wolf pelt with a blanket and pillow on the floor. Sigina rents a room in the Bohemian District, but often stays the night at the school, because she feels safe and comfortable there, and because she is sometimes

up copying fliers until late at night. The Game Master could let the changeling be there when the player characters burst into the headquarters – they must then pass a *Discreet* test while opening the door, in order not to wake her or disturb her focused work.

14. The headquarters

The modest headquarters of the Torch contains little more than two chairs and a table, on which one finds two oil lamps and an impressive, leather-bound book. There are also two bookcases; one occupied by sixteen books similar to the one on the table, the other filled with loose sheets of paper, writing utensils and a ledger listing the middlemen who have thus far been in the Torch's employ. The book on the table is only half filled with writing, namely the news of the past seven months – crossed-out drafts as well as finished announcements.

15. The secret door

The wall behind the staircase to the second floor looks like an ordinary brick wall. Despite the ravages of time, or possibly because of it, the outline of the secret door is very difficult to spot (requires a successful [*Vigilant* -5]) for those who do not expressly state that they are looking for just that (in which case an unmodified *Vigilant* test will suffice).

The door can be unlocked by pressing on a certain brick near the ceiling. Once the outline has been identified, this brick can also be detected with a successful *Vigilant* test. There are no traps or alarm systems to worry about, but on the other side the holy guardians are waiting ...

WAYS TO ENTER

As mentioned earlier, having listened to Algal's ravings and followed up on the unintentional leads he provides, the characters should have their suspicions aimed at the Convent School of the Last Light. They should also have realized that they are looking for a hidden space in a basement. But how will they manage to confirm their suspicions and, by extension, gather evidence which might prompt the city's authorities to act?

This section presents four different strategies which the Game Master may use as inspiration as the player characters go from planning to action. People they ask for advice, if any, are also likely to mention one or several of the bullet points below. Should your players think of something even more clever, or choose a more foolish approach, you will simply have to adapt quickly!

Holy Guardian, ritual

Tradition: Theurgy

Mystics who already know the *Patron Saint* ritual may also learn to bind the saint to a specific location, as a holy guardian. This requires an urn with sanctified graveyard soil, as an anchor to the place which is to be guarded. The mystic binds the already existing Patron Saint to the urn on a permanent basis; the spirit can then move within a limited area around the urn (about two movement actions' radius) to attack or scare off intruders, except those whom the mystic has indicated are welcome.


Learning the *Holy Guardian* ritual also opens up the possibility for the mystic to bind himself/herself to a second Patron Saint, provided that the first one is already bound to an urn. The mystic can bind the second spirit to a different urn, to guard the same or some other location.

Regardless of whether the mystic has summoned one or two Patron Saints, the *Break Link* ritual can be used to sever the bond between an urn and its spirit, who then goes back to following the mystic as usual. To then turn the spirit into a holy guardian, the ritual must be performed anew.

A holy guardian has stats as a Patron Saint; it gains experience like a player character, which it loses upon death. It is also fought as a Patron Saint, with the addition that destroying its urn immediately banishes the guardian to the Spirit World – which means that mystics often hide such soil-filled urns, possibly shrouding them with mystical means.

Stealthy maneuvers: It is entirely possible for discrete individuals to sneak their way onto the grounds, for example by climbing the wall or distracting the guards by the entrance in some clever way. However, this requires that they have figured out where the basement they seek is located, perhaps by using rituals, talking to some contact who has visited or previously attended the convent school, or interviewing one of the students who are sometimes sent out into the city to run minor errands for the teachers. Here the Game Master must decide whether the dormitory's basement is the only one, or if the player character's challenge should be made more complicated.

The challenges awaiting them will be different depending on the time of the break-in. The Pupil's Home is empty during the day, while the students are in class or at the temple, but it will be harder to cross the wall in broad daylight ([*Discreet* -5] instead of an unmodified test). At night the incursion itself will be easier, but must be followed by a successful *Discreet* test inside the dormitory – also note that the children will probably wake up if/when fighting erupts in the basement.



Sigina's Plea

Sigina is not afraid to defend the Torch against those who seek to expose the organization, but if she finds the opposition too much to handle, she drops her quarterstaff and surrenders. Should the characters spare her life, she will try to persuade them not to reveal the Torch's operation to the world, arguing that it is the only organization standing up for the people against the rulers: "*We are the only voice of the poor and defenseless, in Yndaros, and in all of Ambria – without us, they will be entirely on their own!*" She can even promise never to mention Father Sarvola or other Reformists again, if only the characters will let the voice of the Torch live on

Deceit: Perhaps the characters can con their way past the gate? Here the Game Master must listen to the players' ideas and judge how Abelena and Berto will react to their attempt. This will probably require one or more tests against [*Persuasive*←*Resolute*], possibly modified by the quality of the con.

A lie that might work could be that the player characters (or one of them) disguise themselves as Black Cloaks passing through the area, who would like to stay the night at the convent school, preferably in the unused beds in the dormitory. Neither Abelena nor Berto knows everyone within the Black Cloaks' order, but they will probably ask some tricky questions about the Twilight Monastery to verify their claims.

Confrontation: One of the better strategies is to actually confront the Abbess, Abelena Loramon, with the statement that the Torch's headquarters is located somewhere on school grounds. She will furiously dismiss this as pure lies and deceit, immediately ordering Berto and his guards to escort the characters off the premises. Getting her to change her mind and listen requires a successful [*Persuasive* -3].

Characters who pass the test must follow up with good arguments and another modified *Persuasive* test to arouse Abelena's curiosity. She does not know about the Torch's headquarters, but is of course aware that the First Theurg is running some form of secret operation in the basement of the Pupil's Home. The characters are told to wait while she and Berto investigate the hidden chambers, where they unfortunately bump into and are killed by the two holy guardians and a startled Sigina. How the story develops from here depends largely on the characters' actions, but Sigina will quickly try to erase every trace with lamp oil and fire before fleeing the scene.

The path of violence: Your players might be agitated or unscrupulous enough to simply fight their way through anyone standing between them and the Torch's headquarters. In that case they must get

past Berto and his guards, and most likely Abelena and the other teachers as well (suitable stats can be found under the heading Champions of Prios, page 134 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*).

Whatever they manage to find or prove, such an attack is enough to sentence them all to death, according to the laws of the Lawgiver. If they can escape the long arm of the law, they will of course be wanted criminals and thus have a hard time moving through any part of the realm without a disguise. The quick and seemingly simple solution rarely pays off in the end...

