



TITANS GRAVE

THE ASHES OF VALKANA



AN ADVENTURE
SERIES FOR

FANTASY
AGE





THE ASHES OF VALKANA

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AN ADVENTURE SERIES FOR THE FANTASY AGE RPG

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FOREWORD



Hi there! I'm Wil Wheaton, and I'll be your guide for the next ten days and nine romantic nights, as you get to know your way around the world of Valkana.

Titansgrave was created in early 2015, but was born in the early 1980s when I fell in love with a cartoon called *Thundarr the Barbarian*. Set on post-apocalyptic Earth two thousand years after a comet unleashed cosmic destruction, Thundarr and his companions roamed a world of "savagery, super science and sorcery." I was captivated by the combination of science fiction—Thundarr's weapon of choice was a Sun Sword, which was suspiciously similar to a lightsaber—and fantasy—Thundarr's companions were Ookla the Mok, a beastman who threw the rusted hulks of cars around, and Princess Ariel, a sorceress. Together, the three of them vanquished lizardmen, fought crazy, rogue AIs, and even encountered a crashed spaceship filled with vampires. They did all this against the backdrop of familiar locations on Earth. New York City became the island of Manhat, Cape Canaveral housed the consciousness of an evil wizard, living as a brain in a jar, and they even made it to my hometown of Los Angeles more than once...though things looked a little different on the TV than they did in 1981.

Thundarr captured my imagination. It combined the fantasy worlds and creatures I loved from playing *Dungeons & Dragons*, with the science fiction worlds I loved from *Star Trek*, *Buck Rogers*, *Flash Gordon*, and Atari games like *Yar's Revenge*. It only ran for 21 episodes, but it affected me so profoundly that it was the first thing that came to mind when I was given the opportunity to design and explore my own world with *Geek & Sundry*.

"What if we did a science fantasy world," I recall saying in an early pitch meeting. "We can take inspiration from the *Heavy Metal* movie, *The Land of the Lost*, *Akira*, and *Thundarr the Barbarian*."

Everyone else in the meeting, who had been sort of politely listening to me up to that point, perked up when I mentioned *Thundarr*. Apparently, I wasn't the only kid in 1981 who thought it would be cool to deflect laser blasts with a sword. I got the green light, and I approached Chris and Nicole at Green Ronin about using the *Fantasy AGE* system to run the show. I loved the elegant simplicity of the system when we played *Dragon Age on Tabletop*, especially how it supported imaginative storytelling, simple-but-satisfying combat, and knew when to get out of the way to let our creativity flourish.

There wasn't enough time to set up everything the way we wanted to, but we did it anyway. We worked long nights and weekends and brought in some of the best writers and designers in the universe to work with us. They gave us so much incredible material, we couldn't use it all in the show. And some of the stuff we did use had to be edited out for one reason or another, so GMs who are running that adventure campaign will be able to take their players to places that I couldn't take my players.

All of that material, all of those places we loved, but didn't get to visit is here in this book. You'll find all the characters and locations and puzzles and adversaries we faced in *The Ashes of Valkana* we featured on the show, but you'll also meet some new NPCs, explore the cities of Karros and Vorakis, and get to see even more of Nestora. You'll learn how to create your own characters, inspired by our group or created entirely on your own. You may even uncover things that guide you toward our future adventures in Valkana.

What I especially hope you will find here is inspiration; things to get excited about and make your own adventures in the world we created and fell in love with. Take your players into the best coffee shop in Nestora: Dragons & Donuts, explore the cyborg assembly line at the heart of a floating fortress, and cuddle up with Runcible. I want you to visit the same places we did in *The Ashes of Valkana* knowing that even if you talk to the same creatures we did, your adventures will be unique from ours because the story you tell will be your own.

Welcome to Titansgrave! We hope you get five gold and a party.

Wil Wheaton
May 13 2015





VALKANA

Welcome to Valkana, a science fantasy campaign setting for the *Fantasy AGE RPG*. Valkana is a world where science and magic are both powerful forces. You can see hover cars and dragons race through the sky, and cyborgs and golems battle in the streets. You may be an elf sniper with a blaster rifle, a saurian duelist with power blades, or an orc mage with a mastery of shadow magic. You may discover ancient artifacts or acquire cutting edge technology that fuses science and magic. You may follow the path of the sword, the blaster, or the spell, but choose wisely. Your survival depends on it.

A HISTORY OF VALKANA

A brief history of Valkana follows, with a focus on the Tasmestra Basin. There is much more to Valkana all of which will be revealed in time. The material here should give you enough information to run the included adventure and more of your own design.

THE ANCIENT WORLD

Uncounted millennia ago an alien civilization visited the world of Valkana, which was a lifeless orb at the time. They terraformed the planet, seeding it with various forms of life. Once this was in motion, they moved on, never to return. Valkana has developed in isolation ever since.

In time, intelligent life thrived on Valkana. The dominant races of the ancient world were the elves, beautiful, long-

BOOK ORGANIZATION

Titansgrave: The Ashes of Valkana is a companion book to the web series of the same name. It is the first of what will hopefully be a series of books that explore the world of Valkana. The focus of this book is the adventure that was run on the show. That adventure is in **CHAPTERS 3–10**. This chapter provides an overview of Valkana and describes the three city-states that dominate the Tasmestra Basin, the region where the adventures take place. This corresponds to the included poster map. **CHAPTER 2** provides the rules and a selection of equipment specific to this campaign setting. This material supplements what's presented in the *Fantasy AGE Basic Rulebook*.

At the back of the book you'll find the characters that Alison, Hank, Laura, and Yuri played on the show. Players can use them as pre-generated characters if they like, or you can use them as NPCs to help bring Valkana to life.

1

lived people with close connection to the natural world, and the saurians, a race of cunning and adaptable reptilian humanoids. The ancient empires of these two races fought a long and bitter war. The saurians eventually won the war by advancing their technology faster. Their cities and war machines were powered by mighty engines. They also dominated two servitor races: dwarves and orcs. The dwarves tended the great machines, while the orcs marched to war.

The elves could not withstand this onslaught. They retreated to distant, hidden sanctuaries and let the saurians seize their old lands. Meanwhile the saurian empire flourished. They built new cities filled with luxurious towers on foundations drenched with orcish and elven blood. In this new era, the orcs grew restless. They had no enemies to fight and were tasked with menial labor. The orcs chafed at their servitude and soon rebelled against their enslavers. The saurians responded by arming the dwarves, who had remained loyal to their cause. The flames of war engulfed the saurian empire, two servitor races pitted against one another in a vicious civil war. The saurians seemed untouchable in their fortified towers, but one night there was a fire in the sky....

THE CATAclysm

No one knows the true nature of the Cataclysm that befell Valkana. What is remembered is that fire filled the sky, night turned to day, the earth shook, and the face of the world changed in a matter of moments. Cities were destroyed, mountain ranges leveled, and lands flooded. The saurian empire ceased to exist and everywhere there was death and turmoil.

Those who lived fought to survive. In the wake of the Cataclysm, Valkana was covered with dark, dense clouds that blocked out the sun. The Endless Night, as the era came to be known, was a time of starvation and desperate struggle. Some dwarves and saurians found safety in their underground cities. The elves that could, remained in their hidden sanctuaries, but many of these were destroyed and their survivors forced to roam. The orcs fought for dominance in the new landscape, against the other races and themselves.

REBIRTH

At last, the sun came out again and Valkana was reborn. Cities were built and trade routes established. The old races also discovered they were not alone. Humans, beast-folk, gnomes, and halflings all appeared during the Endless Night, their origin a mystery. The humans were the most aggressive. They bred quickly and soon founded their own city-states.



WHAT CAUSED THE CATAclySM?

Every race has a different explanation for the Cataclysm. The dominant theory among humans is that an object from space, perhaps a rogue moon or comet, crashed into Valkana. The elves believe it was one in a series of trials—such as the loss of their empire—they must endure before inheriting all of Valkana. The dwarves are divided; some believe it was their gods cleansing Valkana's polluted surface to make the dwarves ascendant, while others believe it was those same gods punishing them for leaving the bosom of the earth. The orcs believe it was their war god striking his fist upon the earth, to spur their rebellion and free them. The saurians believe it was punishment for their hubris, particularly their enslavement of other races. While some saurians ascribe this comeuppance to their gods, others speak only of fate in the abstract. Among all the races there are those who search for a scientific explanation to the Cataclysm. They are sure there is one; they simply must find the evidence.

Technology, too, recovered. Great advances were made, recovering and improving upon the science of the saurian empire. A new force was also discovered that did not correspond to existing scientific theories. The elves were first to embrace it. They called it magic and its practitioners mages. Once the elves demonstrated what magic could do, other races were quick to follow. Some dedicated themselves purely to science, others purely to magic, but a group of iconoclasts thought both forces could be made to work together.

THE RISE OF THE PROPHET

For centuries Valkana thrived. There were wars, certainly, and nations and city-states rose and fell, but in general it was a world moving ahead, a world of progress. That all changed with the rise of the Prophet Dhawan. She was a charismatic saurian who preached that the melding of science and magic was an abomination, a blasphemy. She declared that providence commanded all true users of magic to rise up and purify their societies. Only when magic and science were permanently separated, would all the gods be mollified. If they did not, there would be a second Cataclysm, and this one would destroy the world and everyone in it. The Prophet and her followers were determined to spread her message across all of Valkana, first with open arms, and then with closed fists.

Few took the Prophet seriously at first, but that changed quickly when the first settlements were consumed by flames. Almost immediately, uprisings began throughout every major nation. All over the continent the cult took root and soon the nations were tearing themselves apart. The Prophet's armies grew and her enemies soon realized they had to unite to end the threat she and her followers posed. So began The Chaos Wars.

THE CHAOS WARS

It took over a century of strife, thousands of desperate battles, and uncounted lives, but the Prophet was ultimately defeated, and her armies dismantled and scattered. Key to this were a group of heroes of all the races that banded together to fight for freedom. By the end of the Chaos Wars, the world had been re-shaped. Many cities that had been rebuilt were destroyed. Whole populations dispersed. New alliances formed and borders redrawn. The new map was quite different from the old. But, despite the formation of new countries, cities, and empires, many remained in hiding, clinging to the old ways in fear of a continuing instability.

VALKANA TIMELINE

What follows is a rough timeline of Valkana. Most nations use Solar Reckoning (SR) to mark the passage of years. This dates the years from when the sun came out again after the Endless Night. Any dates before that are speculative, since records from before the Cataclysm are spotty at best.

DATE	EVENT
Pre-history	An alien civilization terraforms Valkana.
-1200 SR	The rise of the elven and saurian empires.
-500 SR	The empires begin a life and death struggle.
-350 SR	The saurians and their servitor races defeat the elves. The elves retreat to hidden sanctuaries.
-275 SR	The orcs rebel against the saurians, tearing the empire apart in a civil war.
-200 SR	The Cataclysm. The Endless Night begins.
1 SR	The sun comes out, ending the Endless Night.
990 SR	The Prophet Dhawan begins to preach.
999 SR	The Chaos Wars begin.
1115 SR	The Prophet is defeated and the Chaos Wars end.
1450 SR	Present Day

Only the oldest remaining elves can recall the days of the Chaos Wars, but the wars left their mark on all the peoples of Valkana. While small pockets of cultists remain, the Prophet Dhawan is widely considered to be a force of evil who brought suffering and destruction to all she touched, and the great heroes who defeated her are revered.

As *The Ashes of Valkana* begins, the Chaos Wars are hundreds of years in the past, though as we see at the Battle of the Boasts in CHAPTER 3: **HUMBLE BEGINNINGS**, the wars continue to play an important and significant role in modern mythology.

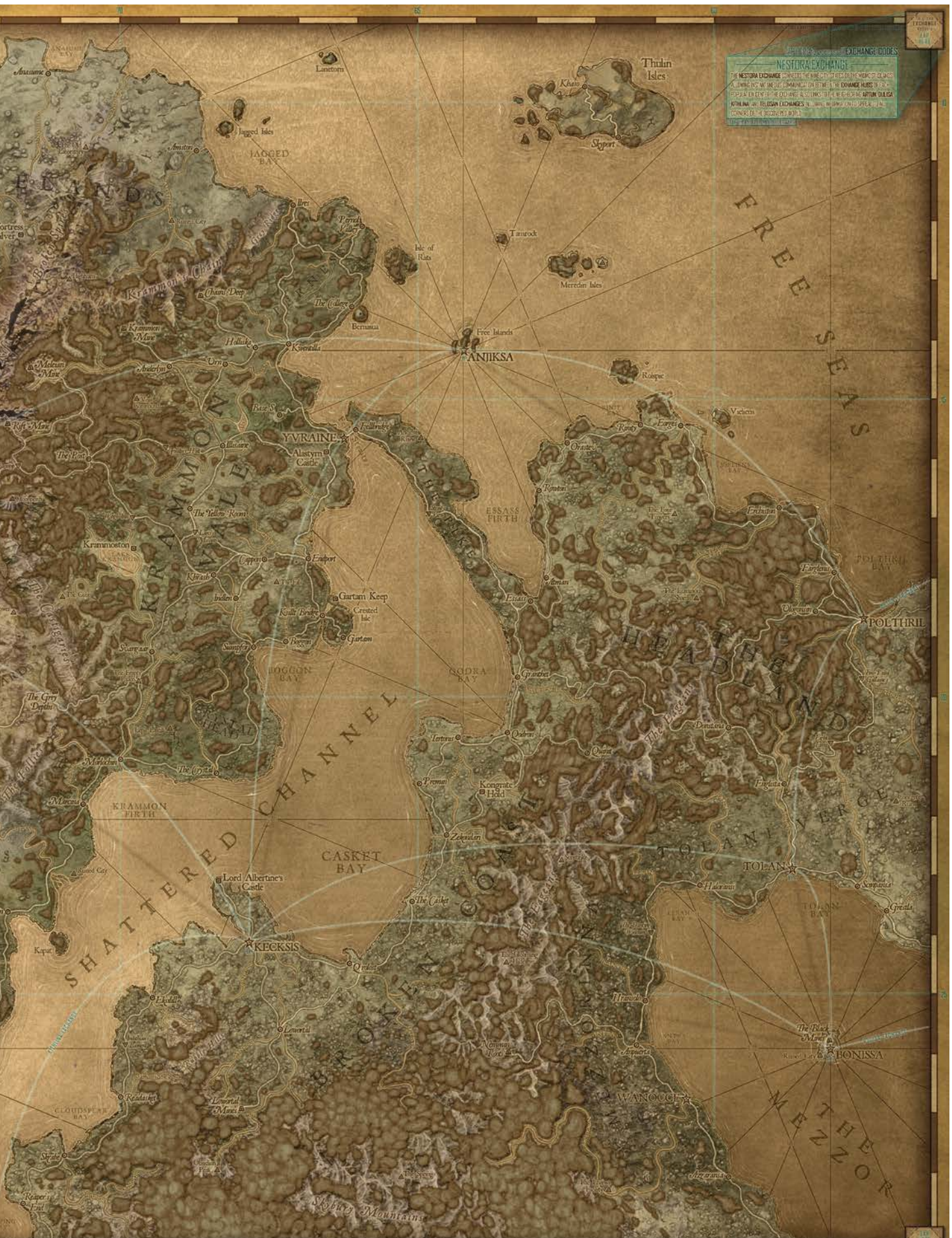


PROPERTY OF
THE BEER BARON

Anchor-Dragon Stamp
4287610
The Beer Baron's Stamp
0433 7732

KEY

- ☆ City State
- Settlement
- Stronghold
- ▲ Mine
- ▼ In
- ▲ Place of Interest





THE TASMETRA BASIN

This book is centered on a region called the Tasmetra Basin, which is detailed in the accompanying poster map. The adventure in CHAPTERS 3–10 takes place here. Dominating the Tasmetra Basin are three city-states: Nestora, Karros, and Vorakis. Overviews of all three city-states follow. Nestora is featured in the adventure itself, so it is described first. The others provide you with new places your player characters can explore as the campaign goes on.

THE CITY-STATE OF NESTORA

Nestora has stood, in one form or another, since before the Chaos Wars began. Human colonists drawn to the fertile banks of the Tasmetra River first settled it. When the settlement grew into a city, they crowned their first queen, Jermaine Nestora, who vowed in her coronation speech that it would be the site of a new dawn for humanity.

This proved more difficult than she imagined, and the first centuries of Nestora's history were soaked in blood and threaded together with devil's bargains. Constant incursions from saurians, dwarves, and elves kept the Nestoran's nascent military stretched to the limit. The Nestoran monarchs frequently ceded land, trade rights, and other resources just to maintain their tenuous hold on the area. Eventually, Nestora gained a reputation as being a human kingdom in name only, with different parts of its infrastructure in the hands of literally every other nation.

Perhaps this was why, of all the lands of the Tasmetra Basin, Nestora was the first to openly join the forces of the Prophet Dhawan.

The Prophet moved quickly to establish her power base in the city, and with the blessing of the monarchy, made Nestora into a living example of her views. The royal guard hunted down the greatest artisans and craftspeople in the city and had them executed in droves. They allowed scientists and

researchers to leave, or to devote their careers to the study of magic. Within a generation, the city was transformed into an autocratic theocracy where all non-mages were second-class citizens, ruled by the Prophet's iron fist.

The leaders of the trade and manufacturing guilds assembled in secret and resolved to take back their city. They formed a shadow coalition to preserve magical technology and organize resistance against the crown. The coalition operated in secret for decades, finally getting their opportunity to liberate the city when the heroes of the Chaos Wars rallied the free people to lay siege to all the Prophet's strongholds.

When the smoke cleared, the guilds knew Nestora would need some form of government, but they had no faith in the crown—no king or queen had ever done right by the people, and it was time to change that and distribute ruling power across a worthy group of patriots. Naturally, they picked themselves, and began working to return the city to its former glory, welcoming members of all nations, races, trades, and philosophies to help. Today, Nestora thrives under the direction of the Nine High Guilds—one for each borough of the city, and one more, the Nestoran Commerce Nexus, which acts as a tie-breaker for matters of state.

Visitors to Nestora remark that the city is a jarring mélange of ancient and modern. Rather than removing their oldest structures, or the ruins of the Chaos Wars, the Nestorans have chosen to integrate them into new construction, building within and around them. To do otherwise, they say, would be to remove vital reminders of their history, the symbols of their ability to persevere in the face of adversity.

RULERSHIP

With the exception of the Commerce Nexus, each of the High Guilds oversees a borough of Nestora and is responsible for all aspects of its governance. The leaders of each guild form a body called the Nestoran Council, which votes on matters affecting the city as a whole, and releases news and information to the public via the vidscreen network. The guilds enforce their policies through a police force called the Nestoran Guard.

The Artist's Guild is responsible for Braidwarth, which holds the old royal buildings and Nestora College. Allfeld's booming trade, banking, and entertainment industries fall under the purview of the Vintner's Guild, which has expanded far beyond its original mandate. The Mercenaries' Guild oversees the rough-and-tumble back alleys of Riverside, much to the dismay of the Dockhand's Union, which controls Riverside's neighbors, the shipping borough of Portora. Scientific and magical research go on in The Nest, under the watch of the Cornucopia Group. The Bureau of Utilities attempts to manage the packed, claustrophobic slums of Kiravi, to varying degrees of success. In the Central borough, where the Nestoran Council is headquartered, the Guild of Advocates pursues just representation for all, if you believe their signage. The wealthiest of the wealthy make their home in Holystan, under the gentle hands of the Physicians' Guild.

The Commerce Nexus operates as a go-between for all of the other High Guilds, managing all the territory not belonging to a borough, and also acts as a liaison for the dizzying array of smaller guilds and compacts who routinely bring issues before the Council.

PEOPLE

Nestorans are a varied mix of people from all over Valkana, because of the Council's open trade and generous immigration policies following the Chaos Wars. The dominant values of the local culture are individuality, practicality, emotional fortitude, and civic pride. The more fortunate you are, the more generous you're expected to be. Nestorans are oddly proud of the hardship they've overcome, and of the city's long history. They tend to participate enthusiastically in festivals commemorating the past and decorate their homes with images, statues, and other representations of historical events.

Lately, they have become a restless people, and many are troubled by recent trends that suggest more problems to come. There is a growing sentiment that the High Guilds are now so wrapped up in the affairs of government that they can no longer represent their constituents, many of whom have a harder time getting a voting membership every year. The minor guilds can only go through the Commerce Nexus to have a grievance heard, which can take months unless they know someone well-connected or are willing to throw money at the problem. Rumors of corruption abound, but the Council seems adept at deflecting these claims.

The streets of Nestora are restless, which has led to the rise of the Autonomous Front, a revolutionary group that

wants to end guild rule. The Nestoran Guard has fought some minor skirmishes with insurgents from this group, but have not made significant progress in rooting out their leadership.



NOTABLE CITIZENS

Some notable citizens of Nestora follow.

S'THANA

VOSS GROUP EXECUTIVE

One of the most prominent saurians in the city, S'thana manages the day-to-day operations for the Voss Group's holdings in Nestora. Her contributions to public works on the Voss Group's behalf have earned her a reputation for generosity and made her a popular public figure. She makes frequent appearances at social gatherings and charity events.

THE GEARHEAD

VIGILANTE

If you're out at night in the dangerous Kiravi slums, and you run into trouble, you may find yourself getting rescued by a tall figure in a hood and cloak, decked out from head to toe in gadgetry. The Gearhead, as the locals call him or her, has been operating in Kiravi for about five years, protecting innocent from the predations of gangs and corrupt officials.

NOLA NERENE

CHIEF CONSTABLE

This severe, battle-scarred elf is in charge of the Nestoran Guard. Not content to be deskbound, she often patrols alongside her troops and personally investigates the most puzzling of crimes. She is also an avid patron of the arts, which surprises those who are familiar with her gruff demeanor.

MAXIMILIAN ARCHVANE

BIOMAGICAL SCIENTIST

Maximilian is a member of the Cornucopia Group who works on optimizing the city's food production. He has a laboratory in The Nest that belches smoke and is the source of strange noises at all hours of the day, every day. Most people consider him to be an odious presence—he never seems to notice the strange stains on his robes, and he has a tendency to leer when he smiles.

GLORA THE GOSSIP

RASCAL

This dwarven thief and cutpurse for hire prowls Nestora's taverns engaging in her favorite pastime—talking about people behind their backs. Her enthusiasm for meddling and rumormongering makes her one of the best-informed people in the city, and unlike an information broker, she does it for the love of gossip.