AFTERMATH

What happens in the wake of the adventure is difficult to predict. The Torch will probably cease to exist (see the box Internal Affair, page 19), but not necessarily: if Sigina manages to escape after burning all the evidence, she will do everything in her power to rebuild the organization, with or without Peonio.

Provided that the player characters make it all the way to the headquarters, the First Theurg's chances of retaining his honor and freedom are quite slim – there are many besides Abelena who know that the operation in the Dormitory's basement was run by him. He will most likely end up in the Palace District's prison tower after a quick trial, with a life sentence for treason. He could also be executed, if the Game Master thinks that would be more appropriate in the Game World which has emerged around the gaming table.

If Abelena survives, life will quickly return to normal at the Convent School of the Last Light; otherwise it might be weeks before her successor is appointed and arrives from the Twilight Monastery. Perhaps that person will bring along new principles about stricter rules and harsher applications of the Lawgiver's laws? Perhaps he or she turns out to be a Reformist sympathizer, introducing a new, much warmer order at the school? The most important thing is that something changes, so that players and characters alike understand that their actions always have consequences for the other inhabitants of the game world!

Non-Player Characters

BELOW WE PRESENT a few people who are important to the adventure; more specifically, individuals whom the player characters might come into conflict with. As previously mentioned, stats for other non-player characters (should they be needed) can be found in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* and the *Core Rulebook's* chapter on monsters and adversaries.

Another thing worth repeating is that the stats below should be viewed as a baseline to be adjusted according to the capabilities of the player characters. This is a role-playing game. There are no absolute truths, other than that the game should be as exciting, entertaining and memorable as possible!

Brother Berto

"Stay away from my kids!"

The swarthy, overweight Brother Berto is fifty years old. When he was younger he could not wait to leave the school for more glorious pursuits, preferably hunting cultists or witches in the northern parts of the realm. But in truth, he is quite content with his lot in life and loves the students as if they were his own children, possibly with the exception of certain goblin brats...

Manner	Quietly jovial
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	Contacts (Black Cloaks)
Accurate 5 (+5), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 15 (-5), Quick 11(-1), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 13 (-3)	
Abilities	<i>Bodyguard</i> (novice), <i>Dominate</i> (novice), <i>Iron Fist</i> (adept), <i>Lore-master</i> (adept), <i>Shield Fighter</i> (novice), <i>Witchsight</i> (novice)
Weapons	Sword 7 Persuasive
Armor	Studded leather 3 (reinforced)
Defense	-1 (shield)
Toughness	10 Pain Threshold 4
Shadow	Shifting shades of silver, like a dented silver tray (corruption: 0)

Tactics: Berto positions himself between the enemy and his wards, ready to die to save as many of them as he can. He is a trained and competent fighter, but very straightforward in his tactics: he strikes with his sword and parries with his shield, hoping that will be enough.

Sigina

"Think about it, have mercy!"

The changeling Sigina was saved by Prios. Kicked out by her human foster parents, she started drinking, gambling and stealing at the tender age of twelve. That is how Brother Algal found her, helpless and battered in one of Yndaros' alleys. He brought her to the convent school, taught her about Prios, and gave her a purpose in life: the Torch!

Sigina is loyal to the Curia, but to her the Torch's main objective is giving hope to the poor and the helpless, showing that they are not alone and giving them a voice. She is ready to go very far to defend the organization and keep its secrets, but is also

willing to compromise, if those threatening the Torch can be negotiated with.

Manner	Intensely passionate
Race	Changeling
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	<i>Shapeshifter</i> (III), <i>Long-lived</i>
Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 15 (-5), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 11 (-1), Resolute 7 (+3), Strong 9 (+1), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	<i>Loremaster</i> (novice), <i>Polearm Mastery</i> (adept), <i>Staff Fighting</i> (master)
Weapons	Quarterstaff 4 Accurate
Armor	None
Defense	-3 (staff)
Toughness	10 Pain Threshold 5
Shadow	Reddish-yellow like a burning sunset (corruption: 0)

Tactics: Sigina learned early on to wield the simple quarterstaff as a weapon, and over the years she has honed that skill to perfection. In battle she is like a whirlwind of swift strikes, thrusts and counter-attacks. She begins with the most menacing enemy, trying to strike him down and knock him unconscious before moving on to the next one.

GABRIOL AND MIKELAS

Race	Undead
Resistance	Strong
Traits	<i>Spirit Form</i> (II)
Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 7 (+3), Discreet 9 (+1), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 15 (-5), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 11 (-1), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	<i>Bodyguard</i> (novice), <i>Recovery</i> (master), <i>Two-handed Force</i> (master)
Weapons	Sun hammer 6, ignores <i>Armor</i> Accurate
Armor	Half damage according to <i>Spirit Form</i> II
Defense	-5
Toughness	11 Pain threshold -
Shadow	Glimmering white gold (corruption: 0)

Tactics: The patron saints attack their toughest enemies first, protected by their auras.

The Heat of the Night

WHILE SOME ADVENTURE LOCATIONS invite the wary or challenge the belligerent, the one featured at the heart of this incident serves as a puzzle of sorts, a waypoint that may generate more questions than answers. The adventure introduces the rekindling of an old faith, the veneration of one of the Young Gods apparently abandoned in the great exodus across the mountains to Ambria.

WHILE SET IN Yndaros, there's no reason to restrict the events to that location. If the Game Master so desires, the events could take place in any of the major urban locations scattered across Ambria; anywhere that might support a thriving trade in antiques and keepsakes, from Ravenia to Agrella.

As the adventurous venture into Davokar, so the Titans veritably scream for attention, calling out to those who will listen. For many treasure-seekers, the prospect of venturing south beckons, if only for the lack of administration - no need for an Explorer's License.

Introduction

THIS ADVENTURE LOCATION centers upon an artifact beyond the understanding of those seeking to possess it. All too often, valiant and fool-hardy treasure-seekers return from excursions into the depths of Davokar hoping to make their fortunes, but instead return with their doom, bearing objects saturated with corruption. Some do not return at all, divested of their humanity by exposure during the long journey home; more unnatural, twisted abominations in the depths of the forest to plague the next unlucky band of explorers.