- BRAIDWARTH**
- 1 NESTORA PALACE
 - 2 THE OLD BOOKSHOP
 - 3 BRAIDWARTH ARMS
 - 4 THE EXECUTIVE'S DREAM
 - 5 NESTORA COLLEGE
 - 6 THE GREEN
 - 7 LISHUNG'S BIBLIOTHECA
 - 8 THE GLASSTEEL STUDIO
 - 9 DRAGONS AND DONUTS
 - 10 THE CIVIC MINT
- TAP HERE for stories concerning NESTORA PALACE's haunting

- ALLFELD**
- 11 HABBERIKIL STADIUM
 - 12 THE GRYPHON INSTITUTE
 - 13 FESTIVE HOTEL
 - 14 GRUUSHANK'S
 - 15 THE ALLSMITH
 - 16 THARNHAEL'S EMPORIUM
 - 17 HIGH EXCHEQUOR OF NESTORA
 - 18 BEER BARON'S
 - 19 THE BOMB SHELTER
 - 20 MARKET BANK
- TAP HERE for upcoming events at HABBERIKIL STADIUM

- RIVERSIDE**
- 21 GROGG'S THE BAKER
 - 22 NESTORA BARRACKS
 - 23 GUNTAG'S BOARDING
 - 24 THE MONUMENT
 - 25 ARUN'S MERCY HOUSE
 - 26 THE MILLS
 - 27 KATALINE'S CONCOCTIONS
 - 28 THE PROPHET'S VOICE
 - 29 FELLMARSH
 - 30 THE HIDDEN HERRING
- TAP HERE to learn about RIVERSIDE'S many gangs

- PORTORA**
- 31 HARBOUR MASTER'S OFFICE
 - 32 THE PILLARS
 - 33 THE TRANSFER
 - 34 THE WAYSTATION
 - 35 STEVEDORE HOUSE
 - 36 THE GEM
 - 37 T.P.T.A.
 - 38 SEA LORD'S CHAMBERS
 - 39 THE THOUSAND BLESSINGS
 - 40 FISHERMAN'S MISSION
- TAP HERE to discover when PORTORA was founded



THE CITY- NEST



STATE OF
TORA

- THE NEST**
- 41 HTHISKIN FARMS
 - 42 HIGH INCUBATORY
 - 43 THE GUIDED MOUSE
 - 44 FORKED SERVICES
 - 45 LUSIANNITH AERONAUTICS
 - 46 MOLLITH'S MENAGERIE
 - 47 THE CHARNEL
 - 48 THE STRIP
 - 49 EXCHANGE HUB 45E
 - 50 SKALESONS

- KIRAVI**
- 51 GHURVAR'S DYERS
 - 52 GIRAVNOI OFFICES
 - 53 TORON'S PATTEENS
 - 54 DUGSANS
 - 55 THE DRILLHALL
 - 56 THE ILUSTRIDIOUS NOOSE
 - 57 JUSERPHI'S ORPHANAGE
 - 58 KIRAVI RAG PICKERS
 - 59 PUPPETEER'S CORNER
 - 60 THE DUMP

- CENTRAL**
- 61 HATHERING HALL
 - 62 THE COURTHOUSE
 - 63 PERDITAS
 - 64 CITY HALL
 - 65 EMBASSY HALL
 - 66 DIVIDE'S WATCH
 - 67 VOSS GROUP
 - 68 KRADDOCK AND SILVA
 - 69 CUSTODIAN BANKING
 - 70 RITKIN-SIERT ALLIANCE

- HOLYSTAN**
- 71 THE NEW GORANAN
 - 72 NESTORA CIVIC HOSPITAL
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 - 74 THE NESTORA GUARD
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LOCATIONS

Some sample Nestoran locations follow. See the poster map for a detailed look at the city.

NESTORA PALACE

Once the seat of power for Nestora's royal line, the Palace has been turned into a museum dedicated to chronicling the time from the city's founding through the overthrow of the monarchy. Powerful enchantments allow the lavish exhibits to run on their own, with animated projections acting out significant moments in early Nestoran history. The anti-royalist sentiment is clear and unsubtle, and the exhibits are designed to emphasize the moral and ethical failings of the crown.

HABBERIKIL STADIUM

The most prominent events center in the city, Habberikil Stadium hosts a variety of different functions, including political speeches, sporting events, concerts, dramatic performances, and exhibitions of skill. Modular platforms make the arena infinitely configurable, and vidscreen support in the upper mezzanine ensures that even the cheaper seats offer a stunning view of the action below. The Artist's Guild and Vintner's Guild are constantly in debate over whether the stadium should prioritize cultural or social events.

THE MONUMENT

The Monument depicts the last king of Nestora in his final moments, hands held up in a plea for mercy, as the imposing figure of Lenarel, elven warrior-maiden and one of Lady Vадja's companions, towers over him. Her sword is leveled at his throat, and a plaque on the base of the monument projects the words: "In memory of our liberation from the Prophet Dhawan's tyranny," and the date. The plaque cycles through all the known languages of Valkana. The Exaltation of the Fallen, an annual parade commemorating those who died in the Chaos Wars, concludes its procession here.

THE TASMETRA PORT AND TRADE ASSOCIATION (T.P.T.A.)

One of the oldest shipping guilds in Nestora has its headquarters in Portora, right along the river. Though they never ascended to the status of High Guild, the T.P.T.A. is still powerful, as it retains control over much of Nestora's import and export traffic. Their main holdings consist of a large warehouse complex and secure keep, which bustles at all hours with merchants, ship captains, and business owners hauling in goods. The Sea Lord's Chambers, a nearby tavern and inn, brings in an enormous amount of business thanks to its proximity to the T.P.T.A. headquarters.



THE STRIP

The Strip is a large, fenced-in field in The Nest brimming with magical automatons. Lusiannith Aeronautics donated the land for use by any company or group with a technological bent and manages the use of its space and resources. A massive complex, the Engineer's Hub, hosts an open congress of designers, technicians, wizards, and contractors, who test and perfect their designs out on the grounds. Naturally, they can get competitive, and spectators often line up at the fence to watch the different automatons compete and battle.

THE ILLUSTRIOUS NOOSE

Of all the rough places in Kiravi, this is probably the roughest. This bar is downwind of the city dump. The Noose allegedly got its name when a former Bureau of Utilities chief declared that if you were desperate enough to go there, you might as well just hang yourself. They claim to serve some of the most potent potables in the city, some made from industrial lubricants. Thus, it's a popular stop for the young and the reckless, who dare each other to consume the Noose's questionable drinks.

DIVIDE'S WATCH

The Watch is one of the largest private investigation firms in Nestora, and has a large, multi-story complex in the Central district. Their services are expensive, but the populace generally considers them a much better option than relying on the detectives of the Nestoran Guard. Rumor has it that the Watch's offices contain personal data on every important personage in the city, but no one has ever been able to corroborate that.

HOLYSTAN PARK

A sprawling natural preserve near the coast, Holystan Park is a favorite gathering place of artists and philosophers from all over the city. It's common to see an informal debate, discussion, or small, intimate musical performances going on under the canopies of the trees. An invitation to stroll the various paths of the park is a polite way to initiate courtship in the old Nestoran tradition, and therefore features heavily in any romantic story set in the city.

TENT CITY

Outside the jurisdiction of any guild, a tent city sits on the northwest edge of Nestora proper. Home to a transient population of refugees, outcasts, and the poverty-stricken, they have nevertheless bonded together in a tight community, valuing mutual protection and communal practices. The Physicians' Guild routinely sends shipments of food and medical aid, but many of the tent city's inhabitants say the Physicians' Guild



is only doing the bare minimum needed to assuage their consciences and look good to the public. Some say the tent city contains one of the most lucrative black markets in the region, but the inhabitants neither confirm nor deny that.

AMIETTA'S SHACK

A curiosity sitting on the roadside behind the city dump, the shack once belonging to Amietta Loren remains a source of local interest and folklore. Amietta herself disappeared in a mysterious magical event about a century ago, and no one's ever been able to discover exactly what happened. Since then, people have reported strange sightings there—apparitions appearing out of nowhere, strange lights and distortions in the air, and muttering voices. Most people dismiss this as hearsay, and official investigations from the College have turned up nothing.

THE CITY-STATE OF KARROS

In ancient times, Karros was a saurian stronghold, a hub of commerce in the heart of the Tasmestra Basin, right at the confluence of the Karrosa and Tasmestra Rivers. It served as a shining bastion of technology and culture that showed the people the greatest heights to which they could aspire. The Cataclysm shook the city's foundations though, bringing the towers tumbling down, burying the people beneath the glittering symbols of their success.

The foundations of Karros endured, however. It did not slide into Rift, the great canyon that opened up in the Broken Spire Mountains during the Cataclysm, like other cities of the saurian empire. While thousands perished, others survived in the city's deep underground tunnels and spaces. Crucially, much of their technology survived as well. In the darkness that followed the Cataclysm, Karros became a rallying point for survivors. As it was rebuilt and expanded, it helped other settlements in the Tasmestra Basin do the same. Scientists from Karros developed computers and all the major cities maintained functional communication networks. There were wars and crises to be sure, but with every generation the devastation wrought by the Cataclysm became more of a memory. Until the Chaos Wars.

As the Chaos War broke out, the people of Karros at first thought they were safe behind their famed Fanged Wall. Unfortunately, it wasn't an army that came to lay the city low. It was a magical virus that couldn't even be seen let alone defended against by a wall. The Data Plague infected the computer networks, destroying knowledge, crashing the economy, and crippling defenses. It was in the ensuing chaos the armies of the Prophet Dhawan came and sacked the city. The destruction was great, but there was one saving grace: her forces didn't stay.

As the Chaos Wars raged on, the leaders of Karros sought new ways to defend their city. They were wary of relying on computers after what had happened, and this is what led a team of scientists and mages to invent the golems. They were mechanical constructs, but animated by spirits summoned and bound into them. This made them immune to the Data Plague.

The golems were a success. Not only did they help Karros repel several more attacks on the city, but they also marched with the victorious armies that finally defeated the Prophet Dhawan. By the end of the Chaos Wars the golems were more than war machines; they were the *de facto* leaders of Karros. At first the golems acted as a unified front, but with the overt threat of the Prophet gone their alliance splintered. Factions developed among the golems and at times fighting broke out between them on the streets of Karros. Over time, the golems solidified into three different groups that came to a kind of détente and reaffirmed their control over the citizens of Karros.

The three factions became known as the Triumvirate of Karros, and their authority over the city is absolute. There is little that goes on inside the Fanged Wall that the Triumvirate does not know about. They have lesser golems everywhere to monitor the place. The Triumvirate's main concerns are maintaining and defending the city and giving the citizens proper guidance.

Despite the presence of the golems throughout the city, the many varied people of Karros seem relatively happy, at least on the surface. They have come to rely so much upon the Triumvirate's services that the golems don't seem so much an intrusion in their lives, but a necessity. Many people never leave the city, unsure of how to protect themselves or make decisions without the guidance of the Triumvirate.

Karros is the most stable of any of the city-states of Valkana. While outside forces have tried to threaten it in the past, the Triumvirate has honed the city's defenses to level of frightening effectiveness. Many attackers have crashed against the Fanged Wall and fallen back when faced with scores of golems armed for war.

Visitors to the city often remark that it seems too clean, too respectful, too perfect. It's hard to call such comments complaints, but they hint at the fact that the people of Karros are not the masters of their own fate, as they've given that over to the Triumvirate. Many have also had cause to wonder what the golems really want. They are animated by magical spirits that don't seem to age. Do they have their own agenda and what does that mean in the long term?

RULERSHIP

The three factions that make up the Triumvirate are known as the Alabaster, the Emerald, and the Golden. Those groups have split up control of the city into three different areas, though every faction maintains maniples of golems for the city's overall defense. Command of the city's army passes from one faction to the next every two years to keep the factions in balance.

The Alabaster Golems handle the city's infrastructure and control a large force of workers—many mages and scientists among them—who live in the underground complex beneath the city. They rarely venture into the daylight, and the rest of Karros's citizens refer to them as the Ghosts.

The Emerald Golems maintain law and order in the city. They patrol the streets and punish criminals—often on the spot. They keep a special eye out for anyone not wearing an identity bracelet (a crime in Karros). Citizens must display one at all times and visitors must acquire and wear a special one that marks them as non-residents.



The Golden Golems oversee the city as a whole. They take a wider view and spend their time considering the city's place in greater Valkana and how the people of the city can best work as a cohesive unit to further the Triumvirate's plans. As a faction, the Golden Golems communicate with everyone in the city via wall-sized screens scattered about the public spaces of Karros.

Sometimes the factions of the Triumvirate disagree. Most of these troubles happen behind the scenes, but they sometimes spill over into the public sphere. It's then that the people of Karros have to decide to which of the golem factions they are most loyal.

PEOPLE

While Karros began as a saurian settlement, it's become one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. The only requirement for someone to become a citizen of Karros is to accept an ID bracelet and agree to follow orders the Triumvirate gives the new citizen. Anyone who refuses is immediately escorted outside the Fanged Wall and forbidden from ever entering the city again.

The majority of the Ghosts, the mages and scientists that maintain the city from underground, are saurian. Those who immigrate to the city cannot become Ghosts, as only native-born citizens qualify for such positions. People covet these jobs because the Ghosts are traditionally the safest people in the city. If war or disaster hits Karros, the Ghosts all have first access to the bunkers. They also cannot be banished from the city without the unanimous consent of the Triumvirate, and anyone else can be kicked out by a judgment by a single faction.

The Ghosts are a quiet and reclusive folk, suspicious of those who live above them, much less any strangers or non-residents. They stand in stark contrast to the rest of the people of Karros, who are often polite to a fault. The golems have trained the citizenry to serve the greater good, and they are often pleased to extend such generosity to total strangers, as long as such souls do not run afoul of the Triumvirate and its rules.

The greatest fear of most citizens of Karros is misunderstanding a golem's order and doing the wrong thing. If asked to do something outside of their experience, such people usually ask for clarifications several times, until they are positive such actions could not possibly get them into trouble.

NOTABLE CITIZENS

Some notable citizens of Karros follow.

THE PRIMARCH

GOLDEN GOLEM LEADER

The leader of the Golden Golems is known as the Primarch and it (the golems don't have genders) is the most powerful being in Karros. While the three factions are always in a balancing act, the Primarch's job is to provide vision and leadership for the city. The Primarch has led the Golden Golems for over two centuries now. It sometimes talks of perfecting "the ultimate formulation" but what that means is a mystery.

THE GHOSTKEEPER

TRANSLATOR

The Ghostkeeper is a position held by the latest in an uninterrupted line of saurians that extends back to the city's first written records. She is part of the legendary Diguana family, and she is nominally in charge of the Ghosts. Mostly she just relays orders from the Alabaster Golems to the Ghosts, but the current Ghostkeeper has shown an independent streak that might spell trouble.

BIDE SHARPAXE

WHETSTONE CAPTAIN

This sturdy dwarf is the captain of the Whetstones, the engineering crew that helps the golems keep the Fanged Wall in a constant state of readiness for war. He ensures the weapons are oiled and loaded at all times and that no one falls asleep on their shift. The ever-vigilant golems pull the hardest duty, though, keeping watch from the peaks of the pyramids that line the wall.

SKOT DOOLING

GOLEM MASTER

The all-too-human Skot leads the engineers who maintain the golems, keeping each individual in tiptop shape. The golems don't heal naturally and require constant repairs, but Skot's also experimenting with creating brand-new golems that wouldn't be loyal to any of the Triumvirate's factions. If he succeeds, he may become the most powerful—and most wanted—person in the city.

BRIN DRAGE

DOCKMASTER

This ancient elf supervises the riverside docks through which most of the region's trade passes. He has done so—on and off—for hundreds of years. When intrigued enough by some mystery or opportunity, he hands the job off to someone else and leaves town on an adventure that can keep him away for years at a time. His job is always waiting for him when he returns, so there is much speculation about the exact nature of his relationship with the Triumvirate, since they afford no one else this luxury.

LOCATIONS

The following places can be found in and around the City-State of Karros.

THE GOLEM GATES

There are three main gates that allow traffic to enter and exit the city, one for each of the main roads, and they're each named for the next city the road leads to. The Jaloppin Gate faces northwest, the Waystation Gate sits to the northeast, and the T7-42 Gate looks to the south.

The gates were each original constructed from foot-thick sheets of reinforced steel, but over the centuries, the engi-

neers have improved the city's defenses by lining the gates with the bits of broken golems that could not be fully repaired. These partial creatures now keep eternal watch over the city's main entrances, and they howl an alarm any time a stranger approaches.

THE RIVER GRATES

There are three wide grates that seal off the breaks in the Fanged Wall through which water flows, and they sit where the Karrosa and Tasmestra Rivers enter into the city and where the now-joined rivers continue as the Tasmestra out of the city. Karros uses the river grates as toll gates, and only those who pay the steep fees are permitted passage up or down the river. While the gates themselves stand impressively tall and are constructed out of the finest steel, the weaponry trained on them at all times intimidates most visitors even more.

THE BEAUTIFUL BAZAAR

The main square in the city sits not too far from the river's docks, and it teems with merchants and traders of all kinds peddling their goods and services. Each business is contained inside a single ten-by-ten-foot building that stands alone, separated from its neighbors by an aisle only five feet wide. Some of the most successful merchants in the city have taken over several adjacent buildings and conglomerated them into a larger place, but no structure stands over a single story tall. The concatenated aisles form a massive maze that only locals have any prayer of navigating easily, and during the busiest times of the day, all traffic grinds to an agonizing shuffle of people wandering through on their various errands.

THE SKYMOOR

Aerial traffic over Karros is not allowed without the Triumvirate's explicit permission. Anything that wishes to fly into the city must check in at the Skymoor, a lofty platform atop a tower that stabs out of the western end of the Fanged Wall. Most visitors by air simply park their conveyances here for the duration of their time in Karros rather than risk being shot out of the air if they fail to comply with the Triumvirate's orders.

THE FESTIVAL GROUNDS

Just outside the Fanged Wall lies a stretch of flat and open grass that extends for a quarter mile past the T7-42 Gate, and it's here the citizens of Karros hold their solstice celebrations. This involves sports and contests of all kinds during the day, accompanied by concerts, dances, plays, feasts, and legendary drinking challenges every night. It's the one time of year most of the people of Karros set foot outside the city, if only to find a short respite from the presence of the golems, which remain in the city proper.



THE HOLLOWS

This natural formation sits to the south of Karros, in the foothills of the mountains known as the Follies. It consists of a number of open-topped domes that are not only hollow on the inside, but stand on top of large, deep caverns that seem to fall away forever. They formed when rapidly-cooling lava flowed over massive air pockets, which created the open shafts as they burgeoned to the surface from deep below.

The Hollows gave the early people of Karros easy access to rare and precious gems, minerals, and metals they could extract without having to cut mines deep into the earth on their own. They have long since been played out, and word is they now only serve as homes to terrible monsters of all kinds, including a particularly territorial dragon who makes her home in one of the Hollows.

THE CITY-STATE OF VORAKIS

It is said that the ancient saurian empire had mighty cities in the Broken Spire Mountains, but they were shattered in the Cataclysm and consumed by the Rift. Only scattered ruins remain...ruins and massive deposits of fulgin. Miners and prospectors flock to the Broken Spires in search of precious ore, while adventurers seek the treasures left in buried halls. No matter their purpose or destination, everyone passes through the gateway to the Spires: the city of Vorakis.

Vorakis was born in the early days of the Chaos Wars, when a collection of engineers, rebel mages, and refugees realized that the ancient ruins could be easily fortified. The city was built to defy the Prophet Dhawan, and from the start its founders wove science and magic together to create an unbreakable fortress. Vorakis is carved into the base of a mountain. Its great gate is lined with warding glyphs and flanked by massive blasters. Light, air, and food are provided by a blend of magic and technology; globes of cold fire are flanked by fulgin lanterns, and the deep thrum of air reclamation systems blends with the tingle of preservation spells. Though the Chaos Wars are long over, Vorakis has never lowered its guard. The stone halls are patrolled by cyborg warriors and grim mages in ornate robes. The city has never fallen to an outside threat.

The one thing visitors note about Vorakis is the presence of busts of the Lady everywhere. In fact, all of these statues have two visages, one showing a gentle, human woman, and the other a stern male dwarf. Periodically, the face of the Lady dissolves and the Lord replaces it. When the face of the Lady watches over the people, Vorakis is a peaceful place. The soldiers act only when they are needed. Children play in the streets and laughter and songs fill the air. Things change



when the Lord glares down from the statues. When the dwarf is watching, the cyborg guards are brutal and oppressive, and the mages interrogate those suspected of treachery. When the Lady reigns the grand plaza is a place for festivals; under the Lord it is a stage for executions.

Despite the strange duality of the city, Vorakis is a vital center for trade. It's a safe haven from the many dangers of the region, and filled with opportunities for adventurers and merchants alike. But those who visit Vorakis are wise to watch their step when the Lord's power is ascendant.

RULERSHIP

Vorakis is ruled by the mage Abin-Dula. In many stories, Abin-Dula is a fearsome tyrant. Handsome and vain, this dwarf lord is infamous for his excesses and his cruelty. Yet other stories depict Abin-Dula as a gentle matron characterized by compassion and devotion to the gods. In truth, Abin-Dula is all of these things: kindly priestess and ruthless tyrant, wizard and engineer. Long ago two mages merged their souls and powers into a single body to defeat a hated despot. Abin-Dula possesses the powers of both these mighty mages, but control and appearance of the shared body shifts unpredictably. Sometimes one personality is dominant for days or weeks, while at other times Abin-Dula shifts between sentences.

Abin-Dula's right arm and left eye have been replaced with cybernetic implants, and these persist regardless of the ruler's current form. *Lord* Abin-Dula is a tyrant feared by his subjects. He is paranoid, lecherous and cruel. However, he is a brilliant engineer and gifted military strategist, and his tactics and innovations have helped Vorakis triumph over many challenges. Conversely, *Lady* Abin-Dula is loved by her people. Compassionate, wise and devout, she does her best to improve the lives of everyone in Vorakis. The lesser leaders of the city are split into two camps, each poised to enact the will of their preferred ruler; the Lord's favorites slink into the shadows when the Lady governs, while the Lady's ministers do their best to avoid the cruel gaze of the Lord's followers when he's in control.

Two forces enforce Abin-Dula's rule. The Lord's Guard is a unit of heavily-armored cyborg soldiers, while the Twilight Eyes are an order of mages who specialize in scrying and divination. The Lady holds the Guard in check, but during the Lord's reign the cyborgs are free to be as brutal as they wish.

PEOPLE

Vorakis sees a steady influx of strangers. Prospectors and adventurers come seeking their fortunes in the depths. Merchants pass through the city exchanging exotic goods for fulgin batteries. Alongside the ebb and flow of travelers, the people of Vorakis are stoic and fatalistic. Dwarves form the bulk of the population, along with a human minority and a small saurian community. The central philosophy of Vorakis is simple: survive. Endure the hard times, and take your joy where you find it. Look after your own and do what you must to protect your family. Welcome a stranger when you can afford to...and sacrifice them when you have to.

When the Lady rules, the city shows its softer side. In these times, children play in the great halls, and travelers are welcomed to games of skill and chance, but when the Lord returns, the citizens pull back. There is no charity to be found in these times, and the Lord's Guard punishes any who break Lord Abin-Dula's ever-shifting rules. Despite this, the people of Vorakis are proud of both their rulers. Lord Abin-Dula may be cruel, but he has defeated every force that has threatened the city; he may be a monster, but he is *their* monster. Beyond that, there are those who thrive during the dictator's reign. All Vorakin have their preference when it comes to the ruler—but they are proud to be citizens of the city.

Of course, while Vorakis has never fallen to an outside foe, many leaders have been toppled from within. Abin-Dula removed a previous tyrant, and there are always schemes afoot in the city. To date, no conspiracy has been able to evade the Twilight Eyes and the Lord's Guard. But there's always a new plot brewing.

NOTABLE CITIZENS

Some notable citizens of Vorakis follow.

HORAN DANK

THE FULGIN KING

The Fulgin Works are the heart of Vorakis. If you're a prospector with ore to trade, or an adventurer in need of cheap batteries, Horan Dank is the dwarf you need to see. Over the decades, this old dwarf has carved out a reputation as a trustworthy trader; you can get lower prices dealing with ore-snakes in the Dregs, but when you deal with Dank you know you're getting the best. Aside from dealing in Fulgin, Horan Dank is always outfitting expeditions into the Broken Spires, and adventurers can often find work as guards or advance scouts.

LYRIA FENRIX

WEAPONSMITH & ARMS DEALER

The elf Lyria is the face of Fenrix Arms (see **Locations**, following) in Vorakis. A brilliant engineer and canny businesswoman, Lyria spends her time brokering deals and designing weapons. The family business has a massive appetite for fulgin, and this has cemented the strong alliance between Fenrix Holdings (a town to the southwest controlled by her extended family) and Vorakis. However, Lyria places the needs of her family and her work ahead of any loyalty to Abin-Dula, and may draw adventurers into schemes not fully sanctioned by the Lord or Lady of Vorakis.

HARROW

ENFORCER

Almost every organ in this dwarf's body has been replaced by cybernetics. He's a bloodhound for the Lord's Guard, spending his days hunting down criminals and bringing them to justice...and when the Lord is in power, "criminal" has a wide definition. He has no love of adventurers and enjoys bullying the weak. The one way to win Harrow's friendship is to face him in the Golden Pit (see **Locations**, following)...

and lose. If Harrow is defeated in battle, he won't rest until the insult has been avenged.

DUSK

ORACLE

Once Dusk was the spymaster for the Twilight Eyes. She disappeared years ago after a disagreement with Lord Abin-Dula, but rumors persist that she survived and lingers in the shadows of the city. Some say she is scheming to overthrow Abin-Dula; others claim she has a plan that will suppress the Lord and allow the Lady to reign alone. Whatever her ultimate goal, Dusk is a diviner and oracle with remarkable skill. She typically appears from the shadows with cryptic advice or a vital clue, only to disappear again; it's rarely clear how her aid advances her own agenda. Dusk's age and race remain a mystery. She never appears with the same face twice, and some believe that 'Dusk' is actually a cabal who have co-opted the real Dusk's identity to use as their own instead of an individual.

LOCATIONS

Vorakis is driven by two major industries: fulgin and food. The Fulgin Works are a web of refineries and factories that transform raw fulgin into the batteries that serve as the city-state's primary export. Those who don't work with fulgin typically labor in the Deep Fields, the mushroom farms and hydroponic vaults that sustain the population of Vorakis, along with breweries, reservoirs, and waste reclamation systems. Most of the structures in Vorakis are tied to fulgin or agriculture, but there are a number of other locations that may be of interest to adventurers.

THE GOLDEN PIT

The people of Vorakis love a good fight, and there's always a battle to be seen in the Golden Pit. Bloodsport of all kinds can be found here. Warriors fight exotic beasts. Mages face off in mystical duels. Teams of adventurers compete for glittering prizes. In the best of times, these battles are sporting events that rarely end in death. When the Lord is in power, the Pit serves as a place of trial and execution. Adventurers passing through Vorakis may choose to enter the Pit in search of fame and glory...or they may be forced into the Pit to fight for their lives.

FENRIX ARMS

The Fenrix family is the preeminent arms dealer in the Trimetra Basin. Fenrix is developing new weapons as well as scavenging the treasures of the past, and Fenrix Arms offers the finest selection of arms and armor money can buy. There are deadly tools here that can't be found anywhere else...



and if an adventurer finds an unusual weapon they don't want, this is the place to sell it.



DROSS HALL

While most of those who delve into the Broken Spires return with fulgin to sell, there are many wonders to be found in the ancient ruins that run the length of the mountain range...and an endless supply of rubbish. Dross Hall is the place to bring anything found in the depths. A flea market on a massive scale, it is filled with people hawking every conceivable sort of trinket from the Chaos War and before. There are a few wonders to be found, and the dwarf woman Sundry is the best merchant to help find them...but for the most part this hall is an enormous haystack with very few needles.

THE GLEANERS

This inn and tavern lies below Dross Hall, and it's a haven for the tunnel rats who comb the Broken Spires in search of treasures. It's an excellent place to find a guide or to hear the latest tales about monsters in the mines or newly discovered ruins, but strangers are advised to keep a close watch on valuables.

THE CRECHE

The Broken Spires are dangerous for miners and adventurers alike. The Creche is an orphanage founded by Lady Abin-Dula to care for the children of those who die below the Broken Spires. People headed for the Rift often leave their children with Father Stone at the Creche, just to be on the safe side.

THE TWILIGHT ACADEMY

The Vorakins place equal value on magic and science, and the Twilight Academy is where those with mystical talents can hone that spark. Traditionally students repay their tuition through service in the Twilight Eyes, but those with gold can pay their own way. The Academy is a wonderful resource for any wizard, with an exceptional library and fine workshops. Its provosts are more welcoming during the reign of the Lady, but its services can be useful to adventurers at any time.

VORAKIS DEEP

Vorakis is built on the foundations of ancient civilizations. The city-state is constantly expanding, but there are always new galleries and vaults that have yet to be fully explored. This urban frontier is a haven for opportunists and criminals. Should the gates of the city be sealed, renegade adventurers may find the Deeps to be the only way to escape the cruel justice of Lord Abin-Dul.



CHARACTERS AND EQUIPMENT

Since this is a science fantasy setting, there are some rules modifications and additions that must be applied to the *Fantasy AGE* rules to reflect the nature of Valkana. The key thing to understand about the setting is that the sci-fi and fantasy elements live side by side. There are flying machines, but you'll still find horses and wagons on the streets. There are blasters, but swords and axes are still vital weapons on the battlefield. This chapter shows you how to modify the *Fantasy AGE* rules to reflect this reality, provides you with some fun new options, and includes a selection of new equipment. Unless otherwise stated, assume everything in the *Fantasy AGE Basic Rulebook* is still valid.



PLAYING A SAURIAN

If you choose to play a saurian, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Strength ability.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Intelligence (Scientific Lore) or **WILLPOWER** (Self-Discipline).
- Your Speed is equal to 10 + Dexterity (minus armor penalty if applicable).
- You can speak and read Saurian and the Common Tongue.

Roll twice on the **Saurian Benefits** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

CHARACTER CREATION

The basic process of character creation remains the same. Valkana offers an additional player character race: saurians.

SAURIAN

The Saurians are a race of intelligent lizardfolk who ruled the greatest empire in ancient Valkana. They won a long and brutal war against the elves. Dwarves and orcs were their servitors, though the orcs ultimately rebelled against their enslavement. All of the saurians' accomplishments were brought to ruin when the Cataclysm came. Their cities tumbled down and their empire ceased to exist in one terrible night.

Since then the saurians have struggled along with all the other races. Many died in the Chaos Wars, but in the centuries since the saurians have surged back. They have produced many notable scientists and engineers, and some powerful mages as well. They live among the other races in the city-states of the Tasmetra Basin. While some long for the ancient glory of their people, most are content to live in an era of relative peace.

SAURIAN BENEFITS	
2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Willpower
3-4	Focus: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
5	Focus: INTELLIGENCE (HISTORICAL LORE)
6	Focus: INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)
7-8	+1 Intelligence
9	Focus: INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS)
10-11	Focus: STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)
12	+1 Constitution

SAURIAN NAMES

FEMALE NAMES: Breveth, Da'for, Hathaa, Ka'bith, Rethkk, Sselva, Ta'vess

MALE NAMES: Ba'thoss, Gaador, Greveth, Ka'voss, Krathor, Si'vek, Slevan

CLAN NAMES: Ambereye, Blackscale, Redclaw, Whitetail, Yellowtooth





LEGENDARY STUNTS

One rule that came out of the *Titansgrave* Tabletop series was Legendary stunts. You can use this in your Valkana campaign, and any other *Fantasy AGE* campaign if you like. If you roll three 6s when making a test, the maximum possible result on a roll of 3d6 and one that generates 6 stunt points, you not only succeed wildly at whatever you were trying to do, you also create a legend. This means that your action was so impressive that people talk about it for years to come. It might also give you an appropriate nickname by which you become known far and wide.

CLASS MODIFICATIONS

Modify the classes in a Valkana campaign as follows:

- Starting weapon groups for rogues are: Blaster Pistols, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves, and either Blaster Longarms or Bows.
- Starting weapon groups for warriors are: Brawling, plus any four of the following: Axes, Blaster Pistols, Blaster Longarms, Bludgeons, Bows, Heavy Blades, Light Blades, Spears, or Staves.
- Warriors add Blaster Weapon Style to their list of available starting talents.
- If you are a warrior, your starting armor is scout armor.
- All characters start with three Fulgin batteries.

NEW FOCUSES

The technology available in Valkana makes a few new focuses necessary.

BLASTER LONGARMS (ACCURACY): Proficiency with weapons of the Blaster Longarms Weapon Group.

BLASTER PISTOLS (ACCURACY): Proficiency with weapons of the Blaster Pistols Weapon Group.

ADVANCED DRIVING (DEXTERITY): Maneuvering more advanced vehicles, as opposed to the carts and wagons covered by the Strength focus Driving.

COMPUTERS (INTELLIGENCE): Knowing how to operate and program thinking machines.

PILOTING (DEXTERITY): Taking off, maneuvering, and landing flying machines.

SCIENTIFIC LORE (INTELLIGENCE): Knowing the scientific method and the latest facts and theories.

NEW TALENT

BLASTER WEAPON STYLE

CLASSES: Rogue and Warrior.

REQUIREMENT: You must be trained in the Blaster Longarms or Blaster Pistols Weapon Group.

Handling a blaster is second nature.

NOVICE: It's hard to get the drop on you. Once per round you can use a Ready action with a blaster as a free action.

TECHNOLOGY IN VALKANA

There is some impressively advanced technology in the world of Valkana, but much of it is rare and expensive. One big difference between Valkana and our own world is that there is no fossil fuel. Technological development has thus gone a different route: the use of batteries. These power most everyday technological devices. There are three basic types of batteries, in ascending order of strength: Fulgin M, Fulgent, and Carsilorate.

Valkana does have computers, but there is nothing like the Internet. As mentioned in **CHAPTER 1: VALKANA**, the Prophet Dhawan unleashed something called the Data Plague during the Chaos Wars that crippled the economies of many city-states. Since that time no one has dared to create such networks. It is simply too dangerous. This is also why a formerly advanced monetary system reverted to the use of coins. Such currency may be primitive but it is not corruptible.

JOURNEYMAN: Enemies that get close to you regret it. When shooting at a target at short range, you inflict +1 damage.

MASTER: You can get the most out of each shot. When shooting a blaster, you can perform the Dual Strike stunt for 3 stunt points instead of the usual 4.

EQUIPMENT

All of the equipment in the *Fantasy AGE Basic Rulebook* is available, except for black powder weapons (which were not invented in Valkana). The equipment may be made from more advanced materials, but functionally it is the same. The rest of this chapter has additional equipment specific to this campaign setting.

BATTERIES

FULGIN M: This is the most common type of battery and is available all over Valkana. It is made from a metal, Fulgin, found in quantity in the Rift and mountainous regions. A Fulgin M battery holds 10 charges.

FULGENT: Fulgent is made by chemically processing Fulgin. The methods of its creation are public knowledge, but the chemicals utilized are dangerous and regulated. A Fulgent battery holds 20 charges.

CARSILORATE: Found deep underground, Carsilorate is a dense liquid that becomes superconductive when heated to a specific temperature. Because the liquid requires inordinate



BATTERIES

GEAR	COST
Fulgin M	5 sp
Fulgent	15 sp
Carsilorate	75 sp

ARMOR

ARMOR	ARMOR RATING	ARMOR PENALTY	COST
Scout Armor	4	0	40 sp
Light Battle Armor	6	-2	75 sp
Heavy Battle Armor	8	-3	130 sp

NEW WEAPONS

WEAPON	DAMAGE	MIN. STR	COST
Power Weapon	As base weapon +2	As base weapon	Base weapon cost + 60 sp

Blaster Pistols (Accuracy)

Holdout Blaster	Pistol	1d6	30 sp
Light Blaster Pistol	1d6+2	-	35 sp
Heavy Blaster Pistol	2d6	0	40 sp

Blasters Longarms (Accuracy)

Blaster Sweeper	2d6	0	60 sp
Blaster Carbine	2d6+2	0	50 sp
Blaster Rifle	3d6	1	75 sp

technological resources to process and stabilize, Carsilorate is only distributed in small quantities. These batteries are rarely available for sale and they are expensive when found. A Carsilorate battery holds 50 charges.

ARMOR

SCOUT ARMOR: A mix of synthetic material and tough leather, scout armor provides good protection and unrivaled mobility. The novice degree of Armor Training includes scout armor.

LIGHT BATTLE ARMOR: This armor is made from thin sheets of Dracolan, composite material that is highly shock resistant. The novice degree of Armor Training includes light battle armor.

HEAVY BATTLE ARMOR: A full suit of Dracolan armor, designed for warriors and used in armies throughout Valkana. The journeyman degree of Armor Training includes heavy battle armor.

WEAPONS

There are two primary types of energy weapons in Valkana: blasters and power weapons. Blasters are projectile weapons that shoot focused beams of energy. Power weapons are melee weapons that can be sheathed in energy for short periods of time. All of these weapons are battery powered.

BLASTER WEAPON RANGES

WEAPON	SHORT RANGE	LONG RANGE	RELOAD*
Blaster Carbine	24	48	Free
Blaster Rifles	30	60	Free
Blaster Sweeper	6	-	Free
Heavy Blaster Pistol	12	24	Free
Holdout Blaster Pistol	8	16	Free
Light Blaster Pistol	10	20	Free

*Reloading blaster weapons is a free action as long as the battery has charges left. Swapping in a fresh battery is a major action.

NEW EQUIPMENT

GEAR	COST	GEAR	COST
Binoculars	35 sp	Flashlight	15 sp
Calcualtor	20 sp	Handset	30 sp
Cybernetic Eyes	120 sp	Lamp	30 sp
Cybernetic Limb	200 sp	Lockbreak	25 sp
Data Disk	30 sp	Matches (40)	1 sp
Data Reader	75 sp	Night Vision Mask	60 sp
Extending Pole	20 sp	Watch	10 sp
Flare	30 sp		

BLASTER PISTOLS GROUP

HOLDOUT BLASTER PISTOL: This is a small, easily concealable blaster pistol that is often kept in an ankle holster or in the small of the back for use in desperate situations. It requires one hand to use and a single shot burns up 1 battery charge.

LIGHT BLASTER PISTOL: The most common type of blaster pistol. It requires one hand to use and a single shot burns up 1 battery charge.

HEAVY BLASTER PISTOL: The largest and most obvious of the blaster pistols. It requires one hand to use and a single shot burns up 1 battery charge.

BLASTER LONGARMS GROUP

BLASTER CARBINE: A lighter version of the blaster rifle. It requires two hands to use and a single shot burns up 1 battery charge.

BLASTER RIFLE: This is a military weapon that fires a powerful blast of energy. It requires two hands to use and a single shot burns up 1 battery charge.

BLASTER SWEEPER: This short-barreled weapon shoots a wide beam of energy out a short distance, potentially damaging several opponents. The blast is 6 yards long and 2 yards wide. You make one attack roll when firing a blaster sweeper and compare it to the Defense of each target in the blast area. Stunts affect targets individually. A Mighty Blow, for example, would apply to one target of your choice, not all targets in the blast. You cannot use Lightning Attack with a blaster sweeper, but you can Dual Strike. It requires two hands to use and a single shot burns up 2 battery charges.



POWER WEAPON: These weapons can use battery power to sheath the damaging part of itself in energy, which makes them more potent in melee. Turning on a power weapon is a free action and it costs 1 battery charge to power one for 1 minute (or part thereof). Any melee weapons except fists and improvised weapons can be made into power weapons. They deal their normal damage +2.

NEW EQUIPMENT

BINOCULARS: These magnify the user's vision, though they also restrict field of vision.

CALCULATOR: A handheld terminal used to calculate numbers. The device has a small built-in memory drive that can store a reference list of up to 40 pre-programmed formulas. One charge powers a calculator for six hours.

CYBERNETIC EYES: These rare devices can restore or enhance sight. They provide perfect vision and Dark Sight out to 20 yards.

CYBERNETIC LIMB: These prosthetics are becoming more common in Valkana, though they are expensive. They restore normal functionality to missing limbs. In addition, unarmed attacks using a cybernetic limb do 1d6 damage instead of the normal 1d3. A weapon can be housed in a cybernetic arm if desired, and it can be readied as a free action. This cost double the weapon's normal cost, plus the cost of the cybernetic arm.

DATA DISK: A small, rectangular piece of metallic sheeting emblazoned with circuitry and arcane symbols. Used specifically by a data reader, the data disk acts as a page beneath a pen, condensing large amounts of text information into a small, portable space.

DATA READER: This is a simple device with a small screen that displays the contents of data disks. A detachable stylus

allows new text to be added as well. One charge powers a data reader for three hours.

EXTENDING POLE: A metal auto-locking extender pole. It's 1 foot long when collapsed and can extend out to 10 feet.

FLARE: A pistol with a single, bulbous round. When shot, the round burns a bright red, visible from miles around. It used for both illumination and signaling.

FLASHLIGHT: A battery-powered, handheld illumination device. A convex glass cover is fitted over a small metal filament, which is attached to a terminal powered by the battery. One charge powers a flashlight for three hours.

HANDSET: A ranged, dedicated communication device with a range of two miles. This small box allows communication between two individuals with the press of a button. The clarity of connection may be changed by distance, physical obstructions, and weather. One charge powers a handset for one hour.

LAMP: This device casts a wide illuminating beam of light much wider than a flashlight is capable of producing. One charge powers a lamp for one hour.

LOCKBREAK: An intensely oscillating length of stiff wire that strips the delicate inner workings of locking mechanisms. It gives the user a +3 bonus on a single Dexterity (Lock Picking) test to open a mechanical lock. It burns three battery charges every time it's used.

MATCHES (40): Small, softwood twigs with alchemically coated tips that ignite with friction.

NIGHT VISION MASK: A heavy, clunky, metal mask that covers its users eyes and grants Dark Sight out to 30 yards. However, the user is also intensely sensitive to light, suffering -2 to attack rolls and Perception (Seeing) tests the round after exposure to such.

WATCH: A time-keeping device magically linked to the position and movement of the sun and moon through a central hub. One charge powers a watch for a week.



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Titansgrave: The Ashes of Valkana is an unusual adventure. Before many gamers will get a chance to play it, they'll have watched the show and seen how another group experienced the story. There are two important things to remember about *Titansgrave*, however. First, the show is edited down from four days of play time. Not only are there encounters that were played, but not shown, there are encounters designed for this book that were never played by Wil and company. There is, in other words, a fair amount of content that will be fresh for players even if they watched every episode of *Titansgrave*. The second thing to remember is that this is your story now. As the Game Master, you can change and modify things as you like, expanding or contracting the story as you see fit. The way it went on the show is not the way it has to be around your game table. Players being players, odds are your results will be quite different!

THIS IS YOUR STORY!

To help you make *Titansgrave* your own, we have provided points of customization within the adventure. These are called out in the text and you'll have to decide which option works best for your campaign. The most important way make the adventure special for your group is to make their player characters the center of this story. If you watch the show, you'll note that Wil teases a lot of information out of the players about their characters in the early episodes. He then uses that that information to customize the adventure, which allows for both story and character development. There are things that happen in the show—the vision sequence after the characters go through the portal being the biggest example—that were not in the adventure as written at all. They were created for Laura, Alison, Hank, and Yuri because of the character backgrounds and choices they had made. You should give your players that same attention. If you can make them feel that this adventure is fundamentally the story of their characters, you are doing it right.

3



GETTING STARTED

The PCs should start the campaign at 2nd level, under the assumption that they've been adventuring as a group for the time it took them to get to the border of Nestora. Use most of the first session to set up background details for the following chapters, and help the players become fans of their characters and the world.

To do that, summarize the PCs' escapades from 1st to 2nd level in a montage of sorts, ask the players some leading questions and pick out important highlights to establish some hooks. Throughout the following chapters are opportunities to bring these details back into play, which help to personalize the campaign.

Some of the questions presented in the following section are essential, because their answers provide key pieces of information you can use later. The other questions are optional, and we recommend you base the number of these additional questions on the number of players you have. If you have six or more players, ask all the optional questions that follow the essential questions below. If you have three players, ask the essential questions and three or four of the optional ones. For any number in between, ask enough optional questions to make sure every character gets some spotlight time, probably four or five of the optional questions.

The essential questions shouldn't *seem* essential; mix them in with optional questions so the players don't know which ones they are, but you should keep track because the answers to those questions are important for later in the adventure.

Encourage the players to help each other answer the questions and overcome any mental blocks that come up. Spread the focus around, and make sure everyone gets a chance to answer a question for their character. The whole conversation should be very collaborative and loose, with you pushing them to create material they're enthusiastic about.

We recommend that you have the players make level 1 characters to start. When their 1st-level characters are finished, start asking the questions you've selected and create a montage of their activities based on their answers (and make sure you take notes). Once everyone has a good idea of what they did in the early days of their adventuring careers, then have them advance their characters to 2nd level. This allows them to reflect story elements in their character choices if they like.



THERE ARE NO CONTRADICTIONS

Some of the answers you get may seem to contradict information given in future chapters. For example, one of the players might say, “My relationship with the Chaos Wars is that everyone thinks I’m descended from one of the great heroes of old, but that’s all a lie. My parents just pretend to be descendants for the status bump.” Suddenly, the reveal of the PCs bloodlines seems ruined.

If this happens, don’t panic! You don’t want to censor the players’ answers, because the fun is in seeing their suggestions come to life in the adventure. Instead, rely on a principle from improvisational theatre: *anything that seems like a contradiction is just another mystery waiting to be solved.*

All you have to do is find the reason why the supposed contradiction isn’t one. Maybe the PC is missing some information that explains the mystery and just has to find it. Maybe they were lied to or tricked, and their inaccurate perception of events is working to an enemy’s advantage. Maybe there’s some strange, ancient magic involved. You have several chapters to figure things out, so don’t sweat it.