The following section frames the instigators and the threat, before closing with possible reasons for why the player characters might become involved in this strange encounter. As noted already, the events herein could happen somewhere other than Yndaros, and the Game Master should be ready to make appropriate adjustments to the locales and characters.

NOSTALGIA'S CALL

As proprietors of *The Chance* (page 25 in *Yndaros - the Darkest Star*), Lyssa and Davido have been

sending their scroungers across the Titans for some time, to gather the remnants and keepsakes of home to sell to those wealthy clients nostalgic for the lost days of Alberetor. Such trips are as dangerous as any expedition into the depths of Davokar. Any scroungers sent southward can expect to face energetic and, some might say, sporty competition from other treasure-seekers, including those employed by the keepers of the Legacy Gallery.

The added complication for The Chance arises from the condition of the curiosities returned from beyond the mountains. In the beginning, the owners took safety seriously, paying Ordo Magica significant sums to research each and every item. Alberetor steams with corruption and the last thing either Lyssa or Davido wanted was to have their customers, particularly the rich and regular kind responsible for keeping the business afloat, turning into rampaging abominations.

However, over time, they also realized that Ordo Magica charged on a sliding scale that never seemed the same and kept items for weeks or even months, only to come back with a negative report long after potential customers had drifted on to some other faddish extravagance. After putting up with this treatment for some time, Lyssa and Davido became a little more circumspect in maintaining their inventory, sometimes "forgetting" to pass an item along to Ordo Magica if the potential for an immediate sale seemed quite certain.

THE ARCH-BUILDER'S HEART

One such discovery, revealed by the most recent trawl of the gray and wasted lands beneath the eastern wing of the Titans, was a sturdy, leather gauntlet-of-sorts, blackened by heat but still intact, sporting a setting on the back that holds a thin sliver of flame-colored crystal. It appeared to be the decadent accoutrement of some noble set to soldiery in the Great War, a frippery of substance over purpose, something to show off to the rank and file to remind them of their place. Ganto, the finder, carried it and a few other items back to The Chance and Lyssa made the decision to set aside the normal checks and balances with Ordo Magica.

While this decision saved a lengthy delay and substantial cost, it was short-sighted, as Ganto had recovered a relic of the Young Gods – an exquisitely crafted artifact set with a sliver of ancient rock said to be a fragment of the Arch-Builder's heart. When the Young Gods held sway and the people of Alberetor worshipped them far and wide, the Heart had pride of place on the altar of the Great Forge at Kandoria. Over time, as was the wont of the elite craftsmen of the Great Creator, they removed a

fragment of the heart and turned it into something exquisite. The intricately patterned glove, neither vambrace nor true gauntlet, was the result of this honorable practice of devotion.

However, like so many artifacts, The Arch-Builder's Heart is a double-edged sword, a sink of potential corruption. The original Heart imprisoned a rare form of fire spirit; each and every single one of the fragments taken from it contains a fraction of that unholy creature of flame. The Arch-Builder's Heart remains sufficiently intact to stop a major catastrophe, but the time may come when that is no longer the case.

For the moment, a hairline fault in The Arch-Builder's Heart means the ghost of a scorching summer's day burns eternal in an expanding radius around the artifact, one that perpetually increases in both size and heat. At the moment, the influence extends across half the Northern Artisan's District, centered upon the location of a concealed forge, home to a cell of the extant order of the Arch-Builder, the Higher Academy. Visible as an expanding haze to some using *Witchsight*, the phenomenon produces no other physical evidence, other than the death of those unable to withstand the strange "heat".

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

Of all the places in Yndaros to be visited, treasure-seekers tend to gravitate to those that offer a comfortable bed, a hearty meal, or the thaler to line a sagging purse. The Chance offers no hospitality, but for the explorer with a sack of rare finds – and no wish to attract attention – the proprietors offer good money and much less risk than the big auction houses. They specialize in the keepsakes and collectables of home, offering a fair price and the promise of return business to those who do them right. For some, this has become more a career than an occasional agreement – but, for the Game Master, this easy and agreeable relationship between adventurers and The Chance allows for an easy way to introduce the events concerning the Heart.

Of course, such a perfect situation might not be one open to all, so the Game Master needs to make adjustments and attune the introduction of Lyssa or Davido to match the particular needs of their game. The goals and attitudes of the gaming group should provide a best fit for the need to visit The Chance, but failing something obvious, some suggestions that can be modified as needed are included.

Regardless of what situation and specific hook is used, Lyssa and Davido will explain that they have been robbed of an artifact and describe it in some detail. They will answer questions about it, within reason – never incriminating themselves

and always bending the finer details in such a way so as to remain truthful within certain parameters. So, yes, they use the services of Ordo Magica to assess and certify the condition and safety of their artifacts – though, that’s not to say that they do so for all of their artifacts.

A Fence By Any Other Name

The player characters have items in their possession and have heard that the proprietors of The Chance ask no questions. Under normal circumstances, anyone knows that every single item coming into the city needs to be submitted for inspection within a day, with certification to follow at the leisure of the appropriate authority. Many see this as an inconvenience and seek to find shortcuts without putting themselves at undue risk of fine or incarceration.

Lyssa or Davido will listen to any offer, but will initially come back with the appropriate and lawful response that the city ordinances require that all artifacts of questionable providence be submitted for proper inspection and quarantine, paying the appropriate administrative charges. However, perhaps – given some persuasion or some additional incentive – they might know of a way to fast track an artifact through the system; a shortcut, so to speak. Knowing the right people certainly helps when seeking to acquire proper paperwork, signed, stamped and sealed, with no questions asked and little delay.

If that sounds of interest, there’s just this little favor that could do with handling first...

Errand Runners

The player characters seek a valuable object on behalf of a client, a patron or some other third party. They receive good intelligence that suggests the item they require might lie in the depths of The Chance, but Lyssa and Davido require a favor before they’ll part with it.

As the Game Master, you might be familiar with this approach as a hook if you have played through the events outlined in Act 2 of *Wrath of the Warden*. The player characters want something and the only way they can secure that rarity lies in the hands of someone who just happens to need something themselves.

Malady Hunters

The player characters have become aware of a strange spate of deaths in the north of the city. Residents of the Northern Artisan District and the Bohemian Block have died from a fever of a most intense kind – and fears have been growing that the same disease of the blood that is said to have wiped out the one time occupiers of the area might have returned.