Once you have the reason, just wait. Don’t try to explain the contradiction before the PCs uncover it. Let the players think they’ve caught you, then nod and say, “Huh. That *is* weird. Wonder what’s going on with that?”

Then, smile wickedly.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

These are the question you should be sure to ask your players. Their answers will help you connect their characters to the story more tightly.

- One of you has an unusual relationship with or connection to the history of the Chaos Wars. Which of you is it, what is that relationship, and how does it impact your life?
- One of you seeks an artifact, from the ancient or recent past. Which of you is it, what is the artifact, and what is its significance to you?
- Recently, one of you got away with a crime you didn’t think you’d be able to commit. What was the crime, and who was the victim? Did they deserve it?
- What was your first major victory as an adventuring group? Who contributed the most? Now, who *really* contributed the most, and why is the first person getting the credit?
- Once, early in your careers, all of you nearly died but narrowly escaped. What happened? Whose fault was it? Now, whose fault was it *really*, and why did the other person get blamed? Which of you still holds a grudge about that, and how serious is it?
- At some point, one of you gained a dedicated rival as a result of your deeds. Name the rival, and say what you did to earn their competition. How far will the rival go to inconvenience you?
- One of you knows something about another member of the party that they themselves do not know, and that no one else knows. Which of you is it, what do you know, and about whom? (You might need to work this out privately, away from the other players.)
- One of you was forced to choose between your adventuring career and a relationship. This doesn’t have to be romantic in nature, but it could be. Which of you is it, who is the person or people you were forced to reject, and what were the consequences of that act?

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

Select some of these questions to ask your players (as indicated above) and mix them in with the essential questions from the preceding section. These questions help define the characters and build stronger connections between the players and their characters.

- One of you has an unresolved mystery from your past, which spurred you on the adventurer’s path. Which of you is it, and what is the mystery?
- One time, one of you saved the party from serious trouble as a result of your perceptiveness and acumen. Which of you was it, and what was about to go wrong? Is anyone still mad that you avoided the danger?
- One of you became an adventurer in order to settle a debt. Which of you is it, to whom do you owe that debt, and why?

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The adventure begins with the party arriving at the Pegasus Roadhouse, a magnificent structure just inside the border of Nestora, at a major intersection of trade roads. They are searching for a sage to help them identify a strange magical item they found a few weeks ago, and are following a lead from Gurlock, called the Beer Baron, a celebrity, whom they had the chance to meet at the end of a prior adventure.

The establishment proves to be the equal of Gurlock’s claims and then some, plus the party discovers they have arrived at a particularly lucky moment: Gurlock is on the final leg of his trade run and is going to arrive at the Pegasus soon with several barrels of his finest ale, at which point a raucous celebration with ensue. This is a beloved local tradition, and the festivities are already well underway.

The party has the opportunity to participate in a storytelling game popular across Valkana, where they insert themselves into a legend from the Chaos Wars, filling in the details with



tales of their own adventures. Of course, the locals are eager to hear from travelers, and the party's contribution draws a great deal of attention.

Just as the locals are about to toast the PCs and serve them copious free drinks, the door bursts open, and a mechanical wonder staggers through the door. It's a motorized, animate, talking beer keg, with arms, legs, and a stumpy head. It identifies itself as Keg-E and delivers terrible news: Gurlock's caravan is under attack by bandits!

The party (and potentially several bar patrons) follows Keg-E to the caravan and finds it trapped behind a makeshift roadblock. The caravan guards are losing to the bandit onslaught, and the PCs must protect both Gurlock and his caravan from being overrun. Once they've dealt with the bandits, a grateful Gurlock accompanies them back to the Pegasus, where they finish out the evening's festivities.

PROLOGUE

Once you've established enough background to make things interesting, read or paraphrase the following:

You've had many adventures over the course of the past few months, and overall things are looking pretty good for you. The job in Malrath Village a couple of weeks ago turned out to be a cakewalk, though they did genuinely need the help – who would have thought that a cyborg janitor would put people on its list of things to clean?

It also produced a treasure of unusual provenance: a magical sphere, perfectly smooth except for traces of strange, spiraling symbols engraved on its surface. No one in Malrath could identify it, so you still don't know what it is.

The locals made up for this small disappointment by throwing an incredible party in your honor, and you had the chance to meet someone who loves his job almost as much as you do. Gurlock, AKA Uncle Beer, AKA The Beer Baron, AKA a bunch of other colorful nicknames you no longer recall, immediately unloaded a cask of Gurlock's Brown Special Reserve when he found out you were local heroes, and gifted it to the tavern. You must have been partying with Gurlock for six or seven hours that night, sampling his entire brewtastic catalog. Fun times!

He mentioned at one point that he was from the city-state of Nestora, and he recommended a fine establishment if you should happen to be traveling that way: the Pegasus Roadhouse, pride and joy of the Nestoran Commerce Nexus. He bade you tell Winifred, the bar manager, that Gurlock sent you, and she would "hook you up," whatever that means. (Probably more beer.)

He also recommended a sage in Nestora who specializes in odd magical gadgets, named Farkaya, in case the sphere was still a mystery when you got there.

In fact, it is. You've asked dozens of learned folk across various towns about it and turned up empty. Farkaya now seems like your best hope of figuring out what the magical sphere is.

This evening, as you cross into the holdings of Nestora along the Fantangle Trade Road, you see the single bronzed spike that identifies the Pegasus pointing skyward, torchlight reflecting on the polished surface, a beacon to the weary.

You remember Gurlock's recommendation, and the promise of free beer, and thus, you head that way.

ENVIRONS

THE PEGASUS ROADHOUSE

The Pegasus has been, since time immemorial, a place of community and hospitality. According to local legend, the three-story building has stood since before the Chaos Wars, and it has always been used as a tavern, restaurant, or gathering place. Ancient magics still hold after centuries, powering the devices that make it ideal for this purpose: coldboxes where food can be stored almost indefinitely, elemental plates for heating and cooking without the need for flame, and ritual basins that enchant water for the deepest of cleaning.

While the mystery of how all this works is unknown, each proprietor of the Pegasus has handed down the keywords and incantations for the machinery to their successor. Nestoran scientists attribute these wonders in part to an enchantment laid on the giant bronze spike angling from the building's roof, which seems to take in energy from the sun and supply it to the devices.

The variety of civilizations that have inhabited the Pegasus lend it an eclectic décor. Each proprietor has added something of their culture to the place, but has also honored a tradition of conservation, which makes the Roadhouse home to an immense collection of historical relics and pieces of the past.

The current proprietor of the Pegasus is Winifred Theonus, a Nestoran noble who abandoned the family legacy to become a tavern keep. She runs the place with help from her husband, Tain.

SCENE 1

FROM ONE PARTY TO ANOTHER

Roleplaying Encounter

When the PCs enter the tavern, read the following aloud:

Upon entering, you discover that a celebration is already underway. The center of the Pegasus' main hall has been cleared to make room for a dance floor, and a band of musicians plays to an eager crowd. Along the walls, serving tables contain a variety of delicacies – spiced meats, stews, breads, local produce – all for the taking. Servers rush to refill food items that have run out. At the bar, a squat, muscular man doles out tankards of ale for all comers, racing between a row of twenty tapped barrels encased in a metal frame. The barrels are stamped with the markers of all the most famous breweries in the world, though a quarter of them appear reserved for Gurlock's beers.

If the PCs ask for Winifred, it takes some time, but eventually she appears and greets them, catching her breath from recent labor. She welcomes them to the Pegasus and introduces herself, and before they even mention Gurlock, suggests that they load up on food if they're hungry and see her husband Tain behind the bar if they need brews. She



RANDOM TAVERN FUN

If you and the players are enjoying this opening sequence, feel free to linger and let the PCs enjoy this sumptuous gathering. You have an opportunity here for some fun roleplaying. Here are some ideas to guide you when you're making up material for this scene:

- The locals are exceedingly proud of the Pegasus' history and their status as Gurlock's "home tavern," and don't mind telling about it.
- People don't waste food and drink here. They unabashedly want to know if the PCs are going to finish their cups and plates.
- Scholars come to study the relics all the time, and some might be here cursing their ill-fortuned timing.
- The happy crowd makes for easy pickpocketing targets. If the PCs aren't feeling larcenous, someone else in the crowd might be.
- Locals like to gamble and play other games of skill, and Winifred is very permissive about letting them, but her patience for cheating is very thin.
- The minstrels are always happy to accommodate skilled performers if a PC wants to show off.

especially recommends Gurlock's taps: the Brown Special Reserve, the Warrior Stout, the Iron Ale, the Sunshine Lager, and the Toasted Wheat.

Everything's on the house today, on account of it being a holiday of sorts: Gurlock himself is scheduled to arrive later in the evening, with a delivery of a very rare small batch brew—the Old Chaotic Neutral. Supposedly derived from a formula discovered in an ancient treasure trove, he has only ever served it at the Pegasus, marking the final stop on his caravan's trade run. On the night of his arrival, Gurlock takes care of the entire bar tab for all patrons, all evening, asking only that everyone enjoy a grand feast in exchange.

All this said, Winifred encourages the PCs to make merry and hustles back to work.

The PCs have the chance to carouse and engage the party as much or as little as they want. Depending on how much you and your group like to ham it up, you might spend a bit of time here, or you might move straight to **Scene 2: Battle of the Boasts** after some light description.

If the PCs talk to Tain at the bar, he parrots his wife's recommendation of Gurlock's brews, but also proudly expounds on the history of the roadhouse and the surroundings. Feel free to drop any commonly known information about Nestora here from the setting material and use Tain as a mouthpiece to get them familiar with the world.

If the PCs ask about the sage, Farkaya, the locals know that she lives in the city proper, and they consider her knowledgeable, but grumpy—there's no chance she'd attend a party like this one.



SCENE 2

BATTLE OF THE BOASTS

Roleplaying Encounter

At some point during the evening, the minstrels interrupt the proceedings and call for everyone's attention. Their leader, a woman named Phaera, has an announcement to make.

The crowd hushes, and a reedy, lanky elf wreathed in tattoos and multicolored silks takes the stage. She holds up her hands, as if to make a declaration of great import.

"As part of the night's entertainment, we offer you a chance to aid us in the spinning of a grand tale: the legend of Lady Vadja and the Warlord!"

Everyone bursts into cheers, but she waves her hands urgently, bringing their exultation down to a low series of murmurs.

"I have heard tell that on this night, we are graced with friends of our beloved Beer Baron. Is that so?"

The crowd parts as if by magic, forming a clear line of sight between you and the minstrel. She flashes you a smile that's equal parts warm and playful.

"Travelers, we have told the legend many times at the Pegasus, and seen the same would-be storytellers time and time again. Tonight, would you grace us with something new?"

All eyes turn to you. The air crackles with anticipation.

This is an invitation to participate in a widely known storytelling game that is common across Valkana. Usually, the professional entertainers retell various legends from the Chaos Wars, but then leave a space for members of the audience to insert themselves in the tale and spin the events in

a relatable, contemporary way. This particular version, the legend of Lady Vadja, requires the participants to boast about their achievements in the most grandiose way possible. The audience judges the best tale with a vote of applause.

The PCs may participate as a group or individually, and may even compete against each other.

The event begins on a current of low drumbeats and flutes. One of the minstrels stands with his arms crossed, playing the part of the Warlord. Phaera enters from stage right, approaches the man, and gives him a deep bow.

"My Lord," she intones, "We bid you join us in the most worthy of aims: the destruction of the Prophet Dhawan, whose evil has blanketed the world in terror!"

As demanded by the ritual, the crowd boos and jeers at the mention of the Prophet's name.

The "Warlord" frowns, shaking his head. "The Prophet wreaks no havoc on my lands. And she has survived the weight of all nations pressing at her door. What makes you believe that you will triumph against her, when all others have failed?"

Phaera gives a look of mock surprise. "Do you not know me, my Lord? I am the Lady Vadja, the only being fit to wield the Fellhammer, anointed heir to the crown of Zotara!" She paces a circle around him as she speaks. "It was I who prevented the siege of Locklorn Woods. It was I who returned the Scrolls of Portent to the Temple of the Golden Serpent and prevented untold calamity."

The crowd hollers their support. She waits for them to quiet down.

"And," she says, "I am but one of many companions, whose legends speak boldly as mine. I shall present them, and you shall be the judge."

She sweeps her hand out, inviting the volunteers. "My first companion, come forward, and tell the Warlord of your brightest deeds."



Ideally, the story the PCs should tell is the victory mentioned in the background questions. If the players choose that story, get them to flesh out the details, and ask them if they tell the story as it happened or if they embellish it even further for the sake of showmanship. If they want to compete against each other, each participant must tell a different story. If they don't, some of the other villagers step up, but don't dwell on their stories unless you had an NPC encounter of particular interest last scene.

The crowd isn't hard to win over: succeeding at a **TN 9 COMMUNICATION (PERFORMANCE) test** elicits whatever reactions the PCs desire. If you want to call for a few tests in order to make for a longer scene, feel free. They'll win the competition either way, because they're newcomers and the locals are happy to hear some new stories and want them to feel welcome, but if they do poorly on the tests, suggest that it's obvious the crowd is taking pity on them. If the players want to know which of them did the best, you can determine that with degrees of success on the test. The character with the highest result on the Dragon Die on a successful test wins.

Once everyone has gone, the "Warlord" declares, "Very well! If anyone can prevail against the Prophet, it must certainly be you and your compatriots. I shall join my might with yours, Lady Vadja."

They bow to each other, and the tavern erupts into cheers.

INTERRUPTION

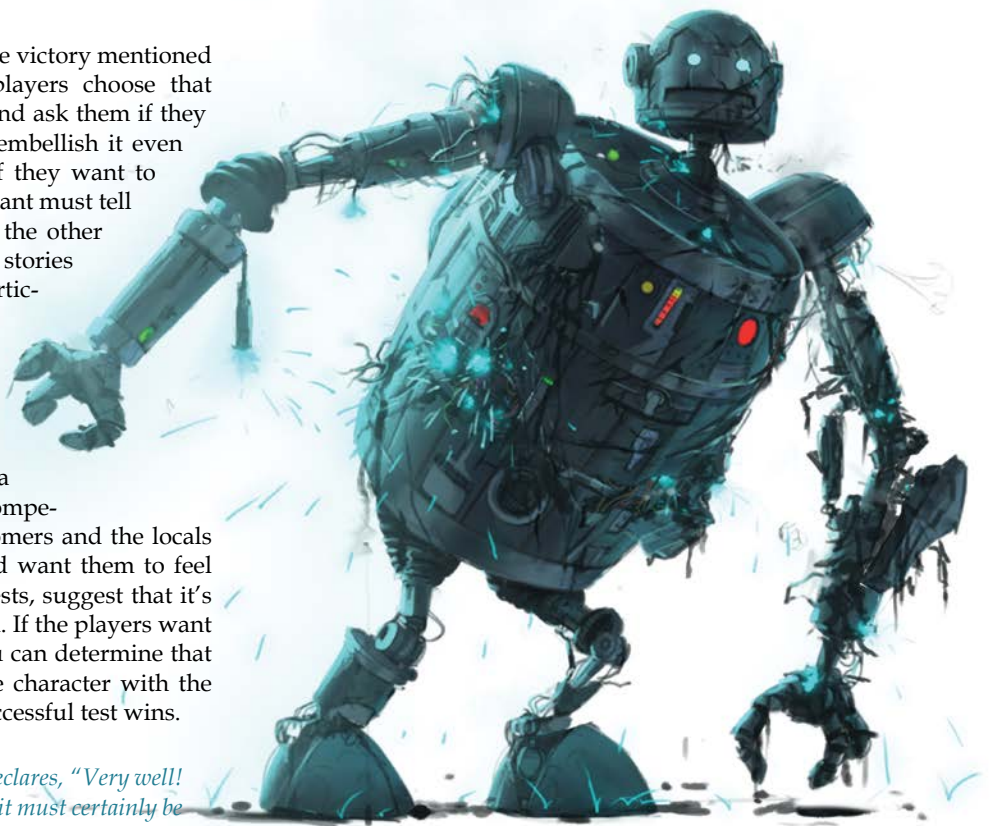
Just as the revelers begin to push more beers into the PCs' hands, the door bursts open with a thud. In the doorway stands a metal beer keg, much like the ones behind the bar, but with an important difference—this one has mechanical arms, legs, and a stumpy head, and is clearly an animate being. Any character with the **INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** focus can tell that the keg-robot is in bad shape. Steam leaks from its powerplant and electricity traces its circuits when it bumps into things or tries to move.

The keg-robot is Keg-E, and one of the secrets of Gurlock's success. The robot maintains the technology that keeps Gurlock's caravan in working order and is the only one who knows how to repair it.

Everyone at the Pegasus knows Keg-E already and reacts exactly as they would if an injured person walked through the door.

Keg-E explains that the nefarious White Hawk bandit gang blocked the road that Gurlock's caravan was on, at a place called Durlain's Pass, and attacked. Gurlock and the caravan guards are currently locked in a pitched battle with the bandits, and Keg-E barely managed to escape with its life intact, determined to go find help.

Even worse, the bandits seem to not even know the value of what they're attacking. Keg-E relates in horror that they're heedless of the damage they're doing to the caravan itself, and it is worried that the caravan might be damaged beyond its ability to fix if things get much worse.



It pleads for help. Of course, the locals encourage the PCs to come to Gurlock's aid, and Winifred volunteers to show them the way to the Pass. If they need any further motivation besides saving the party and earning the locals' undying gratitude, Winifred could offer a reward, free beer for life, or anything that's within her reach. Several of the locals are also willing to aid in the fight, if the PCs are worried about numbers.

If a PC wants to try fixing Keg-E, it'll take a **TN 15 CUNNING (ENGINEERING) test**. Doing so allows Keg-E to accompany them as well; otherwise, Tain insists that Keg-E stays at the Pegasus. If Keg-E is with the PCs, it makes some obstacles in the next scene easier.

SCENE 3

SAVE THE BEER!

Combat Encounter

Durlain's Pass is a winding road that cuts through the hills on Nestora's western border, and was the site of a famous battle from the Chaos Wars. Normally, it serves as a main thoroughfare for wagon and cart traffic to and from the city-state.

After only a few minutes spent following their guide, the party arrives at the site of the attack, they see a large pile of rocks on the road. It looks like the bandits used explosives to cause the roadblock. Give the PCs a lot of leeway when choosing their angle of approach and reward clever planning with the element of surprise. There is no chance that the bandits will spot them, as they are committed to the battle with Gurlock and his guards, who are still holding out...just barely.



GURLOCK'S WONDROUS CARAVAN

Gurlock's caravan is a magical artifact in its own right, a relic from the height of a civilization past. Several large interconnected power plants levitate six interlinked platforms off the ground, all connected to a raised platform at the front for the driver and a passenger. Whoever is seated in the driver's seat moves the caravan with their thoughts, willing it to speed up or slow down in response to what they see ahead. It can move at around the same speed as an ox-drawn wagon, but suffers no penalties due to rough terrain.

The platforms themselves contain climate-controlled compartments of various sizes, allowing them to be used as a transport for foodstuffs, livestock, or even passengers. Gurlock has since modified it to keep all of his beers at the exactly correct temperature, as proof against spoilage and to ensure that they can be consumed immediately upon delivery.

Once they approach the battle site, they find that things are a mess—two of the six linked platforms that form the caravan have been knocked over, kegs and other contents scattered unceremoniously in the road. The platforms themselves look a lot like Keg-E did in the previous scene, billowing smoke and throwing arcs of electricity around. Bodies of bandits and caravan guards alike litter the pass. Gurlock is down to just himself and two of his henchmen; the party's arrival saves them from certain defeat.

If the bar patrons accompanied the PCs, there might be quite a few combatants in this scene. Keep the spotlight on the PCs while you describe their companions fighting desperately in the background, and use them for environmental details only.

The bandits have no regard for whether or not the caravan survives the fight intact. Because this is the first fight of the adventure, the object is not to make it too tough, and the real tension here is figuring out how badly damaged the caravan is by the end.

During the scene, any fighting in or around the caravan has a chance to damage the caravan itself. This can happen in two ways while the fighting is raging around the caravan:

- When the bandits attack, they can use a special 3 SP stunt to damage the caravan, hoping if they damage the equipment enough it might explode and take some of the opposition with it.
- When a PC attacks a bandit and misses or fails a casting roll with an attack spell, the caravan is damaged if any of the dice rolled were doubles.

These don't apply if the PCs manage to force the combatants back up the hill or back down the pass; again, reward clever planning with the ability to keep the caravan out of danger.

- *If the caravan is damaged five times or fewer during the scene, the caravan is repairable given enough time and elbow grease.*
- *If it is damaged more than five times, it is wrecked beyond repair, and Gurlock's professional life is altered forever. Additionally, that sixth instance of damage ruptures something in one of the magical power plants, causing an explosion and forcing any characters within 4 yards the caravan to make a successful **TN 12 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test or suffer **2d6 damage**. No damage for characters who succeed.*

ADVERSARIES

The PCs are fighting members of the White Hawk bandits. Describe roughly 2 to 1 odds depending on how many people you have in the scene on the PCs' side. But, don't actually worry about any bandits who aren't fighting the PCs, and end the fight after enough bandits have been defeated to equal twice the party size.

In other words, if you have three PCs, end the fight when six bandits have been killed by the PCs and assume the rest get routed fighting the party's companions.

CHAPTER RESOLUTION

If the PCs manage to save the caravan, Gurlock rejoices and enlists their aid in clearing the roadblock and jury-rigging the toppled platforms into place, so he can make his delivery to the Pegasus. The patrons rejoice at the chugging, creaking arrival of the caravan, and the PCs have the honor of imbibing the first round of the Old Chaotic Neutral. Gurlock refuses to have his spirits dampened by the event, and demands that the celebration continue into the wee hours of the morning, in honor of his brave rescuers and the memories of his fallen guards.

If they don't manage to save the caravan, Gurlock doesn't blame them, but the loss weighs heavily on him. He sends one of his guards to request aid from the Nestoran Merchants Guild to help him finish his delivery, and asks the PCs to help clear the roadblock and keep watch in case the bandits try again. It takes the better part of the next day to get whatever beer wasn't spilled back to the Pegasus Roadhouse. A single cask of the Old Chaotic Neutral survives, and Gurlock suggests sharing it in a solemn toast to the fallen and to the loss of the wondrous caravan.