This might fit best if the group has a member with skills in *Loremaster* or *Medicus* for whom this would be an interest, but better yet if some associate (or associates) of the group have come down with the condition themselves very recently, but have not yet passed.

By this approach, the Game Master will involve the player characters at a tangent to The Chance, as investigation of the condition will lead them to uncover that residents of the areas suffering have also reported violent break-ins and acts of arson. Unbeknownst to the residents, these crimes are being committed by Kenna and her flaming servant (see *The Ember’s Glow*, page 30) to find the hiding place of The Cold Flame.

GROUPS & FACTIONS

To sell something in Yndaros, you need a front to draw in the public, but you also need to have supplies and a place to store them. The Harbour District throngs with storage places, large and small, in which the many merchants and traders of Yndaros stockpile their goods. Sometimes a canny dealer will realize the value of waiting and use such locations as a more permanent place to store away their investments. For those who deal in the unique treasures that Ambria yields up, their store and their storage space can become one and the same, with some of the stock open to the public and the rest squirreled away in back rooms, cupboards and cellars.

Where people choose to keep things matters a great deal in this adventure. The interior of The Chance has been designed to entice and engage potential buyers, leading them down a merry path through their memories in the hope that it might garner a bigger sale. At the same time, the convoluted structure is jammed with nooks and crannies that serve as an excellent means to safely and securely hold an immense amount of investment stock, goods that might one day allow Lyssa and Davido to retire. Set aside in one of the building’s many side rooms lay the Cold Flame – an item of undoubted value to the right person. As a recent acquisition, it had but a note in the inventory, not yet part of the complex catalog system created by Davido and maintained by his servant Patience. Therefore, when Branco, devout follower of the Arch-Builder, stole it, the owners were ignorant for more than a day until Patience set to cross-referencing and cataloging new inventory.

Now, the artifact lies in the repurposed and refurbished cellar space of a building in the Northern Artisan’s District that Branco has nicknamed the Old Forge, contained within a deteriorating ward of protection in a cold and lightless furnace.

In addition to the shopkeepers, there are three key individuals in Yndaros with their attention focused on the artifact – Branco of the Higher Academy, Mirwar of Ordo Magica, and Kenna of the Ember's Glow, a cult of Prios.

The following sections provide an overview of who these individuals are and their specific motivations in respect of the Cold Flame and The Chance. While they initially have no direct connection with one another, they have every prospect of uncovering each competing party and drawing their own conclusions. For example, while Branco and Kenna might not exactly sit on the same page, they might find common cause in their healthy disrespect for what the Church has planned for Ambria.

The Higher Academy

Since the decline of Alberetor and the ascendancy of Prios as the sole patron of the people, the followers of the Arch-Builder have lived in the shadows. The repentance of followers in the wake of the Exaltation allowed the faithful to avoid the fate of heretics who refused. Their deep-seated belief and the value of their members' skills to the community means they have persisted in plain sight, associating secretly in localized cells that meet infrequently to make vows of their continued commitment and pass on their skills.

Mergile holds the largest concentration of followers; Yndaros, by comparison, has only a scattering of committed members, most with significant roles in the Guild hierarchy that restrains and strangles the crafters within the city. Branco is one of the few members without a position in the Guilds. His focus is set on the covert conversion of new members to the old faith. The arrival of the Cold Flame in the city became apparent when Branco visited The Chance on his ceaseless quest to find old relics and symbols of the Young Gods. He knew the unquestionable provenance of the artifact immediately – and set about making plans to make off with it at the earliest opportunity.

While the theft went off without complication, using the talents at his disposal to sneak into the place unnoticed and leave it with the single item, the inherent corrupting power of the Cold Flame has created a beacon.

Branco established a protective ward around the Cold Flame to dull the beacon, but he realized that it was not enough and that the artifact would erode the shield. He made plans to travel to Mergile with the item as soon as possible, but, alas, fortune failed him. Branco was detained by Black Cloaks and imprisoned on suspicion of heretical activities. In the time he has been away, the ward has all but failed, creating the effect that will ultimately draw the player characters, and others, to the location.

SKIP WARD

Tradition: Only available to Artifact Crafters

The expertise of those knowledgeable in base materials allows them to contain the inherent leakage of ambient corruption from old or damaged artifacts. The mystic places the artifact within a circle composed of a mixture of materials opposed in their essential disposition to the item before sealing the ward. Once enclosed, the radiant corruption of the artifact, whether temporary or permanent, while left warded and unused, reduces to zero for a period of 1D4+1 days. The Game Master may judge the ward less effective upon truly potent artifacts, in which case reduce the efficacy of the ward's effects by half, rounded up. Meant as a temporary measure, a Skip Ward can normally contain a dangerous artifact long enough to allow an Artifact Crafter time to find the means or materials to permanently mend or destroy it.

He will be released later in the day after the player characters have gotten involved and started their investigations – and will be suspicious of their appearance in the streets of the Artisan's District, worrying that they might be policing his activities on behalf of the Church.

Ordo Magica

Mirwar had the responsibility of making sure that nothing entered the city that would endanger the lives of those who live there – obviously with the emphasis on those of high station! At the same time, the canny Pyromancer used the opportunity to make up for her failure in the ladder-climbing within the order to line her pocket and make something of herself. She knows that The Chance has been breaking the deal, smuggling under her nose and depriving her of those ill-gotten gains.

Mirwar doesn't specifically know about the Cold Flame or those involved with the artifact, as it is one of the items that has been moved into the city without her approval. She has an absolute certainty that Lyssa and Davido have done wrong and she plans to take the time and effort to reveal the truth. She has a day job, and superiors who have little respect for her failures, but right now revenge drives her and nothing else matters.

She has been spending more and more time watching The Chance from afar, frequenting local establishments, roaming the streets around the Harbor District, and keeping a general eye on all comings and goings around the location. Once the player characters get involved, she will take that as a fresh lead and add them to her list of

suspects – seeking to understand their involvement without attracting too much attention. A drink and a chat with a little gossip about what goes on, perhaps? If the player characters prove reticent to share information about their involvement with the proprietors of The Chance, she might have to get more heavy-handed, especially if they're of a profession that requires licenses, Guild-approval or other paperwork. As a member of Ordo Magica, she has mystical powers at her command, but her greatest weapon against the player characters can be in the snare of fowl bureaucracy.