WHITE HAWK BANDITS

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY
0	COMMUNICATION
1	CONSTITUTION
2	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
2	FIGHTING
0	INTELLIGENCE (EVALUATION)
1	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
1	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	15	12	3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	RANGE
LIGHT BLASTER PISTOL	+2	1d6+3	10 YARDS/ 20 YARDS
MACE	+2	2d6+1	-

SPECIAL FEATURES

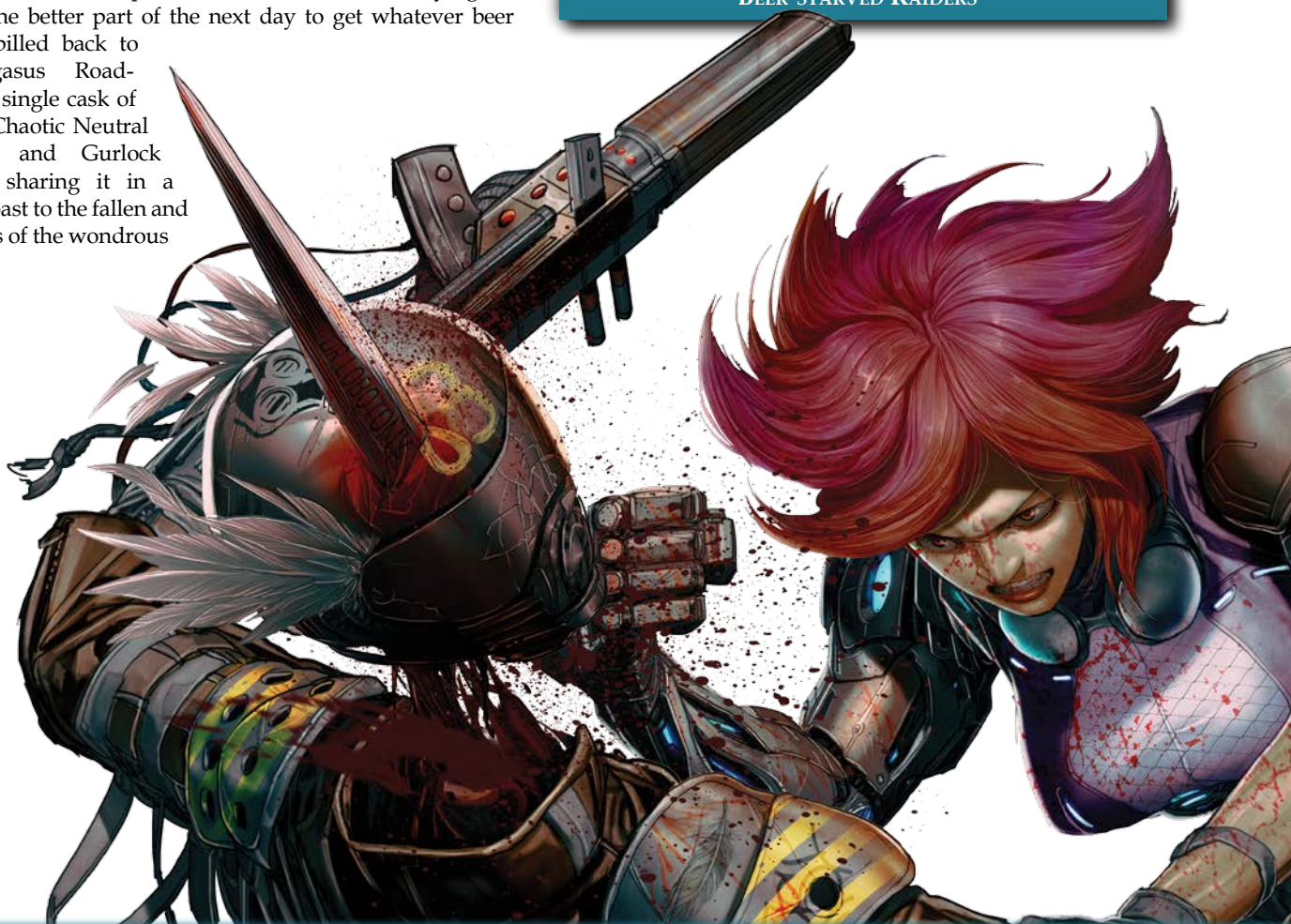
FAVORED STUNTS: Knock Prone, Lighting Attack.

TALENTS: Armor Training (Novice).

WEAPON GROUPS: Brawling, Bludgeons, and Blaster Pistols.

EQUIPMENT: Light blaster pistol, light leather armor, mace.

BEER-STARVED RAIDERS





THE BEER BARON

4

After escorting Gurlock, the Beer Baron, back to his estate, the PCs enjoy a grand celebration. The following day brings disturbing news: hostile creatures have invaded his brewery, the heart of the Beer Baron's operations. Gurlock has yet to rebuild his personal guard, and he turns to the player characters for assistance. The PCs discover the brewery has been infested by hellions, malicious tricksters with a thirst for destruction. Once these creatures are dealt with, the Beer Baron finds himself once again in their debt.

The main goals of this chapter are to develop the bond between the player characters and to teach them to work together. It also raises a few questions: how did the hellions get released into Brew Core? The PCs are being tested by the Voss Group, though they will not realize it at this time.

SCENE 1

BACK AT THE PEGASUS

Roleplaying Encounter

The day after the PCs (hopefully) triumphant return to the Pegasus Roadhouse, Gurlock asks them to join him for breakfast. He has an offer for them. The Pegasus Roadhouse was his final stop. It's time to take the caravan back to Brew Core, his estate at Nestora. However, there's always the danger of trouble on the road and most of his guards were slain in the attack. They were good soldiers, and he truly mourns their loss; however, it also leaves him with a practical problem. He needs a team he can trust to escort the caravan back to Brew Core. Are the PCs willing to take the job? In addition to gold, he promises a celebration at Brew Core that will outshine any feast the PCs have ever seen.

The Beer Baron is known across the Tasmestra Basin, and the luxuries of Brew Core are legendary. Stories speak of fountains of ale and rivers of mead. Hopefully the promise of a few days in paradise are enough to convince the PCs to sign on. Beyond this, Gurlock is a genuinely likeable person. He's honest, generous, and romantic; His gold is good and his connections make him an invaluable patron for an up-and-coming band of adventurers. But in an ideal scenario, they won't just take the job for the money; they'll take it because they like the Beer Baron.

The Beer Baron's offer: 5 gold pieces to escort the caravan back to Brew Core. And a party!

SCENE 2

THE OLD ROAD

Exploration Encounter

In the morning the Beer Baron quickly reviews the caravan with the player characters, reviewing inventory and the

damage sustained in the bandit attack. This is an opportunity to call out what a remarkable artifact the caravan actually is. It's a series of armored hoverplatforms, complete with refrigeration units and a few tanker cars. Gurlock acquired it through a series of adventures in his youth, and few people in the modern age fully understand the technology involved. If he finds any serious problems—a leak in coolant systems, an overtaxed hoverjet—he wrings his hands.

"Hopefully Keg-E can patch it up," he says. *"I don't know what I'll do when the old girl finally breaks down for good."* Luckily, the caravan is only carrying a light load. All the merchandise had been delivered, and the Beer Baron is confident they can make it back to Brew Core without too much trouble.

The expedition reaches the Old Road within an hour. This is a wonder of the ancient world, built by the dwarves in the days before the Chaos Wars. The highway is a hundred feet across, formed from gleaming white permastone. The innate power of the road increases the speed and stability of vehicles, and it is the safest and swiftest path between the city-states. While the journey is relatively safe, there are a few obstacles to overcome. Present as many challenges as time allows and keep track of the number of times the PCs fail to overcome one of these challenges because that has an impact on Gurlock's attitude at the end of the journey.

Should the Beer Baron's caravan have been destroyed in the previous chapter, Gurlock hires a few wagons to return any beer and parts that can be salvaged. The chapter then plays out with the PCs trying to protect the last scraps of his legacy.

THE TOLL BRIDGE

The forces unleashed in the Chaos Wars devastated entire cities, and the Old Road didn't escape the conflict unscathed. There are rifts in the road—chasms spanned with bridges of wood and steel. The caravan passes the first toll gate with little difficulty, but the second rift proves more challenging. The guard—a one-eyed dwarf named Holsic—has an old grudge against the Beer Baron (and if it works with a character's back story, one of the PCs as well). He demands a ridiculous price for passage. It would take at least a day to bypass the rift, and with the damage to the caravan the Beer Baron wants to get home as quickly as possible...but he's not happy about the price (100 gold pieces!). One of the player characters can make a **TN 13 COMMUNICATION** test to negotiate a better price. This could use **BARGAINING**, **PERSUASION** or even **Seduction** as a focus...provided the PC can justify how the focus aligns with their approach to the problem.

Convincing Holsic to let the caravan through at a reduced price can be run as an advanced test if you prefer. In this case the various PCs can make **TN 13 COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, PERSUASION, or SEDUCTION)** tests and the **Success Threshold**



is 12. PCs with less patience may opt for **STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)** tests instead. If the PCs attack Holsic, he defends himself while trying to call for back up with his handset. Unfortunately for him, the nearest patrol is out of range so they do not hear his entreaties.

REACTOR PROBLEMS

The caravan is powered by a compact reactor. It's a remarkable piece of ancient technology...and one that's seen better days. Halfway along the trip, the reactor's temperature rises to a dangerous level. It's still operational, but if the caravan keeps running it will result in significant long-term damage. If a player character can succeed at a **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (ARCANE LORE or ENGINEERING)** test, the character can adjust the reactor to keep it running at peak efficiency without any damage. If the test fails, the journey takes an extra day due to needing to move at a decreased speed to prevent damage to the reactor.

BEER ON THE WALL

As the caravan approaches Brew Core, it passes through an intense, ripping windstorm. The cars rattle and shake...and one of the player characters is there when a rack of empty kegs breaks free from its moorings and topples towards the floor. With a successful **TN 13 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test, the character is able to hold the rack steady until the storm passes. On a failed test, the character takes **3d6 damage** from rolling kegs.

HOLSIC

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY (BLASTER LONGARMS)
1	COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING)
2	CONSTITUTION
1	DEXTERITY
2	FIGHTING (BLUDGEONS)
1	INTELLIGENCE (CULTURAL LORE, NAVIGATION)
2	PERCEPTION (HEARING, SEEING)
2	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)
2	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
9	30	11	4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BLASTER RIFLE	+4	3D6+2
MACE	+4	2D6+2

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Defensive Stance, Skirmish.

TALENTS: Armor Training (Novice) and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).

WEAPON GROUPS: Blaster Longarms, Bludgeons, and Brawling.

EQUIPMENT: Blaster Rifle, Handset, Mace, Scout Armor, box with a dead bird and a piece of tape inside.

DWARF TOLL-KEEPER



KILLING THE BEER BARON

“Why don’t we just kill the Beer Baron and take his stuff?”

Avaricious players may consider killing the Beer Baron at some point. Perhaps they want to steal the caravan or loot his estate. Why work for a rich man when you could take his money? There are a number of problems with that plan however, the player characters don’t have the skills it takes even to maintain the caravan, let alone the connections or experience required to run a brewing empire. Beyond this, Gurlock is a beloved figure in Nestora. His murder would cause public outrage and a massive manhunt to track down his killers. Conversely, having the Beer Baron as a patron provides more benefits than just the payment he’s offering; his favor and connections can help aspiring adventurers in many ways. In short, he’s far more valuable to the PCs alive than he is dead.

However, if a group of PCs is adamant about murdering the Beer Baron or stealing his things, work with them to improvise the story of how they commit their crime... and the repercussions that follow. This will take the place of adventure in Brew Core, and eventually you can move on to Nestora and CHAPTER 5.

ARRIVAL AT BREW CORE

The caravan arrives at Brew Core as soon as the final challenge is completed. The Beer Baron’s manor is a sprawling structure in the finest Nestoran style, with massive ghost-glass windows shining in the twilight. The grounds of the estate are filled with an astonishing array of sculptures and foliage, but one element stands out: the brewery. It’s a bizarre patchwork structure, with the glass walls of the elven renaissance blended together with modern Nestoran stonework and ancient saurian steel. To the casual observer it’s rather ugly, but any student of history can see the brewery has gone through many hands over the centuries.

The Beer Baron’s mood depends on how the player characters did on the journey. Add up the number of times they **failed** tests.

- **No failures.** The Beer Baron is overjoyed. He increases the pay he was offering by 50% and invites the PCs to stay for an entire week. He further proposes to name a beer after each one of them, rambling about what qualities would best represent each PC.
- **One to two failures.** It’s a difficult journey, and the Beer Baron expects to encounter a few problems. He invites the PCs to enjoy his hospitality for the next two days, and hopes they will find additional opportunities to work together in the future.
- **Three failures.** The Beer Baron is disappointed in the player characters. *“I supposed I shouldn’t have such unrealistic expectations of adventurers,”* he grumbles. *“They can’t all be heroes of legend.”* He still offers a fine dinner, but he expects the player characters to be on their way in the morning and makes no mention of

future collaboration. When the group reaches **Scene 4**, it should be presented as a chance at redemption.

SCENE 3

AT HOME WITH THE BEER BARON

Roleplaying Encounter

The PCs are ushered into Gurlock’s manor, and the Beer Baron orders his steward Lessata to give them the grand tour. Lessata is a stern saurian with an artificial eye, and she treats the player characters with the bare minimum of respect; she wishes the Beer Baron wouldn’t bring his strays into the house. However, the cold demeanor of the steward doesn’t lessen the wonders of the mansion. As promised, there are fountains of ale along with taps offering all of the Beer Baron’s finest brews. The menagerie includes an impressive array of deep-world lizards and beautiful kite-flutters (a rare and unusually large sort of butterfly). The armory is lined with weapons from throughout history—though sadly, all too fragile to be of much use to adventurers. Library, greenhouse, game room—the estate has delights for all manner of visitors.

If time allows, ask the players to suggest other wonders that the house contains. Ask each player to describe the room, object or artifact that most impresses their character.

Eventually, the PCs are called into the banquet hall and the party truly begins. It is the finest evening the PCs have ever had. There is music, exquisite food and the finest of drink, dancing, gambling and more. Have each player character make a **TN 13 CONSTITUTION (DRINKING)** test to see how they hold their ale; PCs who don’t drink do not have to take the test. Failure means the character becomes drunk, something which should be kept in mind in the following section. To round out the events of the night, ask each PC one of the following questions.

You’re introduced to the Beer Baron’s children. His lovely daughter Bessa, who is 14years old, wants to become an adventurer, while his handsome son Bale, 12years old, is determined to expand the family business. Which one takes an interest in you, and how does the evening end?

As the evening unfolds, the Beer Baron asks you about a strange rumor he’s heard. Apparently the steward has found a report stating you committed a crime recently; the details are quite accurate. What do you say about it? (*This question should be given to the player character who was established as having committed a crime in CHAPTER 3: HUMBLE BEGINNINGS.*)

After dinner you have another round of drinks with the Beer Baron and share stories. In a sentimental moment, he takes you to see his favorite thing in his mansion. What is it?

The steward Lessata has no love of adventurers, and she watches you suspiciously throughout dinner. At some point in the evening, you either offend her or play a practical joke on her. Which is it, and what happens?

After all these questions are resolved, the festivities die down and the player characters enjoy a well-deserved rest.



KEG-E

Keg-E is an ancient robot, built in the first days of the brewery. Originally designed to serve as a domestic servant, “he” is the foremost expert on the patchwork systems of the brewery and helps the Beer Baron keep the place running. Keg-E’s voice processor has a nasal twang, and he worries incessantly about the condition of the brewery: *“We need to make certain nothing happens to the yeast synthesizer. If the capacitor is overloaded, I don’t know what we’ll do!”*

In addition to serving as a guide, Keg-E is an expert mechanic and repairs damage to the brewery as best as he can as the PCs make their way towards the intruders. In combat he retracts his limbs like a turtle and stays out of the way.

SCENE 4

TROUBLE IN BREW CORE

Roleplaying Encounter

The following morning the PCs are treated to a grand breakfast, along with a remarkable treatment for hangovers. The Beer Baron asks the PCs about their future plans. This conversation is interrupted when the steward Lessata escorts a wounded dwarf into the dining hall. The dwarf is a middle-aged woman named Turss, and she’s in bad shape. She’s suffered severe burns and is covered with blood, not all of which is hers. She delivers a shaky report: there are intruders in the brewery. Her work crew was attacked by half a dozen intruders—small figures, but swift and deadly. One of the boilers exploded and Turss managed to escape the intruders in the chaos.

Turss is in shock, and can’t provide much further detail. If a player character calms her down with a **TN 9 COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)** test she can remember a few more details. Her

assailants weren’t human or any species she knew. They were small, dark figures and attacked with makeshift weapons and teeth. She remembers the teeth quite clearly, saying they were “all teeth.”

The Beer Baron turns to the player characters. His best guards were slain in the caravan attack, and while he could rely on his remaining staff, he’d prefer to use a team proven in battle. Are the PCs willing to deal with this threat? His offer stands as before: gold, patronage, and further hospitality. If the PCs wish to bargain, the Beer Baron accommodates reasonable requests. Free Gurlock beer at any tavern that serves it? A bottle of mead older than the Chaos War? Naming rights for a new brew? The Beer Baron *could* send in his remaining guards, so he’s not going to offer the moon...but he’s prepared to be generous.

Once the PCs agree to the task, the Beer Baron calls Keg-E, who is looking much better than when they last saw him in the Pegasus road house. Keg-E guides the PCs through the brewery and repairs damage whenever possible. Keg-E is deeply concerned about the threat and urges the PCs to move swiftly.



SCENE 5

HELLIONS IN THE BREWERY

Combat Encounter

The foundations of the brewery date back to before the Chaos Wars. It has been repaired and expanded several times over the centuries. It is a massive operation, with subterranean silos holding tons of grains and hops. It blends traditional brewing techniques with magic and advanced technology, and the rooms themselves are a strange patchwork. One side of the entry hall is lined with heavy steam pipes, while the opposite wall is covered with a mosaic of elven runes and sigils glowing with mystic light. There is a trail of blood left by Turss, but no other signs of combat in this room.

Keg-E rushes to the mosaic, which indicates the status of various systems. *"Fermentation vat three is operating within normal parameters. No signs of contamination in storage tubes one or two."* He continues to rattle off facts until he reaches a problem: *"Ventilation systems in Mill Four are offline."* Before he reaches this conclusion, one of the player characters might suggest following the trail of blood left by Turss, which requires a **TN 9 PERCEPTION (TRACKING)** test.

Either way, the group makes their way into the depths of the brewery. It's a noisy environment, filled with sounds of steam, grinding machinery and the hum of mystical energy. This makes it difficult to hear or see dangers...but easy to surprise enemies. As the player characters approach the mill room, they have the option to make a **TN 9 DEXTERITY (STEALTH)** test. If they succeed, they surprise the hellions.

Mill Four contains four massive mill units, each one five feet wide and ten feet long. Pipes from the ceiling feed grain into the

mills, and a secondary system of pipes take the grist down into a room below. Three of the mills are currently operating; the fourth has been torn open. There are **2 hellions per PC** scampering around the mill units, working with wrenches and tools to break them open. The air in the room is thick and musty, and clouds of dust slightly obscure vision. The bodies (corpses, actually) of four workers are scattered around the room. Most bear the marks of large teeth, though one is badly charred.

The creatures are hellions. They are gleefully destroying the mills, and just as eagerly fight the PCs. One hellion charges the PCs, but the others keep their distance. Their goal is to get the PCs to use ranged weapons...and set off their trap. Grain dust is highly explosive, and the clouds of dust are ignited by any energy discharge, like that of an energy weapon or spell. Any time a PC uses a blaster or spell that discharges fire or lightning, the resulting explosion inflicts **2d6 damage** to the PC and any adjacent characters; it also negates the attack (the attack doesn't hit its intended target, nor does it cause damage to anything else).

There's one more catch. When a hellion dies its body dissolves and a spark of energy is drawn back to the hellion alpha (see the hellion description following). That spark of energy is sufficient to trigger a grain dust explosion, which will damage anyone adjacent to the defeated hellion. This includes other hellions, so this can set off a chain reaction if the damage from one hellion death is enough to kill one or more adjacent hellions.

The hellions fight to the death, and cannot be taken alive; when a hellion falls, it immediately dissolves. One hellion keeps its distance from the PCs, and when there is three or fewer hellions it flees, racing towards the wash room. If the PCs kill all of the hellions before any can flee, a new hellion emerges from hiding and makes a dash for it; in this case, there are only be three hellions in the wash room.



After the battle is concluded, a PC that makes a successful **TN 10 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORICAL LORE)** test realizes the whole situation is very odd. Hellions haven't been seen for hundreds of years. There must be an alpha nearby producing these lesser hellions, and it will be more powerful now that they are dead. But where did it come from? How long has it been here? Keg-E has no answers; he doesn't remember the brewery ever suffering a hellion attack in the past. He wants to get to work repairing the broken mill unit, but if the PCs chase after the hellions he reluctantly follows.

HELLIONS

Hellions are cunning and cruel. They are living weapons created in the Chaos Wars, thought to have been completely exterminated at the end of the war. Absolute eradication was critical, because hellions reproduce at an alarming rate. A hellion alpha absorbs ambient mystical energy from its surroundings, and when it has consumed a sufficient amount a lesser hellion emerges fully-formed from the alpha. This rate of reproduction varies based on the ambient mystical energies of the region, but given time a single hellion alpha can produce an army. Worse still, when a lesser hellion is slain a spark of energy flows back to its alpha, temporarily enhancing its abilities. A hellion alpha is a dangerous foe in any circumstance, but when enough of its spawn have been slain it becomes a whirlwind of destruction. Hellions were created to serve as guerrilla soldiers. They are cunning and have an innate knack for sabotaging machinery and crafting traps, but aren't entirely sentient and have no desires beyond destruction.

Hellions are lean humanoid creatures with slick, leathery black skin and long fingers. Their heads are dominated by large, grinning mouths filled with needle-sharp teeth. They have no other facial features, and perceive their surroundings using scent, sonar and a keen sense of touch. A hellion alpha is typically seven feet in height, while lesser hellions are around three feet tall.

SCENE 6

THE WASH ROOM

Combat Encounter

The last surviving hellion flees down into the brewery. Player characters can pursue immediately, or they can following more cautiously with a **TN 9 PERCEPTION (TRACKING)** test. The hellion leads them into a large chamber containing two large sunken pools. One is completely empty and dry. The other is filled with various brewing equipment suspended in a clear liquid. Pipes cross the ceiling, and there are racks holding kegs and fermentation vessels.

If the player characters approach the scene cautiously, they can make a **TN 11 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test. If the characters are swiftly pursuing a fleeing hellion, it's a **TN 13 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test. What they see depends on the degree of success:

- **1-3 DEGREES:** a PC spots the remains of a brewery worker. The woman's body has been partially knocked into the filled pool, and where she's come into contact with the clear liquid her flesh has dissolved.

HELLION

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY (GRENADES)
0	COMMUNICATION
1	CONSTITUTION
2	DEXTERITY (TRAPS)
1	FIGHTING (BITE)
0	INTELLIGENCE
2	PERCEPTION (HEARING)
1	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
14	15	12	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BITE	+4	1D6+3
ACID VIAL	+4	3D6 + SPECIAL

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Cloud of Chaos, Mighty Blow, Pierce Armor.

CLOUD OF CHAOS: A hellion can perform this special stunt for 3 SP. The hellion disappears in a cloud of prismatic smoke and it reappears 1d6 yards in a random direction. Anyone adjacent to the hellion when the Cloud of Chaos is used takes a -1 penalty on all tests until the end of their next turn. Penalties from multiple Clouds of Chaos do not stack.

EQUIPMENT: Two of the hellions in the Wash Room have two acid vials each (four total). See **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT** in *Fantasy AGE* for special rules.

LEGACY OF THE CHAOS WARS

- **4-6 DEGREES:** A PC notices an additional important detail: a tripwire stretched across the entrance of the chamber.

If the trap is triggered it tips a vat of powerful acid down across the entryway. Up to two PCs can be caught in the splash if they are chasing the hellion, suffering **2d6 penetrating damage**, reduced to **1d6 penetrating damage** if a successful **TN 11 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test is made. Thereafter, the pool remains as a hazard blocking entry to the room. Leaping over it requires a **TN 9 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test, and failure results in **1d6 penetrating damage**. The acid has no effect on inorganic materials.

There are a total of four hellions in this chamber (three if you needed an extra one in the previous encounter). Two are hidden up on the racks of kegs. They have excellent cover (+2 Defense) and a total of **four acid vials**. The other hellions are hidden behind machinery when the PCs enter.

The pool of clear liquid is filled with acid. If any creature is flung or pushed into the pool, they suffer **2d6 penetrating damage** each round they remain in it, and **1d6 penetrating damage** for the following two rounds after they emerge.

The hellions fight to the death and dissolve if killed. Each time a hellion dies, a spark of energy flashes from its remains and goes down deeper into the brewery.



SCENE 7

THE HELLION ALPHA

Combat Encounter

Once the last hellion falls, a figure scampers into the room. It's a young man, one of the brewery workers. He's covered with dirt, having survived by hiding behind filthy vats. He heard the fighting and is overjoyed to find the PCs victorious, but has grim news. "There's another one of those ... creatures ... down in Well Six. A big one, bigger than you!" (Here he gestures at the brawniest of the PCs.)

Keg-E sputters at this. "Well Six is where we just decanted the new brew. There's thousands of gallons of top ale there. If this creature were to poison the beer, the cost would be ghastly."

The man—Scothe— isn't a warrior and wants nothing more than to flee. Keg-E can lead the PCs to Well Six. As they move closer, they can hear raucous, inhuman laughter echoing through the halls. This is a good time to remind any PCs that knew **Historical Lore** about the hellions, that the hellion alpha (as this must be, based on its size) grows stronger whenever a hellion is killed...and this creature must be very strong indeed.

Player characters can sneak up on the alpha by winning an opposed test of their **Dexterity (Stealth)** vs. the alpha's **Perception (Hearing)**, **Stealth** tests if they wish, or come up with other careful preparations. As it turns out, the hellion alpha hasn't come to the Well to poison the beer; he's there to drink it. The Alpha is over seven feet tall, and he is flooded with the energy from his slain spawn. His body burns with arcane power, and his bulging muscles are quivering with energy. But he's not preparing for battle; he's lying on his back in a puddle of beer, laughing uproariously and clutching the bucket he's used to scoop ale out of the massive pool dominating the room.

The chamber is a large refrigerated room, mostly taken up by the large circular pool. The Alpha fights once he becomes aware of the PCs, but he won't act until they do; with a **TN 7 Dexterity (Stealth)** test a player character can walk right up to the Alpha without being



HELLION ALPHA

Abilities (Focuses)

1	Accuracy
0	Communication
3	Constitution
2	Dexterity (Traps)
3	Fighting (Bite)
0	Intelligence
2	Perception (Hearing)
7*	Strength
1	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
14	40*	12	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+5 (+2 Drunk)	1d6+7*

* Modified numbers based on dead hellions.

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Cloud of Chaos, Mighty Blow, Pierce Armor.

Alpha: When regular hellions the hellion alpha has created die within 100 yards of the alpha, a spark floats to the alpha and gives it a temporary boost of power. For every two sparks absorbed in this way, the hellion alpha gains +1 Strength and +5 Health for 1 hour. This has already been calculated for this encounter.

Cloud of Chaos: A hellion alpha can perform this special stunt for 3 SP. The hellion alpha disappears in a cloud of prismatic smoke and it reappears 1d6 yards in a random direction. Anyone adjacent to the hellion alpha when the Cloud of Chaos is used takes a -1 penalty on all tests until the end of their next turn. Penalties from multiple Clouds of Chaos do not stack.

Heart of the Infestation

noticed. When he does act, **the alpha is at a -3 on all rolls** due to his drunken state. His behavior is highly erratic, and he occasionally uses his turn to scoop another bucketful of beer out of the pool instead of making an attack.

The Alpha's body dissolves as soon as it is slain.

CHAPTER RESOLUTION

If the PCs defeat the hellion alpha, the Beer Baron is very pleased with them indeed. He pays the negotiated rate and more beers flows. When their stay is over, he sends them on the way to Nestora.

When they are gone, he contacts man in Nestora named Voss. He thinks his old friend may be interested in these adventures....

INTO NESTORA



The PCs have survived—and perhaps even thrived—helping the Beer Baron and now at last they are on their way to the city of Nestora. They have a mysterious artifact—a seamless orb etched with spirals of unknown glyphs—and hope to bring it to an old sage wise enough to decipher such things: Farkaya the Knowing. To reach her and benefit from her knowledge, the PCs must reach her shop in the city of Nestora and give her access to the artifact...but no one who visits Nestora goes truly unnoticed.

The actions and characters in this chapter bring up different themes. Let the players find and highlight what they like. At the same time, this text can help you draw out thematic questions and relationships—about appearances and trust, power and abuse, civility and change—by setting up scenes about these relationships and giving you dialogue to put in the mouths of the NPCs that call these themes to attention. Before you run this chapter, it's worth considering the PCs' backgrounds once again. There may be story elements in them that you can bring to the fore while the characters explore the city. The PCs are visitors in Nestora, but they won't get out without being changed by the experience.

RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

This chapter unfolds over a few days' worth of events. Pace your group's experience for the time you have available by deciding which events to portray and which to describe with just a few vivid sentences. The players' choices in this story don't steer the behaviors of the whole city but they *do* contextualize the relationship between the city and the PCs, determining *how* the story's themes take shape and setting up later adventures. You, the GM, must help portray how the players' choices change what the story is about, even if their characters strive to mind their own business.

One way to help portray and add context to the adventure is to let your NPCs say and do things differently than the PCs do—whether by disagreeing quietly or loudly, or by escalating the PCs' actions in dramatic ways. If the PCs try to stay neutral, for example, NPCs can tell them why they think that's good or bad, and then act to inspire or provoke the PCs to some other action. A variety of points of view for the NPCs help the city feel complex and alive, which is your goal, and they also help you separate *your* point of view from the NPCs' outlooks. You want the players' characters to feel like they're caught in the middle of something.

These are the key moments of this chapter:

DISCOVERING NESTORA (VITAL): The PCs arrive in Nestora and learn about the city. Do they get involved in local affairs and unrest? If so, what actions do they take?

VISITING THE SAGE (VITAL): The PCs are able to get their artifact scanned and studied by a famed sage called Farkaya,

who asks them to return the day after tomorrow to collect her analysis.

PARADES FOR THE FALLEN (OPTIONAL): The PCs experience a day in Nestora, possibly getting further involved in local affairs, possibly keeping to themselves, as this day goes by in a scene or a few sentences.

SECRETS OF THE ORB (VITAL): The PCs learn what Farkaya has discovered—

and then experience the consequences of their involvement (or lack thereof) in local affairs.

DISCOVERING NESTORA

The following information is meant for the players and their characters. It includes a lot of information about Nestora. Either read this aloud or hand a copy of it to the players to read for themselves.

A glowing map posted at the city's edge shows how it's divided into eight boroughs. The sage's shop is deep in a multi-building bazaar called the Market Bank in the borough of Allfeld, which is overseen by the Vintner's Guild.

The city must have once housed many more people than it does now—there are abandoned areas that are home to weedy squares and plazas where footpaths haven't kept the way clear, or spots where gravelly, ancient pavement has been chewed up by weeds and heavy traffic where footpaths have worn through to the ground below. Sunlight beams through the empty windows of derelict buildings amidst the crowded apartments and shops. Empty buildings have long-since been looted of their valuables, so many of them seem to be home to planned gardens or miniature, accidental jungles.

Dozens of cracked screens and monitors, many of them blank and dead, hang from tall kiosks and posts throughout the city, like clusters of strange coconuts around the stalks of palm trees. They're a mismatched collection of tech, from bulky monitors to flat ones, presumably assembled at one time by the guilds, but no longer maintained. Many of them display newspeople clearly discussing the day's news, but there's no sound, instead their words are spelled out in subtitles below them. Nobody on the streets below seems to care or watch.

Still, the city feels lively. People seem more involved in their lives than the news. Rugs and garments hang outside the windows of vine-choked high-rises, making it clear that even the taller buildings remain safe to live in—or are inhabited anyway. People lean on their windowsills, taking in the sunlight and the view of the activity in the streets below.

They're not the only watchers. In every neighborhood, on most corners, it's easy to spot little hemispheres of black glass, each about the size of a human head or a street-ball, mounted on the walls and posts and rooftops of buildings. If every one of them contains a camera; the city is well surveilled. If those are the cameras that are noticeable, perhaps more are hidden around.



WHAT NESTORANS HAVE TO SAY

The PCs might overhear talk in the city—or seek it out. If PCs talk with Nestorans about the social or political climate in town, they might get some casual chatter or some meaningful gossip, depending on how well they come across to the locals. Ask players what approach their characters take and have them make a **TN 12 COMMUNICATION** test. Apply modifiers to their rolls based on how locals respond to the PC's approach. Add an additional +1 modifier to reward a great portrayal of any approach.

- **Etiquette, Persuasion:** +1. Locals appreciate some friendly charm or neighborly chitchat in these volatile days.
- **Leadership, Investigation:** -1. Most locals want to mind their own business, afraid of accidentally being seen to side with rallying insurgents or Guild investigators right now.
- **Deception, Disguise:** +0. If a PC's roll totals TN 12 or less when using Deception or Disguise, the local thinks he or she is being tricked and walks off to report their suspicions to Guild troopers.

Here are some examples of things people say to strangers based on the degree of success achieved on the test:

Failed Test	The character fails to shake any information loose from the locals. They say things like “No thanks,” and “Leave me be, stranger,” and “Get lost. I don’t know you.”
1 Degree	“These are tough times, but what can you do?” “I won’t say anything against the Guilds. They hear everything.”
2 Degrees	“No one listens to reason anymore; it’s all hate and it’s all someone else’s fault these days.” “The Guilds will come out on top, even if the insurgents manage some kind of change before they’re beaten.”
3 Degrees	“Groups like the Autonomous Front are no future for us. Their tactics just make the Guilds that much angrier.” “If we could just get the Guilds to understand us, to listen to us, things might be better.”
4 Degrees	“Only the Autonomous Front, or someone like them, can shake the old pillars of power in this city.” “I don’t know how it is where you’re from, friend, but when you go after the powers that be? Things fall down. I don’t want to lose what I got.”
5 Degrees	“Everything’s shot, now. Everyone’s corrupt. We can’t go on like this. Used to be the Guilds worked for our sakes but since they won’t hear us out, things can only change for the worse now, I bet. If I thought the Autonomous Front had a chance? I don’t know. I gotta go.”
6 Degrees	“Listen, I’d love a vote in the Guilds but I don’t get one and I’m not about to pick up a blaster and risk my neck or my family.”

If PCs don’t seek out conversation, they can overhear comments instead with a successful **PERCEPTION (HEARING)** test using the same guidelines.



While the decaying stone and weathered metal of the city blends into an earthy monotone, green leaves combine with colorful banners and posters to give the place wondrous color. Some of these posters notify of performances by the Artist's Guild, others advertise local restaurants and taverns, and many announce the Exaltation of the Fallen—a day-long festival celebrating all who died in the Chaos Wars against the land's great enemy. The holiday is tomorrow.

Beneath a wide, bright banner for the festivities, is a poster depicting a gigantic human with arms outstretched, smiling over a stylized depiction of Nestora. It reads, "The Guilds watch out for you."

Graffiti inked on the stones beneath that poster spell out in simple block letters "Free us from tyranny!" and "Let us vote!"

Fresher paint, sprayed through a stencil, reads "Vote with blasters."

SCENE 1

CITY OF STRIFE

Exploration Encounter

Note: You can place this encounter nearly anywhere in Nestora. It should happen before the PCs reach Farkaya, so anywhere along their intended route works.

While traveling through the city toward the Market Bank, you hear a dull and abrupt double boom, low and window-rattling, followed by shouts of shock and cries for help coming from up the street. Black smoke twists into the sky, followed by the distant blaring of emergency vehicles—and then what sounds like a single gunshot.

As the PCs come up to the intersection, they see what looks like a Guilder caravan of transport trucks ablaze. Two trucks are on fire, pumping black smoke into the air and against nearby buildings. Out of the smoke, a third truck—its wind-screen fractured, its blackened cab filled with dark smoke—coasts a few dozen feet down the street before rolling into parked, empty vehicles along the road.

PCs who want to help have several options. Make note of what actions the PCs take here so you can describe them again during the final scene of the chapter. Present these options clearly so the players can engage with the scene quickly or use these options to interpret and dramatize other tasks they might attempt. Options for the players include:

1. RESCUE WHOEVER'S IN THAT SMOKE-FILLED TRUCK

The third truck, the one that rolled into the scene last, idles against a row of parked and now-crumpled cars, its engine sputtering. Reaching the truck isn't a problem (a move action is enough) but the doors are locked and the driver is unconscious inside. Breaking through the security glass requires a **TN 13 STRENGTH (MIGHT) or FIGHTING (BLUDGEONS)** test, while any other approach (lock-picking, cutting through with a power weapon, etc.) is a **TN 11** test. If the driver is pulled from the truck and smoke in the first round, then he won't require any further medical attention. After that, getting him medically stable and alert requires a **TN 11 INTELLIGENCE (HEALING)** test. Increase the TN by 2 for each additional round he spends in the car. If the difficulty reaches TN 17 (four rounds), he dies.

2. OFFER MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE INJURED

Twelve people, scattered around the scene, are either unconscious or too injured to move themselves. Ten of these people are in stable condition, they just need some help overcoming initial shock or regaining consciousness; they can be moved by any PC or NPC who accompanies them with a Move action to a safe distance from the flames.

Two victims of the attack need medical attention—a heal action or similar—before they can be safely moved. One is a middle-aged human man, the other is an elderly dwarf woman. Each is bleeding onto the cracked asphalt. Moving one of these characters before they're stable causes them **2d6+3 damage** and each has 12 Health remaining.

Each is also within 20 yards of the burning trucks, so whatever they do, the PCs had best hurry....





3. PUT OUT THE BURNING WRECKS BEFORE FUEL TANKS OR CELLS EXPLODE

Two trucks with Guild logos stand burning in the street, the hindmost truck having collided with the truck in front of it. These hefty cargo haulers can handle some heat but if their fuel systems catch, they explode. Any character with the **DEXTERITY (DRIVING)** or **INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** focuses knows it's only a matter of time until that happens, unless someone intervenes.

Smothering or dousing the flames calls for an advanced test that's easy enough—if people work together. *Each* burning truck has a **Success Threshold of 10**, so when the Dragon Dice totals of actions to thwart the flames total 10, that truck's fires are put out. But, either truck that's still burning at the end of the fourth *round*, explodes! Tell the player of any character with the **DEXTERITY (DRIVING)** or **INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** focuses how long they have to combat the fires.

Note these additional factors:

- Any action to put out the burning trucks is **Challenging (TN 13)**. Players can try different approaches befitting their characters' abilities.
- Up to four characters can coordinate on a single roll: three helpers and one leader. **Each helper adds +1 to the roll.**
- If an action succeeds but doesn't yield a high effect-die result, blame it on sputtering water, steam, or hot-spots. Remember, though, that every successful roll adds *something* to the success threshold, so every little bit helps!
- Any character close enough to a burning truck to toss water (etc.) on it by hand takes **2 penetrating damage each round** from the heat and smoke. A good hose or a blasting hydrant lets a character spray water from a distance, avoiding this damage.
- If the character's investigate the cargo holds, they find the trucks are loaded with armor and riot gear.
- A character who comes into contact with a burning truck suffers **2d6 damage**.
- A character within 10 yards of an exploding truck takes **4d6 damage**. Every ten yards farther away, the damage decreases by 1d6.

4. ORGANIZE BYSTANDERS TO MAKE OTHER EFFORTS MORE EFFECTIVE

The PCs can increase the number of helping hands for any of the options above with a **TN 12 COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP or PERSUASION)** test to rally the locals and onlookers to help. Each successful roll rallies a number of helpful citizens equal to the Dragon Die's value. Though no more than 20 citizens are both close and willing to help, they represent all manner of Nestorans—old and young, rich and poor, of diverse races and backgrounds. For a time, these citizens have a common goal: to help their neighbors.

WHEN THE GUILD TROOPERS ARRIVE

When you decide the timing is right (*e.g.*, when the fires are out or when a truck has exploded), emergency vehicles swoop in, lights flashing, their currents swirling the smoke, and deploy medics from the Physicians' Guild and a dozen troopers in official Guild armor. As the troopers fan out, they guide citizens to a safe distance from the crime scene.

One citizen, a twenty-something, white, human man in fashionable clothes, and who may have been helping the PCs earlier, walks up to the troopers with his hands out. He says, *"Tell your Guild masters this is what happens when they oppose the Autonomous Front. Tell them that they cannot intimidate us any —"*

One of the troopers shoots him (dead or unconscious, no way to tell immediately) with two blasts from his weapon. They put a hood over his head and drag him into an aerial vehicle just as it takes flight.

"Disperse," says a voice through a speaker on the Guild hovercar. *"Disperse now. We have your faces and actions on file. If you stay, we will consider you interlopers in a crime scene."*

If a PC tries to confront the Guilders, they tell that PC to back off. *"Don't worry,"* says one trooper, *"the situation here is under control. Now disperse."* If necessary, they thank the PCs for their assistance—whatever it takes to get them to leave. *"It isn't safe here, citizen. Now go."*

SCENE 2

VISITING THE SAGE

Roleplaying Encounter

Even just a few blocks from the site of the attack, Nestorans go about their lives as usual. Mere murmurs, like "another attack" and "insurgents raising havoc" and "trouble again," move through the conversations of the locals. But by the time you reach the Market Bank, most of the talk you hear is made up of haggling barkers and requests from shoppers. The Market Bank is a sprawling collection of stalls, small buildings, and tents.

"One more tater!" says an eager young dwarf woman at a produce stand.

"Do you have this one in red?" asks a male elf who even looks old.

The place smells of flower petals and musty books, of rose-water and alcohols, of oily leathers and grilling meat. The smells waft through each other, carried in the wakes of visitors inching about in search of finds.

"Is it spicy?" asks a middle-aged and dark-skinned human woman with metal set into her face and scalp. *"Can you make it spicy?"*

For a moment, the smell is curry. Then it's lavender. Earthy, ground beans and the sweet stench of drying cherries. These all mingle with glimpses of watches, rings, and artwork torn from old books and sold on unframed mats in plastic sleeves.

"Is it really gold? What do you care? It looks like gold, people treat you like it's gold, and you get what you want that way. Everybody wins."



Monitors flicker with lists of nearby shops, deeper in the maze of commerce and culture. One of them bears the name in question, “Farkaya the Antiquarian,” along with directions.

THE SAGE’S SHOP

Farkaya’s shop is in the midst of the Market Bank, down a flight of stairs. A sign, hand-painted on an old window, says simply “Farkaya the Knowing.”

The shop is a warren of small rooms, each of arched bricks and sturdy metal shelves. All manner of curious finds stand, dangle, and lean about—toys, dishes, tools, magazines, storage media, tea tins—and something is sure to catch the characters’ eyes.

Ask the players what sorts of things in an antique or junk shop would attract or captivate their characters. Here are some questions you can use to guide them:

- “Are you the sort of shopper who has to handle the curios you find?”
- “Do you find something you miss from your youth or something you never had, maybe never even saw, before now?”
- “Does anyone find something that makes them sad or angry? Something in rotten shape, maybe, that deserves to be cherished?”
- “Who buys something from the shop that they absolutely do not need?”
- “Does your character collect anything they might find more of in the shop? Does the character purchase something to add to that collection?”

FARKAYA THE KNOWING

Articulated metal arms hang from the ceiling above Farkaya’s counter, as if some truck-sized mechanized spider were trapped up there, and each arm ends in a tool like a magnifying lens, a scanner, or a sonar wand—all useful for appraising and understanding objects. Farkaya sits amidst those hanging arms, where she can reach them all, on a pillow atop a stiff and archaic rolling chair.

The sage herself is narrow yet muscular, spindly and lean yet tough-looking, almost fibrous and leathery. Much of her silver hair is gathered in a bun behind her head. The rest frames her face, which is dominated by wide lenses and a thin, hooked nose. Her outfit seems almost like layers of fashions going back decades.

Farkaya is friendly enough—she loves her job—but she also enjoys trolling those younger than her to see who will banter with her. If taken too seriously, she tries to coax people out of their shells. “Try to enjoy yourself, dear. As you can see, nothing lasts forever, so you might as well have a good time while you can.”

When given the orb, she eyeballs it suspiciously. “Could be something,” she says. “Could be nothing.” She offers to scan the orb, generating a 3D image of it she can study without the PCs having to leave the orb behind in her shop or wait on her while she works.

“I’ll need some time,” she says. “Come back the day after tomorrow. I’ll do some work tomorrow, but not much, because of the festival.” If asked, she explains the Exaltation of the Fallen parades march through every borough of the city tomorrow. “Go, enjoy yourselves, and come back the day after tomorrow. I’ll let you know what this curious thing is or what it does.”



AUTONOMOUS FRONT INSURGENTS

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

1	ACCURACY (GRENADES, STAVES)
1	COMMUNICATION
0	CONSTITUTION
0	DEXTERITY
1	FIGHTING
0	INTELLIGENCE
1	PERCEPTION
1	STRENGTH
2	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
10	15	12	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	RANGE
FIRE VIAL	+3	3D6	8 YARDS
CLUB	+3	1D6+1	-

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Disarm, Skirmish.

WEAPON GROUPS: Bludgeons, Brawling, and Staves.

EQUIPMENT: Two fire vials, club, Autonomous Front leaflets.

DETERMINED REBELS

If a PC complains about the delay, she says “Don’t rush me. You rush the scholar, you get rotten scholarship.”

SCENE 3

PARADES OF THE FALLEN

Scene Type: Roleplaying or Combat

It’s a day for celebration in Nestora. Ask the players what their characters want to do on the day of the Exaltation parades. Do they steer clear of the festivities? Do they stay in whatever rental room(s) they’ve taken for the day? Do they attend the local parade?