The Ember's Glow

The very nature of religion in Ambria has fractured and splintered the church, with the belief in Prios ranging from those who accept him as dead to those mustering under a flag of war in his name. For a few, hope remains, but only in acts of selfless devotion and determined pursuit of the impossible. The Ember's Glow is an example of such a splinter and the only representative of this 'cult' in Yndaros at the moment is Kenna. She has an absolute certainty in her faith and a belief that Prios can be saved from a fate worse than dissolution only through affirmative action. If that action means doing something illegal, then so be it.

Kenna had a vision of someone pulling a flame from the heart of Prios and carrying it into the darkness, stealing away a fragment of her lord's soul. She believes in her vision with such certainty that she has pursued its truth without sleep for the past week, using her *Flaming Servant* when exhaustion or legality makes it impossible for her to do something directly. She is certain that the stolen flame – whatever it is – lies in the northern districts. The Servant has been clambering across the rooftops and seeking out sources of faith – a euphemism for corruption that fits Kenna's world view.

The ward Branco created kept the flame quiet, but the slow deterioration of that protection means that the clarity of Kenna's vision grows increasingly stronger. She has directed her Servant accordingly – and it has been the source of burglary and near-miss arson in the district as it flickers to and fro at Kenna's whim. The Servant is clever enough not to linger long – getting in through high windows, storming through the buildings like a wildfire, and then getting out. It passed through Branco's hiding place the day after he was arrested – when the ward was still strong – but now that it has weakened, Kenna has sent it back in that direction to revisit the area.

Adventure Locations

THE CHANCE

The unusual architecture in Yndaros that has arisen from the combination of the old structures present at the time of occupation and the development since seems magnified within the structure of The Chance. The interior design defies any attempts to understand or map it out – not because of some strange twisting in the fabric of reality, but from the way stairs lead to halls, then run into passages between shelves, then ladders to mezzanine storage closets or cramped nooks, and then back into rooms. Old Town was the part of Lindaros that the Kadizians chose to adopt, but the greater city always extended beyond those walled bounds – and in this store of antiquities and nostalgic keepsakes, evidence of old and new merge and combine in some of the strangest ways.

In truth Lyssa and Davido seem to have nurtured this sense of confusion with their careful expansion and extension of the structure. They have a steady stream of goods coming from across the Titans and it ebbs and flows through the available space, a lapping ocean of junk and knick-knacks. Left to their own devices, many of the shoppers who enter the store – refugees of old Alberetor

– need to be coaxed into leaving. The content of the store offers myriad links back to the warm and welcoming comforts of home, half-forgotten but all too easily remembered. It isn't uncommon for those leaving The Chance to do so with puffy red eyes and moist cheeks, their emotions battered and overwhelmed.

NORTHERN ARTISAN'S DISTRICT

Descriptions of the common features and everyday appearance of the district lie outside the scope of this adventure; the unexpected and unwanted are the order of the day for the Game Master to communicate and the player characters to uncover.

Branco stole the Cold Flame from The Chance a week ago. Five days ago he was arrested and taken into the custody of the Black Cloaks. In the last four days, the ward around the artifact has eroded and with each passing hour the influence of this item has grown stronger.

The outcome? Flashes of cold-fire corruption spatter and spit across the district, like hot fat leaping from an open pan. When these gobbets strike a living creature, they cling like invisible napalm and almost bake the target, but without heat or

flame. Like an extreme fever, the poor soul begins a rapid descent toward death as their body shuts down. However, the Cold Flame is fire without heat or scorch mark – and without putting the bodies to the knife, it’s impossible to see the damage clearly. The effect is random and currently restricted to the Northern Artisan’s District and Bohemian Block, but as the ward breaks with no one to calm or control the artifact, the effect will spread.

On the side of the unexpected, the player characters will rapidly uncover that not only has the District attracted some foul and inexplicable plague, the residents have also become the targets of a raging spate of burglaries. The break-ins happen at night and tend to target unoccupied properties or those sites where the occupants have slept soundly; all break-ins have clearly been well planned and thought through. However, some have spotted bright light in properties being robbed and others even claim to have seen some roaring, flaming demon stalking the streets. In the aftermath of break-ins, nothing has been taken, but furniture has been broken, storage compartments opened, chests shattered, and floors scorched, as if the criminals involved considered setting the properties aflame.

THE OLD FORGE

The neglected property sits on a road that leads off one of the wider squares in the Northern Artisan’s District, part of a cluster of narrow buildings regularly used and vacated as traders and crafters come and go. The challenge of the environment in Yndaros, under the watchful gaze of the Guilds, generates a white hot crucible of competition for which many arrive ill-prepared and depart soon after.

Upper Floor

The floor shows signs of a recent fire – a patch of charred floor, oily with soot – and damage that has wrecked the roofing and walls in several areas. The Game Master might note that it has rained in the past week, but the floor shows no sign of damp or puddling. The player characters may also note that while in the shelter of the building they feel comfortably warm. They shouldn’t immediately realize this, but the steady collapse of the ward upon the Cold Flame has haloed the building with a mystical heat.

A set of footprints extend away from the sooty patch at the heart of the fire damage; oddly, they appear to emerge from it and then head toward the open stairwell. As the player characters will most probably enter the location on the ground floor

and follow the trail of footprints upwards, their source will only become apparent once they have completed their climb.

Middle Floor

The floor contains the scattered belongings of the previous occupant, including materials and tools that suggest perhaps a carter or at least a wheelwright. Shelves, boxes, chairs, workbenches – all are scattered across the floor – and amongst the chaos run the same sooty prints, taking a meandering course through the middle of the building, down the external stair to the ground and then through to the heavy front door.

Ground Floor

Investigation finds this area in a state of particular disarray, though it seems odd. A lot of furnishings, materials and scattered tools of the resident woodworker remain – but the collection appears incomplete, as if whoever occupied the place left in a hurry. Consultation with neighbors will reveal that the place was indeed home to a carpenter who vacated the property without warning a month or so ago.

At the same time, what does remain seems to have been tossed around by a clumsy search; shelves and tables lie on their sides, upturned with casual indifference. With consideration of the sooty footsteps, these broadly correspond to the path of destruction – and careful inspection of the wooden furnishings finds that they have been scalded and seared in several places.

The side door leads into an alleyway wide enough for a cart to access. The main entrance, at the top end, leads into a side street. Careful investigation of the broken and rutted ground [*Vigilant -3*] can identify relatively recent wheel tracks, suggesting a very heavily laden cart stood outside the building for some period of time.

The Cellar

Access to the cellar requires a thorough search of the ground floor, where a concealed ring in a slab opens the way into the stygian darkness beneath. A heavy wooden shelf has been overturned onto this slab, so it will require a keen eye or conscientious and time-consuming inspection to find the route below.

The cellar contains a tidy and well-ordered workshop at odds with that above – this is the forge of an artisan, well-equipped with quality tools and replete with a great quantity of raw materials. A large and recently constructed forge with a heavy metal shutter occupies most of the lower end of the room – though notably the interior is stone cold. Oily black soot covers the surface of the great stone

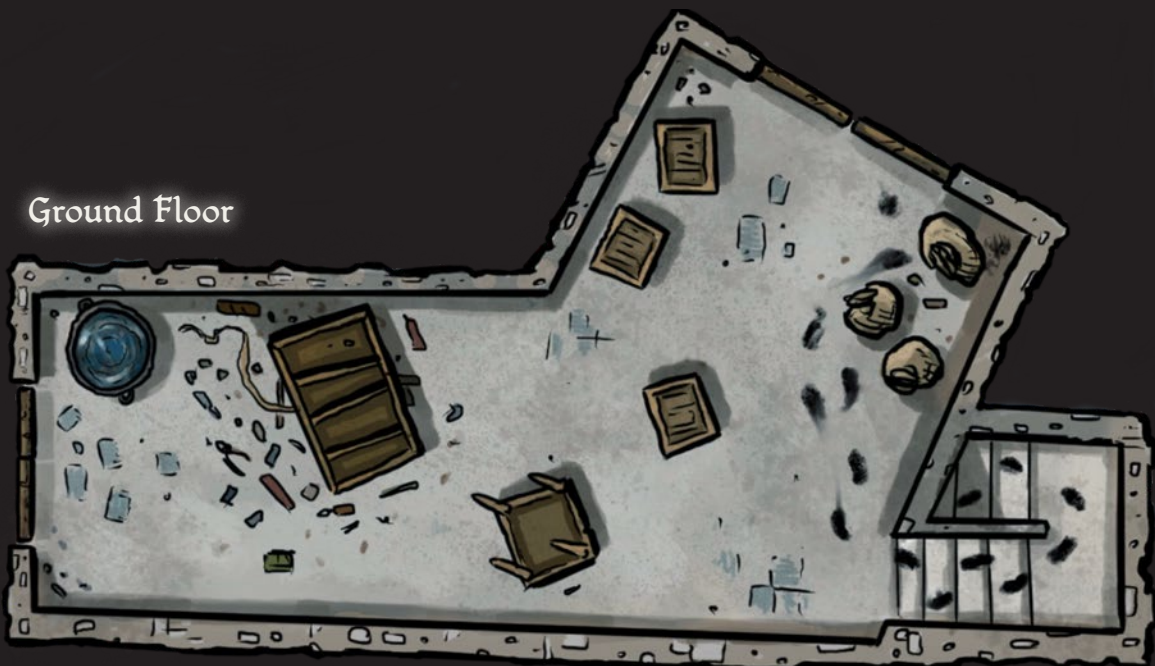
Upper Floor

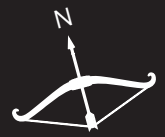


Middle Floor



Ground Floor





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Cellar



Sub-Cellar



THE COLD FLAME, ARTIFACT

As with so many artifacts, truth and myth walk hand-in-hand and none remain that can confirm or deny. The sliver of flame-colored gemstone certainly came from the larger Heart stone, but was the power within it derived from the Heart or imbued by the master crafters that created the finished product?

Held up to the light, the colors of the Cold Flame dance and shimmer as if the artisan caught a tongue of flame and crystallized it. Eight centimeters long and four across, the platinum setting looks like a thin halo of smoke. The overall appearance of the gauntlet shows all the hallmarks of excessive ornamentation and minimal interest in usability so common to the artificers of the Arch-Builder.

As crafted, the artifact assists and enhances the expertise of the master artisan in the creation of new treasures, without the complexities inherent in keeping a forge. However, the Cold Flame has been damaged and no longer functions as intended – Branco's intention being to take it to Mergile for repair.

The broken Cold Flame does not differentiate between living and dead matter, and the radiant leakage means that a haze of heat-free fire burns like a raging fever. Anyone within a half-a-mile radius of the artifact must pass a *Strong* test each hour, or suffer 1D4–2 damage to *Strong* (see rules for Disease on page 169 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* for guidelines). The powers described below can be used by the master of the artifact, but not before it has been properly repaired by a master Artifact Crafter; this also stops the leakage.

Guiding Hand: Fabricated from the essence of the Arch-Builder, the artisan wearer can feel the legendary spirit acting on every bone and sinew. As the master of the Cold Flame, the wearer has a second chance to succeed on all tests using the *Artifact Crafting*, *Blacksmith* and artifact identification aspects of the *Loremaster* Abilities.

Action: Special

Corruption: 1D4

Cold Fire: One who is bound to the Cold Flame can channel the raging essence of the Arch-Builder into a tool without damage to the item, but in such a way as to make it malleable without the feeling or appearance of heat. A blacksmith, for example, could use the artifact to wield a hammer and strike a blade as if it were white hot and pliant, yet it could be touched immediately without harm or sensation of heat.

A warrior that wears the Cold Flame and strikes with a blade at any inorganic material – like armor or clothing – causes it to drop a step in protective value or completely destroys it if it has no protective value.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D6

block that forms the base of the forge, at the center of which (and necessitating that someone climb inside to see) lies the Cold Flame, encircled by a carefully etched ward set with various fragments of natural materials.

The Sub-Cellar

The sub-cellar shows signs of very recent use, including pallets with bed sheets and a chapel of sorts at the top end, enclosed on all sides with full-length drapes. An exquisitely crafted alter supports a bowl with incense, several candles and a scattering of small offerings – each a sample of a different craft and suggestive of the work of apprentices.

The storeroom in the lower right of the sub-cellar contains further sacks, boxes and shelves – and also conceals access to a tunnel that leads into the undercity.

Non-Player Characters

THE FIVE PEOPLE outlined below have a particular interest and direct involvement in the events outlined in the rest of this adventure. The Game Master may also wish to include personalities specific to their campaign on the periphery, whether for incidental color or as a hook for future adventures. If stats for additional monsters or individuals are needed, the Game Master can find them in the *Core Rulebook* or the *Monster Codex*.