Wherever the PCs are staying, they can hear the festivities. People chant and sing in the streets. They blow plastic horns and spin noisemakers. The bass lines from speakers on parade floats thrum through local buildings.

The festivities are an odd mix of solemn and vibrant, combining the praise and glorification of long-dead soldiers with songs of peace and mourning—all of it overseen by squads of armed riot troopers from the Guilds. Ribbons and ticker tape are reflected in dark, faceless helmets. Wet confetti sticks to riot shields. The Nestorans celebrate a victory that was meant to bring peace while a specter of new violence looms among them.

What happens next is up to the Autonomous Front. How it manifests in *your* version of this story is up to you and your players....

GUILD TROOPERS

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

1	ACCURACY (BLASTER PISTOLS)
0	COMMUNICATION
1	CONSTITUTION
1	DEXTERITY
2	FIGHTING (BLUDGEONS)
0	INTELLIGENCE
1	PERCEPTION (SEARCHING, SEEING)
2	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
10	20	13	4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
MACE	+4	2D6+2

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Mighty Blow, Skirmish.

TALENTS: Armor Training (Novice) and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).

WEAPON GROUPS: Blaster Pistol, Bludgeons, and Brawling.

EQUIPMENT: Scout Armor, Mace, Riot Shield (Medium Shield)

NOTE: You may want to arm the occasional trooper with a heavy blaster pistol. That’d be an attack roll of +3 and 2d6+1 damage.

JACKBOOTED THUGS

TWO VERSION OF THIS SCENE

How this scene develops in play depends on what your players choose to do with the day and whether you want a scene that provides a roleplaying moment or an action scene. What you choose should suit the abilities and interests of the players, foremost, so they have something engaging to explore.

It’s possible the players (or their characters) want to steer clear of trouble in Nestora on the day of the festival, in which case you shouldn’t make this optional scene happen *to* their characters, but close enough that they hear word of it. After all, the strife in Nestora doesn’t wait for the PCs to be ready, but the story doesn’t need to impose another scene of potential violence on the players if that’s not interesting at your table.

So, what follows might be a scene about preempting violence or being caught in the middle of it. The scene could be a full-fledged encounter with the PCs at the center of it, or it could be the defining, but somewhat distant, experience of the day. Consider your players and the final scene of this chapter and how the portrayal of this scene informs the players’ decision at the end of this episode.

Part of your job here is to make sure that the players are willing to take their characters underground to avoid the authorities in the end. Use their current attitudes to inform your approach here.



If the PCs already don't like the Guilds, use this scene to humanize the insurgents and make them the lesser enemy.

If the PCs are siding with the Guilds so far, you can use this scene to humanize the insurgents *and* establish the brutal tactics of Guild troopers, so the final scene is also the last straw.

THE (PRIMARYLY) ROLEPLAYING OPTION

The roleplaying opportunities begin before hell breaks loose, the PCs are close enough to the parade route to catch sight of a young human man arranging fire vials (grenades) in his messenger bag. He doesn't know that anyone has seen him, and only the PCs have spotted him so far.

Do they report him? If so, the Guild troopers grab him, put a hood over his head, and beat him into submission.

Do they just follow the insurgent for now? A successful **TN 13 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test lets them spot his hand signal (he taps his eyebrow) meant for a spotter in a window overlooking the parade route.

Do they approach the insurgent on the ground? PCs who want to talk the insurgent down should make an **opposed test of COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP OR PERSUASION) vs the insurgent's WILLPOWER (MORALE)**. The insurgent's **bonus of +4** includes a +2 bonus to his roll to reflect the rousing speech he's already been given by his superior in the Autonomous Front while the PC gains a +2 bonus if she or another PC in the conversation have the **INTELLIGENCE (MILITARY LORE)** focus. *"I'm only here for them,"* the insurgent says, nodding at the troopers. *"It's time they hear us."* He sounds like he's been practicing that line.

If the PC(s) win the opposed test, the quality of the outcome depends on their Dragon Die result:

INSURGENT REACTION

DRAGON DIE RESULT	INFORMATION
1-2	The insurgent hesitates and keeps talking with the PC(s) for a number of rounds equal to the Dragon Die. The PCs can roll again, adding the next Dragon Die to this one to further keep the insurgent talking if their roll succeeds.
3-4	The insurgent tosses his bag of fire vials (there are four) in a garbage can, then flees the scene. The vials aren't armed and don't explode.
5-6	The insurgent throws away the vials and gives a no-go signal to someone up in a window overlooking the parade route. They both quit the scene and, whether or not the PCs know it, take half a dozen allies with them.

Many other options exist, especially if things go badly or the PCs attack the insurgent. Many options are likely to spark fighting between twitchy Guild troopers and the anxious but dedicated insurgents in the area.

THE (PRIMARYLY) COMBAT OPTION

For a combat encounter, the characters don't spot the insurgent with his bad of fire vials, so they don't have any warning before the insurgents make their move. Surprise is the point of the insurgents' tactics, and they essentially get the drop on the public.



How close the PCs are to the fighting is up to you to determine by interpreting the players' aims for the day. If they're near the parade route, the fighting breaks out just a block away. Otherwise, they have to decide whether to run toward or away from the chaos—and the action scene.

When the banners come out and the insurgents don their gas masks, the Guild soldiers immediately snap out their batons and start clearing the streets. Anyone who resists gets struck with a baton or targeted with pepper spray. The Guild troopers want the streets empty. Now.

Who shoots first is unclear—no one is sure—but blast vials and smoke grenades start flying in the first round of combat, either fired by Guild troops or tossed by insurgents with bandanas on their faces.

If the PCs want to get civilians clear of the fighting, they can make a **TN 12 COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP) or WILLPOWER (COURAGE)** test to guide a number of civilians equal to the Dragon Die toward safety.

If they want to fight, they can attempt to subdue Autonomous Front or Guild combatants, but both sides assume the PCs are in the way, shouting threats of arrest or violence to get the PCs to leave the street. It's not long before the insurgents flee, anyway.

If the PCs get arrested by the Guilds, they're tossed in a hover-wagon for an hour and then dropped off at a quiet intersection when "things have settled."

SCENE 4

SECRETS OF THE ORB

Roleplaying Encounter

It's important that the PCs make their appointment with Farkaya the following day. When they do, she says, *"Good news! Spectra-graphics and material analysis say the orb is hollow but not empty."* She smiles. *"And I know how to open it...."*

Farkaya wants to negotiate a fair rate for opening the orb (at least 20 silver pieces and up to 40 if the PCs negotiate badly). She says it is merely a clever puzzle box (and it is), but she believes she can

get a good price for it in Nestora. Perhaps they'd let her keep the orb as a curio if she lets them have what's inside?

"As you can see," she says, pointing to a two-tone grainy image of the orb's insides from scanner data, *"it seems to contain a metal plate in four segments, with each piece on a loop of cord, like a pendant. Talismans, perhaps?"*

If the PCs let Farkaya open it, she taps certain glyphs and sigils along the etched spiral and the orb unravels like the skin of a peeled apple, leaving the four amulets on her counter. Farkaya then winds the "peel" back into a single, seamless orb.

Each amulet is like a pie slice, combining to form a disc of metal, like a plate with an empty circle in the middle—as if something could be inset there. Each amulet also a different glyph etched on its face, which hints at a separate effect for whomever wears it:

- **GLYPH OF INSIGHT:** While worn the character's Perception focuses give a +3 bonus instead of the normal +2. The character also counts as having the Empathy focus if they do not already.
- **GLYPH OF LIFE:** While worn the character receives a +5 bonus to Health.
- **GLYPH OF PROTECTION:** While worn the character receives a +1 bonus to Defense.
- **GLYPH OF THE ARCANE:** While worn the character receives a +5 bonus to Magic Points. Only useable by mages.

Farkaya can decipher each glyph for the PCs and is clearly sorry if she doesn't get to keep any of the amulets. Still, she honors whatever bargain she struck. Then she asks the PCs to leave so she can sulk. *"Just my luck. How do you think I ended up with a shop full of junk?"*

Ideally, there is one amulet for each PC and perhaps one extra one for Farkaya. If you have more than four players, you can double up on some of the amulets or add in more of similar power.

SCENE 5

ENEMIES OF THE CITY-STATE

Roleplaying Encounter

As the PCs leave Farkaya's shop, they see something curious: their own faces on the clustered monitors of the Market Bank. They see patched-together images of their faces, made from multiple photos and angles of footage, all while text scrolls at the bottom of the monitors asking, "Who are these terrorists?"

Describe actions the PCs took in the days before, either reframing their heroics as villainy, or their aid as insurgency. Alter their actions or the consequences of their actions however you like. Whoever controls this footage has the technology to edit and manipulate it to smear and vilify the PCs. For example:

- Rallying citizens to put out a fire is recast as, "organizing looters so the trucks can be robbed."



- Leaving a location becomes, “fleeing a crime scene.”
- Handling a weapon becomes, “brandishing an illegal weapon.”
- Any conversation with an insurgent becomes, “a conspiracy.”

The images and footage, clearly gathered from surveillance sensors both near and far, is paired with the booming voice of an announcer and subtitles summarizing her warnings to the public: “These enemies of the city are wanted for crimes against the Guilds,” and, “If you see these violent rebels, do not approach them,” and, “Even now reports of their whereabouts are coming in through channels,” that sort of thing.

“Our city will be safe once more,” she concludes before moving to the next story.

OCKER APPEARS

As the eyes of citizens in the bazaar turn from the monitors toward the PCs, as recognition and fear marks the onlooker’s faces, the deepening drone of engines and the sirens of Guild trooper trucks echo through the tents and stalls. The crowd bustles and shifts as troopers wade through the masses toward the PCs.

That’s when Ocker appears, stepping out of the crowd in his cargo pants and work shirt, hands out in a gesture of peace. He’s a bald, pale, and angular fellow with a wide nose and crooked teeth. His boss has sent him to the PCs and his goal is to get them to follow. You want to the PCs to trust Ocker, so if you can tie him to some previous or background event, so much the better. On the show, he greeted the characters with,

“Five gold and a party,” so they’d believe he was a friend of the Beer Baron. Try to come up with something similar if you can.

When Ocker has their attention, he says, “Listen, I can get you out of here. And without a ride from the Guilders. I know you’re not with the A.F. but they don’t. They won’t believe you or me. Come with me and we spare all of these people some hurt.”

The crowd makes way for approaching troopers...but some folk nearby whisper to the PCs things like “go on, then” and “hurry!”

Ocker pleads if he has to: “Look, they have decided you’re against them. Which means they’re against you! Do you want to try arguing your defense through a hood or just do nothing, which is the same as giving up?”

Your job here is to get the PCs to go with Ocker, so have him say things the players want to hear. Appeal to what their characters would care about and make references to actions they’ve taken earlier in the story. “You don’t have to side with me, but if we stay here, they will kill us.”

Ocker’s escape route leads through a set of metal doors to a storm drain near Farkaya’s shop. The path goes down, into the city, below the streets, into the unknown. And as the PCs head that way, the citizenry covers their exit, claiming the PCs traveled in some other direction.

CHAPTER RESOLUTION

As Guild troopers draw near and the PCs descend into the tunnels beneath Nestora, offer one last descriptive glimpse of the surface, the bazaar, and the monitors showing their faces...then close the door on the tunnels and this chapter.



HOUNDED, HARRIED, AND HIRED

At the end of **CHAPTER 5: INTO NESTORA**, the PCs follow a man named Ocker underground to escape from Guild law enforcement, who believe that they are terrorists. Unbeknownst to the characters, this whole situation is a set up. Ocker's employer, a powerful industrialist named Voss, is testing them for reasons of his own. Ocker's job is to lead the PCs through dangerous territory beneath the streets and then deliver them to Chairman Voss. His "escape route" leads them deep underground, where the PCs explore not only the city's sewers but also the ancient ruins of a long-buried city, and encounter creatures long forgotten by surface dwellers. If they survive the trip through the underground, the PCs may earn themselves a new and powerful patron.

THE SUBTERRANEAN RUINS

Nestora began construction of a new, deeper sewer system about a decade ago. As work proceeded, the builders discovered the remains of a pre-Chaos Wars city deep in caverns below the ground. Fearing treasure seekers and adventurers would flood Nestora, and perhaps release something awful buried within the ruins, the local leaders kept the discovery quiet.

Of course, rumors and stories leaked, and some people know about it—especially among Nestora's criminal element. It's a dangerous passage. Predatory creatures roam the darkness and frequent tremors and landslides make the ground unreliable. But for smugglers, brigands, and other unsavory characters, it's better than facing surveillance—and the law—on the surface.

THE SEWERS

Ocker begins by leading the heroes into the sewers. They lower themselves down into the filthy water, and begin traveling the narrow corridors. Even if they were spotted, they are not pursued by Guild troopers, who presumably have better sense than to venture into the dark, stench-ridden tunnels.

The sewer tunnels are only five feet wide, with curved ceilings six feet high in the middle. Tall characters may need to hunch over. The corridors have a several inches of smelly, standing water, and a six inch ledge on each side. Those who pass a **TN 11 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test can walk along the ledge until something forces them off.

The tunnels are dimly lit by ambient light filtering down through the occasional storm drain. The light level is highly variable, getting brighter near the drains and very dark between them. Pipes, openings, and grates of various sizes

empty into the main corridors at irregular intervals.

HOW TO RUN THE MAZE

The subterranean maze—consisting of Nestora's sewer system and the ancient buried city beneath it—can be a tricky set of encounters to run your players through. Keep these following points in mind as you do so.

OCKER

Ocker, the protagonists' guide, claims to know how to get to safety through the sewers of Nestora. He uses whatever angle seems most likely to work on the PCs. If they are sympathetic to the Autonomous Front, he says he's taking them to a hidden A.F. camp where they can find refuge and figure out their next move. If they have been put off by the A.F.'s tactics, Ocker says his boss is a neutral party—neither Guild nor A.F.—and that he can provide refuge and possible employment.

Ocker genuinely wants the PCs to get to their destination safely, but once they're into the buried city he's in over his head a bit. This whole plan of Voss's came together rather quickly, and Ocker doesn't know it but he's considered expendable. If they all die down here, Voss will know what he needs to know—that the PCs weren't the right people for the job.

Ocker is competent but not omniscient; he's open to suggestions from player characters with strong opinions about what to do. He's a guide, but don't let him replace player decision-making.

ENCOUNTERS

The trek underground isn't a classic dungeon crawl because detailed mapping isn't necessary. Assume the heroes can keep track of where they are, and don't let things get bogged down in geographic minutiae. Move from encounter to encounter, narrating a travel montage between each one.

The subterranean maze outlines three encounters: one optional and two required. Use the optional encounter if your players enjoy dungeoneering and want a bit more underground action. Restrict yourself to the required ones if your time is limited or if you'd prefer to get the characters back above ground quickly.

When the characters are below ground, stress the oppressive darkness, the pervasive dampness that has long ago rotted or rusted anything made of wood or iron, especially in the buried city beyond the sewers. Ask them what they do for light; if they don't have torches or lamps or any other light source, Ocker finds some in the sewers (perhaps in a supply box), but they need to conserve fuel.



The PCs meet a group of beastfolk adapted to the sunless caverns, who call themselves the Cloustra. They are wretched, mistrustful creatures who hate bright light and secretly plan to offer up the characters as a sacrifice to the predator they worship. Finally, the heroes meet Kynegidas, the relentless hunter who plays with its food and plans to have fun before consuming them.

The point of the journey is for Ocker to lead the characters to his employer, Chairman Voss, who wants to hire them if they meet his criteria. If they survive, they may just be what he's looking for.

SCENE 1

SEWER JACKALS

Combat Encounter (Optional)

Ocker hopes to get the characters out of the sewers and into the buried ruins below, but first, the party must travel a mile or so to the entry point of the ruins. About a quarter mile into the journey, the corridors open into a large junction, and a pack of sewer jackals set upon them.

This encounter occurs in a junction of four sewer tunnels, where the sewer jackals lie in ambush. The tunnels are five feet wide and six feet tall. The junction area is a circular room, thirty feet across, with a roof ten feet high. A storm drain empties through the middle of the roof, providing dim, shadowy light.

As the characters approach the junction, give them a **TN 15 PERCEPTION (HEARING)** test to avoid surprise.

Two sewer jackals per PC attack by bursting out of grates and openings in the corridor walls. Half come out behind the

players, preventing their easy retreat, and the rest come out of similar hidey holes into the junction room.

The sewer jackals fight together by separating the party, using the Skirmish and Pack Tactics stunts to isolate and gang up on characters. If the jackals somehow manage to kill a PC, they attempt to withdraw from the fight and drag the body off to their lair.

If more than half the sewer jackals are killed, the survivors attempt to retreat.





SEWER JACKAL

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

1	ACCURACY
-1	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)
3	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
2	FIGHTING (BITE)
-1	INTELLIGENCE
3	PERCEPTION (HEARING)
1	STRENGTH (JUMPING)
0	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
15	15	13	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BITE	+4	1d6+1

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Pack Tactics, Skirmish.

PACK TACTICS: When part of a group, a sewer jackal can perform a special Pack Tactics stunt for 2 SP, which allows another sewer jackal adjacent to the same target to make an immediate attack as a free action. No sewer jackal can make more than one of these free attacks per round.

FILTH-CRUSTED PREDATORS

This shouldn't be a terribly difficult encounter, but the lack of light and the jackals' divide-and-conquer tactics should make it interesting.

SEWER JACKALS

Sewer jackals are quadrupedal mammalian creatures, equal part fox and rat. They're covered in matted gray fur and have sharp, tearing teeth. Their enormous ears grant them excellent hearing, a big advantage in the darkness of the sewers.

SCENE 2

THE CLOUSTRA

Combat and Roleplaying Encounter

After a few hours of travel through the sewers, Ocker leads the party to a large, very old grate at the end of a corridor. He wrenches the grate open and leads them through.

The characters navigate a rough scramble down a pile of large stones and enter a huge cavern. Their light doesn't even begin to penetrate to the farthest reaches of the chamber, but it's easy to tell by the echoes that it's gigantic. The cavern contains the remains of an ancient city, buried long ago by titanic forces unleashed in the Chaos Wars.

The heroes are on a pile of stone rubble overlooking an old town square, about fifty feet on a side. The far side of

CLOUSTRA HUNTER

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY (BOWS, LIGHT BLADES)
1	COMMUNICATION
1	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)
2	DEXTERITY
2	FIGHTING
1	INTELLIGENCE (NAVIGATION)
2	PERCEPTION (HEARING, TRACKING)
1	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	20	12	4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	RANGE
SHORT BOW	+4	1d6+3	10 YARDS/ 20 YARDS
SHORT SWORD	+4	1d6+3	-

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Mighty Blow, Pierce Armor.

DARK SIGHT: A Cloustra hunter can see 30 yards in darkness without a light source.

TALENTS: Armor Training (Novice) and Single Weapon Style (Novice).

WEAPON GROUPS: Bows, Brawling, and Light Blades.

EQUIPMENT: Heavy Leather Armor, Short Sword, Short Bow, and Quiver with 20 arrows..

DEGENERATE BEASTFOLK

the square is a large granite building, its facade made of huge stone pillars leaning precariously but somehow still supporting a roof in the shadows above. To the left and right of it are smaller buildings and streets leading into the darkness.

PREDATORS IN THE DARKNESS

In the square, another pack of sewer jackals are circling a group of a half dozen beastfolk. Ocker has heard rumors about beastfolk inhabiting these ruins, but has never seen one and doesn't know much about them.

There are two jackals per player character, plus six more, circling the Cloustra. The beastfolk are obviously exhausted and wounded, and are barely holding the vicious pack off. As soon as the PCs do something that would announce their presence—make any sound, light a torch, etc.—the Cloustra call out to them for help. Ocker is dubious, preferring to go around (he has a job to do, and aiding random beastfolk isn't it), but he doesn't argue if the heroes decide to lend a hand.

If the player characters wade into the fight, all but six of the jackals attack the players, while the rest continue to hem in the Cloustra (don't roll for the Cloustra—just describe them as waving their knives at the jackals to ward them off). As



THE CLOUSTRA

The Cloustra (literally “the Enclosed Ones” in their ancient tongue) are the descendants of beastfolk who took refuge in the buried city sometime after the Cataclysm. Since then they’ve scraped out a meager existence, feeding on whatever animals and fungus they can find in the caverns and ruins. They’re smaller than typical beastfolk, short and hunched-over, with large, wide-pupiled eyes. They recoil in pain from bright light.

The technology they use is a curious mix of old and new. They wear primitive-looking skins and furs taken from sewer jackals and other creatures. They wield long iron knives, which they cast from iron they smelt from the vast rust deposits in the ruined city and a coal seam they found in the cavern floor. They carry smoky tar-fueled lanterns.

before, when more than half the attacking jackals are killed, the survivors retreat.

AFTER THE FIGHT

If the heroes help drive off the jackals, the Cloustra are very grateful. Their leader introduces herself as Tana, and says she’s the only one who can speak the language of the World Above, as they call the surface. They speak a language unique to their clan, one derived from the language of beastfolk on the surface but with hundreds of years of drift. Characters who listen closely to the Cloustra talk among themselves might pick out a word or two here and there, especially if they understand the language of beastfolk.

Tana offers to guide the heroes through to the ruins and back towards the World Above. One of her subordinates questions her, and an attentive character may parse out the word “*offering*,” and he uses the word “*Kynagidas*,” but Tana shushes him before he can say much. Otherwise, the Cloustra do as Tana tells them—she is clearly in charge of this troop.

What Tana truly intends to do is to lead the characters to the mighty hunter Kynagidas. The Cloustra worship Kynagidas, and occasionally lead prey to it. This section is played out in **Scene 3: The Hunter**.

For his part, Ocker is eager to take them up on their offer; looking around, he admits that a recent tremor or two may have altered the subterranean landscape, and he isn’t as certain of his route as he’d like.

SCENE 3

THE HUNTER

Combat Encounter

The sewer jackals aren’t the only threat deep in the buried city. A terrifying predator that the Cloustra call Kynagidas lurks in the darkness, waiting for an opportunity to hunt.

This encounter is the overarching threat for the remainder of the characters’ time underground. Play it up for all the tension and fear you can.

KYNAGIDAS

Nobody knows what sort of creature Kynagidas is, or where it came from. It is a three-meter tall, bipedal carnivore of vaguely humanoid shape, covered with short, grey fur, a nightmarish blend of baboon and weasel armed with wicked claws and



KYNAGIDAS

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY (BITE)
2	COMMUNICATION
4	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
2	DEXTERITY
5	FIGHTING (CLAWS)
0	INTELLIGENCE
3	PERCEPTION (HEARING)
5	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)
3	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	60	12	4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
CLAWS	+7	1d6+5
BITE	+4	1d6+5

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Pierce Armor, Quick Bite.