Lyssa, Davido and Patience

“Every desire has a price, my friend.”

For whatever reason, both Lyssa and Davido failed in the professions they originally pursued, one involved in the Free Colonist movement and the other an apprentice within Ordo Magica. Both failed to find their calling in those roles, falling back to Yndaros in the hope of some other path to fortune. Between them, they not only found a tumultuous and often acerbic personal partnership, but also a perfect network and the expertise to run a highly successful business in the form of The Chance.

For Lyssa, use the base statistics of Fortune Hunter (page 215 in the *Core Rulebook*) with the addition of *Natural Warrior* (novice), *Steadfast* (adept), *Trapper* (novice) and the Boons *Con Artist* and *Contacts* (Yndarian Guilds). For Davido, use the pre-generated character Bartolom (page 241 in the *Core Rulebook*), swapping out *Beast Lore* for *Loremaster* (novice) and adding the Boon *Enterprise*.

In addition, the couple possesses a *Servant Daemon*, called Patience, bound to a silver goat-head charm that Lyssa wears as an earring – a gift from a satisfied and

long-standing customer. The Servant Daemon appears as a stooped middle-aged woman with piercing eyes and an unsettlingly sweet odor, like fruit on the turn. The bound abomination (page 93 in the *Advanced Player's Guide*) possesses the Abilities *Feint* (novice), *Loremaster* (master), *Opportunist* (novice), *Natural Warrior* (novice), the Boons *Archivist* and *Horriifying*, and the Burden *Pariah*.

Branco

"Make the workmanship surpass the materials."

A fierce observer of the tenants of the old faith in his worship of the Arch-BUILDER, Branco feels that the Ambrians have been misled by the Queen and the Church of the Lawgiver. The fine mechanism of life in Alberetor has broken and to return order requires that the Higher Academy remain true and seek to remind the misguided of that which was left behind.

For stats, use Artifact Crafter, as described in the *Monster Codex*, page 125, replacing the ritual *Sanctum* with *Skip Ward*. For a Game Master without the Codex, Branco is not a combat-oriented character, but a Master in matters of artifact crafting, smithing, lore and the means, normally, to pass *Unnoticeable* (as he did when sneaking past Patience in The Chance with the Cold Flame).

Mirwar

"Where to start to achieve something? A burning desire."

In the inferno of competition within the Order, Mirwar barely registers as an ember; a flicker and nothing more. With an eye to nevertheless better herself, Mirwar has managed to secure an administrative role, with some measure of trust and responsibility - of which she has taken immediate advantage.

She scrutinizes the paperwork and a portion of all artifacts and relics brought into the city to sniff out the presence of corruption - and, for her own benefit, she makes it as awkward and costly as possible for the benefactor. With The Chance she suspects that her actions have led them to smuggle treasures into Yndaros and with her revenue stream at stake, she has taken to spying on the proprietors and making unannounced visits. If she can prove their wrongdoing, she will mete out her frustration and anger with an act of revenge they will not soon forget.

Manner	Sour-faced, short-tempered
Race	Human (Ambrian)

Resistance	Challenging
Traits	<i>Contacts (Ordo Magica)</i>
Accurate 7 (+3), Cunning 13 (-3), Discreet 11 (-1), Persuasive 10 (0), Quick 9 (+1), Resolute 15 (-5), Strong 5 (+5), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	<i>Anathema</i> (adept), <i>Bend Will</i> (adept), <i>Loremaster</i> (adept), <i>Ritualist</i> (novice: <i>Tale of Ashes</i>), <i>Wizardry</i> (adept), <i>True Form</i> (adept)
Boon/Burden	<i>Office</i> (Bureaucratic), <i>Impulsive</i>
Weapons, Accurate	Quarterstaff 3 (blunt, long)
Armor	Order Cloak 2 (flexible)
Defense	+1
Toughness 10	Pain Threshold 3
Equipment	Order medallion, flask of strong liquor, sheaf of papers and writing instrument
Shadow	Shimmering yellow-gold, like the light of a roaring tavern fire (corruption: 0)

Tactics: Fighting is not Mirwar's strong-suit. If backed into a corner she trusts that bending the will of the most daunting aggressor will earn her a way to escape.

Kenna

"Those who seek the light must cast the longest shadows."

As with religions everywhere, shades of gray permeate belief. Kenna has faith in the irrevocable connection between the belief of the masses and the well-being of Prios. Only through the absolute belief of the congregation can Prios achieve full strength.

Kenna can see the infighting and backbiting distracting the priesthood and wider curia from the true path and that worries her. She fears that because Prios has fallen silent, too many voices have been raised to fill the vacuum, which only serves to confuse matters further. In the hope of restoring order and muffling the noise, Kenna seeks out the lost chords of Prios' last cry. Some facet of the final words must persist that would allow the continuation of the voice - the priesthood could pick up the thread of conversation once more and reignite the discourse of god and follower.

In her dreams she has seen the way ahead and her fervent devotion has pushed her down roads untrod. Her dedication knows no limits, such that she has risked a taint on her own soul in her pursuit by dabbling in the traditions of other mystic paths.

She knows her decisions would, to put it lightly, not sit well with the Black Cloaks.

Kenna has a habit of scribbling notes and thoughts in the margins and between the lines of books and papers. Should the player characters need a push, the Game Master can leave hints, clues or even hooks for future adventures in her current hideout, usually some cramped, but cheap, cell in an over-populated tenement.

Manner	Piercing gaze, rose-tinted cheeks
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Resistance	Challenging
Traits	<i>Contacts (the Sun Church)</i>
Accurate 5 (+5), Cunning 11 (-1), Discreet 7 (+3), Persuasive 15 (-5), Quick 9 (+1), Resolute 13 (-3), Strong 10 (0), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	<i>Blessed Shield (adept), Leader (master), Ritualist (adept): Anoint, Flaming Servant, Oracle, Theurgy (adept)</i>
Boons/Burdens	<i>Augur, Commanding Voice, Fire Forged, Dark Secret</i>
Weapons	None
Armor	Blessed Robe 2, +3 (with <i>Blessed Shield</i>)
Defense	+1
Toughness	10 Pain Threshold 5
Equipment	Flask with 2 drops Water of the Dusk, Sun Symbol, heavily annotated copy of the Lightbringer book
Shadow	Dusky gold, like a thaler proffered in a half clasped hand (corruption: 1)

Tactics: Kenna doesn't resort to violence herself, instead trusting that her faith and words will shield her against the darkness of the world. If this doesn't suffice, her *Flaming Servant* can keep her enemies busy while she sneaks away to safety.

Kenna's Flaming Servant

Resistance	Ordinary
Traits	<i>Harmful Aura (II), Wrecker (I), Wings (I)</i>
Accurate 13 (-3), Cunning 7 (+3), Discreet 9 (+1), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 11 (-1), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 15 (-5), Vigilant 10 (0)	
Abilities	None
Weapons	Burning sword 4

Armor	Smoldering scale mail 3 (impeding)	
Defense	+1 (shield)	
Toughness	15	Pain Threshold 9

Developments

THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME of this adventure will likely be a showdown between the parties intent on finding the artifact stolen from The Chance.

Branco will want to come back, reclaim the Cold Flame and exit the city, bound for Mergile. Kenna desires the artifact as a means to rekindle Prios's flame. And Mirwar wants the item as evidence of Lyssa and Davido's wrongdoing, to have revenge for their disrespect and hopefully get a pat on the back from her superiors for a thorough job well done.

For the Game Master, the most exciting and engaging outcome would be a showdown at the forge, as much a contest of wills and motivations as anything. If it feels like the player characters would prefer a fight over a reasoned discussion, buff up the parties involved with reinforcements or complications - like members of the Higher Academy come to find out why Branco hasn't been answering messages or Black Cloaks seeking out a corrupted artifact, after uncovering the breadcrumb trail of Kenna's crazed notations.

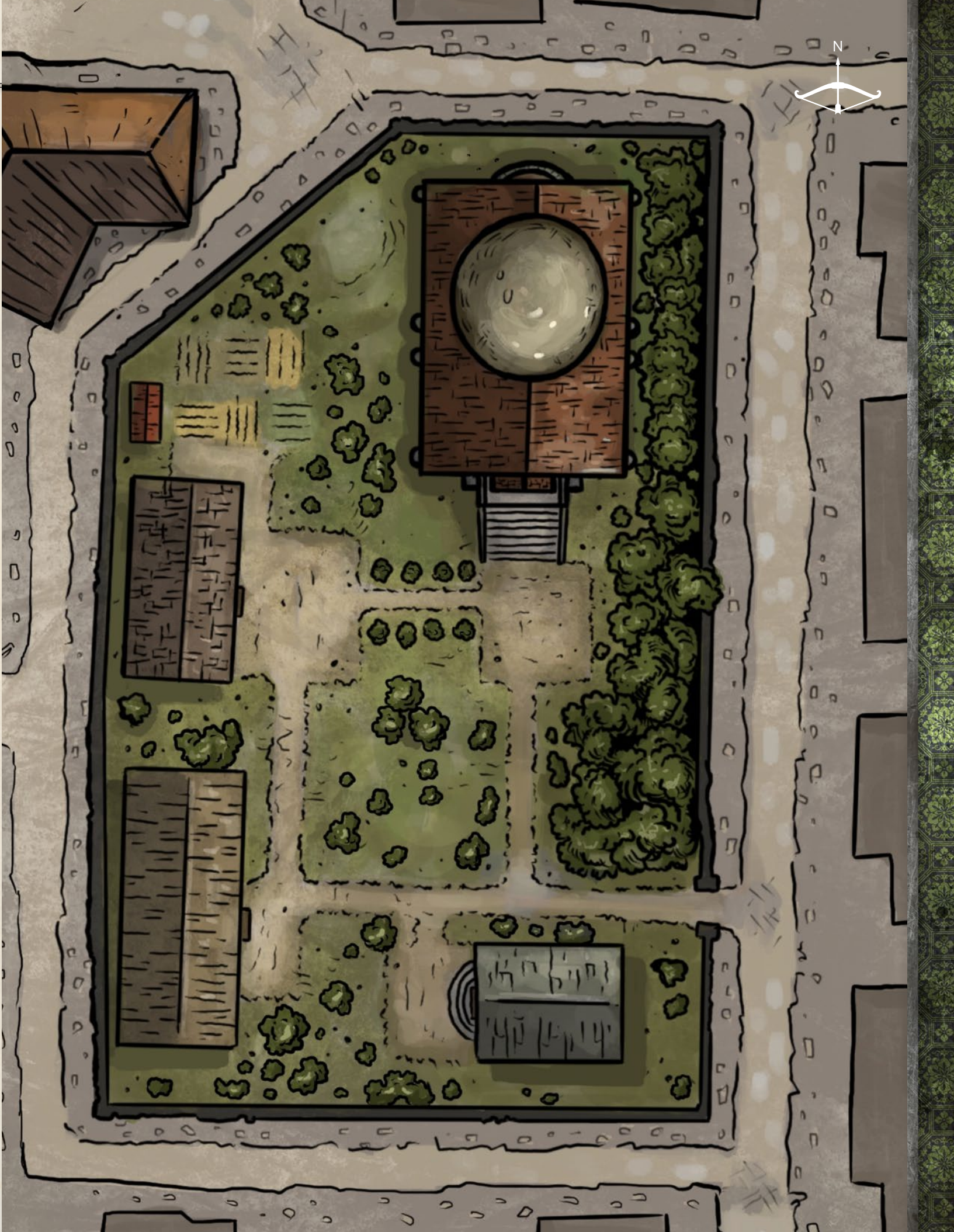
In finding an outcome, more than one party will be left wanting and the player characters can expect to find themselves the focus of fresh interest and enmity.

THE HIGHER ACADEMY

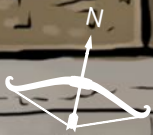
If Branco loses the Cold Flame, he will report back to Master Seamstress Alma in Mergile. While the Higher Academy lacks numbers and martial power, they have plenty of influence that could make the player characters' lives prohibitively expensive!

If the Cold Flame leaves Yndaros in Branco's hands, Alma's pleasure will see him heaped with all due praise and reward - and give the Higher Academy a powerful artifact to add to their artillery. If the player characters assisted in his success, they may find themselves called upon to help recover other items from the blighted land across the Titans, with Branco serving as their contact.

Master Seamstress Alma and the other followers have an agenda that parallels those who see the Church of Prios as deceivers and the god himself dead, so the Higher Academy may prove useful allies if the player characters have a common goal or motivations.



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