HUNTING HOWL: Kynagidas can let out a terrifying howl as a major action. Characters within 15 yards who can hear the howl must make a successful **TN 13 WILLPOWER (COURAGE)** test or move away from Kynagidas as quickly as possible.

QUICK BITE: Kynagidas can follow up a successful attack with its claws with a Quick Bite as a special stunt costing 2 SP. This bite attack must be taken against the same target as the original claws attack. Doubles on the bite attack roll do not generate more stunt points.

TREMORSENSE: The creature “sees” by sensing vibrations. It is otherwise blind. A character must make a successful **TN 11 WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)** test to remain still enough that Kynagidas cannot sense his presence.

TOUGH HIDE: Gives him an Armor Rating of 4.

HUNTER IN THE DARK

fangs. Its long legs allow it to move with a bounding lope that’s downright eerie, but it usually hunches over as if to spring at any moment. Having adapted to life in the darkness of the caverns, its hearing is extremely sensitive, and it has a form of tremor-sense it uses to track prey. It is completely blind, lacking eyes completely.

Kynagidas is not only agile and cunning, it is sadistic and cruel, as close to a pure hunter as you’re likely to find. It lives for the chase, taking immense pleasure in the pursuit of its prey. Its terrifying howl sends most creatures into panicked flight.

The Cloustra worship Kynagidas as a god of sorts. They occasionally lead prey into its path—sewer jackals, lost treasure hunters from the World Above, etc.—and, in exchange, Kynagidas leaves the Cloustra alone. Mostly.

MEETING KYNAGIDAS

Tana and the Cloustra lead the heroes into an open area, surrounded by buildings on all sides, with rubble-strewn streets leading this way and that. Ocker knows where they are, and says they’re still a couple hours from their destination. Suddenly, Tana howls, as if imitating a wolf—and the howl is answered, seemingly from far off.

The Cloustra leer at the protagonists, smirking in a satisfied sort of way. Tana makes some sort of announcement in the Cloustra’s language (“*Our offering is before you, mighty Kynagidas! Look upon it with favor!*”).

Another howl. Closer.

Tana looks at the party, says “*Kynagidas comes!*” in the Common Tongue, and the Cloustra scatter as fast as they can run. If the PCs attack the Cloustra, they don’t fight back and attempt to flee. If grabbed or restrained in some way, the Cloustra yell for help from their friends, then fall silent and attempt to lay still to avoid Kynagidas’ attention (see Kynagidas’ Tremorsense power).

Kynagidas emerges from the rubble. The three-meter tall nightmare weasel crouch-walks along the perimeter of the clearing. It hisses. It snarls. It bares its teeth and claws. It prowls with the cunning agility of a dancer. Make it clear that the heroes face an extremely powerful foe. If necessary, impress upon them that Ocker looks terrified. If they don’t take the hint, it howls again, hoping to inspire them to run.

Assuming the heroes do, the chase is on. If they fight, see **Tactics** section.

If the characters are not traveling with the Cloustra, they find their way to this encounter anyway, but give them a **TN 15 PERCEPTION (HEARING)** test to detect that something has begun to stalk them, then when they reach this area, Kynagidas emerges and threatens them as described previously.





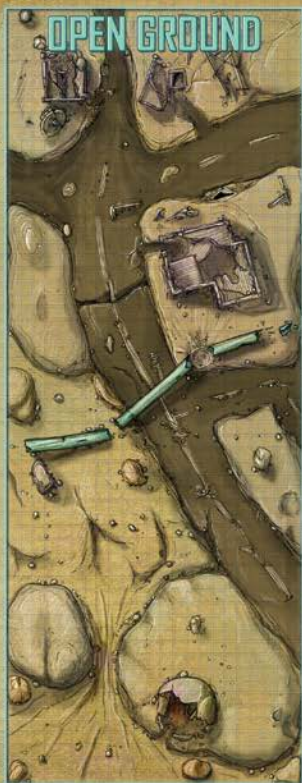
THE CHASE



The subterranean ruins beneath Nestora were discovered just over 10 years ago.

Leaders kept this secret, fearing an uncontrolled outbreak of adventurers and treasure hunters.

Rumors suggest an old ruin may contain a secret stash here.



TAP HERE for more details



TAP HERE for more details



TAP HERE for more details

The purpose of the tunnels was forgotten long ago.



On the run from the law? Call Kraddock and Silva, Nestora's finest lawyers! TAP HERE for more information.

THE CHASE

The key to running this extended encounter is remembering *Kynagidas wants to hunt*. It will forgo outright killing anyone, even one so foolish as to attack it, in their initial encounter, wanting to goad them into an extended chase. It uses its howl to encourage them to run. Once they're out of sight, it gives chase, loping almost lazily after them.

Kynagidas uses sound and tremorsense to locate the characters—the players might figure this out on their own, but if not give them a **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (NATURAL LORE)** test to get it. With this knowledge they may be able to shake Kynagidas—at least temporarily. Kynagidas is relentless, and hounds them until they either kill it or they leave the caverns.

The hunter's most potent weapon in the chase is its howl. It has the potential to panic and separate the party; and once an individual is separated, that's when Kynagidas attacks to kill. The characters' best defenses are contradictory—escaping the caverns, and being very still and quiet. They have to balance these tactics to get out alive, allowing Ocker to guide them toward their destination while Kynagidas hounds them, threatening to pick off any stragglers.

Run the chase as a series of two or three short scenes, depending on what works best for the pacing of your game. Some example maps are provided for these mini-encounters, but feel free to expand or alter them to suit your needs.

- **THE INITIAL CHASE.** Can the party shake Kynagidas long enough to catch their breath?
- **ROOFTOP CHASE.** Kynagidas catches up with the characters as they traverse a collection of ancient rooftops separated by narrow alleys.
- **TUNNEL/ALLEYWAY CHASE.** A series of tunnels much like the sewers they left behind, or narrow alleys with dark corners and passages that lead who knows where.

At some point the party may wish to stop and rest, to bind their wounds and plan their next move. An advantage in their favor is that the ruins of the ancient city are full of nooks, crannies, and hidey-holes where the heroes can hunker down for a couple of hours. Make sure they hear the distant echoes of Kynagidas's howls—it's not going to just give up. It's out there, searching. It'll find them sooner or later, so keep the rests short!

TACTICS

In a direct encounter, Kynagidas's goal is to panic at least one character and separate them from the group, then hunt that character down and kill him or her. The heroes' way out is to kill Kynagidas (possible, but they need to get very creative) or to shake it.

Shaking Kynagidas generally requires getting out of its immediate range, then being as still as the grave until it moves on,



JACKPOT!

If you'd like to provide the characters with a respite and some useful gear, declare that they stumble upon a chamber in the side of a ruined building that was obviously recently occupied. Bloodstains, less than a week old, are evident on the floor—it seems Kynagidas was here and found dinner. The victim's misfortune is the protagonists' good luck—they find a backpack containing a flashlight, a healer's kit, a proximity sensor device with a Fulgin M battery (3 charges left; 1 charge is good for 4 hours of use), a hand blaster with Fulgin M battery (4 charges remaining), a steel pickaxe, and fifty feet of strong rope.

At your option, the remains of the traveler's corpse may also be in the room. This person was just a treasure hunter who had the bad luck of running across Kynagidas. You may want to make the traveler someone known to one of the PCs, if that would add an interesting twist. On the show, Wil used this encounter for S'lethkk to find out the unfortunate fate of his brother. You can do something similar if it fits your campaign.

unable to locate its unmoving quarry. The most straightforward way to get out of its sensory range is to distract its tremorsense and hearing. There are all sorts of ways to do this, everything from the ol' throw-a-rock-over-there trick to triggering a rockslide or cave-in. If the characters try to create a diversion, resolve it as an opposed test, the character's relevant ability vs. **Kynagidas's PERCEPTION (HEARING)**. Be liberal in what skill you allow the character to use. Grant the heroes a bonus of up to +3 for larger, more distracting diversions.

Another way of distracting Kynagidas is to attack it with an extremely loud sound. Again, *reward creative thinking*. If they come up with something that could conceivably go boom, let them try it. Force Kynagidas to pass a **TN 17 CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** test or be disoriented for 2d6 rounds, which should give them plenty of time to get away. While disoriented, Kynagidas cannot use its Tremorsense power.

Once they've put some distance between themselves and Kynagidas, they can hunker down and try to melt into the stonework. If they pass a **TN 11 WILLPOWER (DISCIPLINE)** test they remain still enough for Kynagidas to pass them by. If all the characters hide this way, Kynagidas wanders off, continuing the search, and the heroes can eventually get up and quietly be off.

FINAL ESCAPE

Ocker finally leads the heroes to a large, open area of the cavern. The far wall, one hundred feet away, is natural rock; the characters observe it from behind a pile of stone rubble. Buildings that are ready to fall at the slightest nudge rim the rest of the opening. In the far wall, the characters see a small, electric lamp protected by a cage, next to a steel door with a large wheel in the center that needs to be turned in order to open it. Ocker says that beyond the door is an elevator to the surface.

Unfortunately, if it hasn't already been defeated, Kynagidas is prowling the area. It stands directly in front of the door, almost as if it can tell that's its quarry's goal. It tries opening the door, but hasn't worked out that it needs to turn the wheel.

In this encounter, Kynagidas attacks to kill as soon as it notices the party. The heroes better come up with a plan. The most obvious plan is to lure it near one of the buildings that seems near collapse, then drop the building on it. Allow a few **TN 13 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** or **TN 11 CUNNING (ENGINEERING)** tests to figure that out. Again, *reward creative thinking*—if the players come up with a plan that makes sense, give it a good chance of working. At this point Kynagidas is frustrated and angry, and may not be quite as cunning as it has been. It's had enough play, now it's just hungry.

SAFETY

Once the characters make it through the pressure door, they enter a well-maintained and well-lit elevator lobby, about twenty feet square. They can hear humming machinery deep in the rock, a strange sound after the many hours of silence they've just come through. Kynagidas, if it's still alive, won't follow them here.

The elevator door slides open, and the characters ascend to the surface. Ocker is visibly relieved.

SCENE 4

THE VOSS GROUP

Roleplaying Encounter

Ocker rides up in the elevator with the heroes to another lobby, this one at ground level. The light streaming in the windows is almost blinding after so long in the dark of the caverns. Ocker explains that the Voss Group is an industrial cooperative that manufactures power cells, batteries, and other power supply devices. The person in charge, Elwyn Voss, has something he'd like to discuss with the characters.

The Voss Group headquarters is a large compound containing manufacturing facilities, living quarters, warehouses, and offices for Voss's operations. The grounds are well kept and safe, provided you are on the right side of the highly competent security detail.

In the lobby, several Voss Group workers mill about, doing various tasks. Two are armed with blades and blaster pistols, obviously security personnel. They nod to Ocker, who says "They're here to see the boss." A guard checks a ledger book and waves them to another elevator.

Ocker shows the heroes through security to a particular elevator marked "Executive". He says his farewells and tells the characters to take the elevator to the only floor available: 15. Ocker assures the characters that they can easily find their way to their destination. From here, the heroes proceed to Voss's main office and talk to Voss himself. He has a very lucrative job for them and possibly some valuable information.

THE MEETING

On the Executive level, a dour functionary, who is clearly expecting them, shows them into a twenty feet square room with a long table in the center. Enough chairs for the PCs wait for them on their side of the table; the other side is empty. The far wall contains a large window (with a **TN 9 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test the characters can tell it's a display screen, not a window) with a door next to it.

The door opens, and an elven man steps into the room. He's richly dressed in immaculately tailored finery, and walks with the confidence of a man accustomed to commanding the attention of any room he enters.

In this scene, Voss is a holographic projection. Characters who pass a **TN 14 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test figure out something is

wrong with what they see. If they say anything about it, or if they attempt to touch Voss physically (and discover he is an insubstantial image), see **Voss's True Form**.

Voss introduces himself and compliments them on proving their ingenuity during their subterranean journey, and offers them a job. If they retrieve an item called the Staff of Forlorn Hope for him, he will pay them **100 gold pieces**. The Staff can be found in a floating fortress called the Skyside Stronghold that dates back to the Chaos Wars.

THE DISCUSSION

The PCs don't have to just take it or leave it. Encourage them to engage Voss in conversation. As the conversation proceeds, allow the characters to make tests, depending on the point of discussion. This list should give you a good guide of how to proceed with the conversation.

I want to haggle over the fee!

Roleplay the negotiations a bit, then ask for a **TN 13 COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING)** test. If it succeeds, their fee goes up by 5%. If they meet **TN 15**, it goes up by 15%. That's as high as Voss will go.

How will we get to the flying castle?

Voss says he'll provide a flying machine to take them there.

Why us?

As the conversation proceeds, ask for **TN 11 COMMUNICATION (ETIQUETTE OR PERSUASION)** tests at appropriate moments. For each success, Voss reveals one of these bits of information:

"You have proven yourselves capable by passing the several tests I have laid before you. You have performed well."

Did one of the heroes admit to owing someone a large debt during the opening chapter? If so, use this:

"One of you owes a debt. I have purchased this debt, and I will consider completion of this task to be repayment."

Similarly, is one of the PCs seeking an artifact?

"You may be interested to learn that (the artifact the character seeks) is rumored to be in the castle with the staff."

Use this one last.

"Let's say that I have a particular interest in your careers."

It's obvious that there's more he's not saying, but he's not going to elaborate any more than this.

Why lead us through the tunnels?

Ask for a **TN 11 COMMUNICATION (ETIQUETTE OR PERSUASION)** test. If it succeeds, Voss tells them it's imperative their mission remain a secret. There are those who do not wish it to succeed.

What's so important about this staff?

Voss tells the heroes that it is important to a project he has in mind. With a successful **TN 9 PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)** test, a hero can tell Voss isn't telling them everything, but that's all he'll say about this at the moment.





Is Voss hiding something?

A successful **TN 13 PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)** test indicates that Voss isn't telling them the whole truth, but isn't outright lying to them either.

You're a hologram!

Remember that detecting this requires a successful **TN 14 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test. If a character notices and calls Voss out, see **Voss's True Form**.

Where did you get all this technology?

Ask for a **TN 15 COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)** test—Voss plays this one a bit closer to the vest. If it succeeds, Voss tells them that the Cataclysm brought more than death and fire to the world. Cryptic, but it's a trade secret, so that's all he's going to give up.

Can we borrow some of this fancy equipment of yours?

Ask for a **TN 13 COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING)** test. If the test succeeds, Voss offers one item to each character from this list: a blaster pistol or blaster longarm or power weapon with two Fulgent batteries, a pair of handsets (communicators), high quality climbing gear, scout armor or light battle armor.

Allow the questioning to go on until it reaches a natural conclusion, or until the heroes fail in five tests, at which point, Voss says the discussion is over and wants the group's answer.

VOSS'S TRUE FORM

If one of the heroes actually notices that Voss is a hologram, Voss's image vanishes. The door he initially entered through opens again, and they hear Voss's voice call from through the door:

"Very perceptive. Come through, and see."

Elwyn Voss is, in truth, 1200 years old. This is long lived even for an elf and it is only the technology Voss has spent a lifetime studying that's now keeping him alive. Through the door, the heroes enter a very large, dimly lit room. They are on a scaffold high above the floor (a stairway leads down), and in the center of the room is a large bank of computers and medical equipment. In the middle of all the equipment is a reclined chair, full of flashing lights, tubes, and wires—the chair supports an emaciated elf. This is Elwyn Voss.

The holographic image of Voss appears again, standing next to the chair, as Voss's real hand quivers a bit. "Now, you see me for what I actually am. A tired, worn-out husk. I project my thoughts and self-image through these machines, so that I can interact with others as I wish to. I fear I do not have long. I remember the Chaos Wars, you see, and I remember my comrades who fought and died. I wish to see their work completed, once and for all."

If the characters have more questions, conduct the discussion as before, but grant all tests a +1 bonus.

CHAPTER RESOLUTION

Once a deal has been struck, Voss is eager for them to get started. They can take a day to pick up any other supplies they think they might need in Nestora, but then he wants them to get going. Guild troopers are no longer searching for them (Voss called that off) but the PCs still get sidelong looks as they move around the city. This should encourage them to get what they need and be on their way.

SKYSIDE STRONGHOLD



Chairman Voss has hired the player characters to retrieve a magical artifact called the Staff of Forlorn Hope. It is held inside a fabled and impenetrable vault: the floating chrome fortress known as the Skyside Stronghold. In this chapter Voss loans the PCs a flying machine and they must penetrate the Skyside Stronghold and retrieve the staff. When they arrive—possibly after crashing in the Rustwastes—they discover the fortress is under control of a psychotic artificial intelligence known as the Skyside Sovereign. If the PCs can make it through traps and cyborg killers, they can seize the staff, return to Voss, and learn staggering secrets of their own heritage.



the inner ring. Their machinery seeks to protect the stronghold's sanctity. That means pleasing the Sovereign by preventing anyone from reaching the inner sanctum. They do this by transforming trespassers into monsters like themselves, ever hoping that one more cyborg minion, one more screaming voice, shall be enough to placate the lonely Sovereign.

The inner keep houses artifacts of profound power and oddity, including the physical construct that is the mind of the Skyside Sovereign itself and the treasure it obsessively guards: the Staff of Forlorn Hope.

TREASURES OF THE SKYSIDE STRONGHOLD

The Staff of Forlorn Hope is an important artifact of the Chaos Wars. The heroes who defeated the Prophet Dhawan long ago used the staff's power to tear a hole in reality and imprison the Prophet beyond this existence. To make certain that none could access that pocket dimension again, those heroes hid the staff in a vault high above the land, protected by an artificial intelligence answering only to those with heroic blood. The vault's old name has been lost to time, but in Valkana now it is called the Skyside Stronghold.

The Skyside Stronghold was created from unique elements mined from a meteor, and then covered in chrome and powered with ancient fusion techniques, producing a glowing neon light from every circuit and power relay. The wonder of this impressive technological and artistic accomplishment is, today, as incredible and fearsome, ubiquitous and monumental as any mountain. The Stronghold hovers thousands of feet above the ground and is kept afloat by a combination of magic and technology, moving through the sky along the same slow pattern it has observed for hundreds of years. The Stronghold is said to have been built by Arnon Reed, one of the great heroes of the Chaos Wars.

The public story (known by the PCs with a successful **TN 10 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORICAL LORE)** test) is that the Stronghold is entirely uninhabited, a relic of the Chaos Wars that now serves no purpose. The truth is that it was installed with a magical artificial intelligence that has been corrupted over time by chaos magic. The artificial intelligence, which once selflessly governed the Stronghold's defenses, has come to think of itself as the Skyside Sovereign, and has over the centuries become increasingly, maddeningly, lonely.

For hundreds of years, adventurers who have reached the Stronghold have been captured and fused with neon machinery, transformed and forced to join the Sovereign's horrifying court. The outer ring is patrolled by these screaming bio-tech monsters, created in facilities near the entrance to

THE RUSTWASTES

Beneath the Skyside Stronghold's pattern of travel, reflecting red in its chrome under the blue of the sky, stretches a vast and toxic wasteland. It's called the Rustwastes of Nestora, but Nestora wants no part of it.

In the time of the Chaos Wars, this desert was a great and terrible battlefield. Today, littered with the discarded technology of wars and nations past, the desert is a mix of coarse sand and jagged blades of rust shed off the hides of dead tanks and half-buried airships. Radiation leaks from old engines and lethal ammunition. Toxic chemicals ooze out of old batteries. Minute and razor-sharp particles of eroding metal drift on the wind. Here, a tank is lodged like a boulder, high off the ground, between two towering outcroppings of rock. There, an enormous turbine, divorced from whatever ship it once propelled, juts from the sand like an empty can, half-filled with a dune. The blades of buried airships waggle and bow in the wind.

Thunderstorms blow across this place and hammer down on the metal, leaving much of the wreckage covered in colorful, crusty blooms of rust and calcium. The technology open to the air is pocked and rusted, becoming part the desert around it. The technology buried in the sand and wreckage lies intact, as if entombed, awaiting daring and desperate scavengers.

Davani the Junkmaster is one such scavenger. Strange energies and poisoned water damaged her mind long ago, but twenty years before, she came here with her family to escape the persecution of her beastfolk tribe, seeking to start again. Her husband sought weapons by which they might take the fight back to those who had persecuted them. They built an airship from salvaged parts with the help of their son and daughter and took to the sky without Davani (she's terrified of heights). They went to brave the Skyside Stronghold in hopes of making a discovery that people would have to respect...but neither her husband nor children have ever returned.

Davani has spent the last fifteen years mourning her family and cursing the outside world for taking everything she held



dear. She hates the Rustwastes but she cannot leave them, because she wants to be there if her family comes back to find her.

SCENE 1

INTO THE SKY

Roleplaying Encounter

When the PCs are ready to leave on their quest, Voss sends Ocker (a friendly face, he hopes) to escort them to his private hangar. Inside is a sleek, elven flying machine that can seat up to eight passengers. Ocker explains that this is one of Voss's own ships, lent for use on this mission. It comes with a robot pilot called Locke. The robot knows how to find and safely approach the Skyside Stronghold. Locke is not a conversational machine. He usually speaks in simple phrases like "Yes, master," and "No, master."

The PCs' aircraft resembles a broad-winged, twin-engine propeller plane and runs on powerful batteries. It has a sturdy metal hull. Inside, two rows of seats are arranged against the bulkhead, leaving lots of room in the middle for cargo. The craft's cockpit is open to the rest of the interior and a single pilot's chair faces the glass-like transparent steel of a bulbous viewport. A computer system operates most of the machinery, allowing a pilot to utilize a basic joystick and throttle for flight control.

Though the viewport *looks* like glass, it cannot be broken so easily. "Strong as steel," Ocker says, knocking on the viewport with his knuckles.

SCENE 2

SABOTAGE?!

Exploration Encounter

Strapped into your seats, with morning sunlight beaming in through the pilot's canopy and the viewports along the fuselage, you're ready to venture forth. Locke taxis the aircraft along old asphalt, positions the vessel at one end of an ancient runway, and accelerates. The aircraft rolls forward, picking up more and more speed. When it seems like the craft can't go any faster, when it feels ready to liftoff just from velocity, it keeps accelerating. Only a moment later does it separate from the ground and angle into the sky.

"Climbing to cruising altitude," Locke reports, his electric-blue eyes scanning the world beyond the canopy.

The PCs can roam the fuselage, peering out of portholes or the cockpit viewport. There they see Valkana below as perhaps they never have before: simultaneously small and vast.

After hours in the air, just as the Skyside Stronghold becomes more than a curious shape against a backdrop of clouds, Locke's eyes turn red and a sound like an alarm emits from his mouth. Then: "Weather alert! Weather alert! Storm approaching! Assume emergency positions!"

Any Perception tests made by the PCs reveal that the sky is clear of storm clouds. Scanners detect nothing in the air except the stronghold itself. No storm approaches. The characters don't know it, but Locke's been sabotaged.



LOCKE'S FATE

Who sabotaged Locke and tried to kill the PCs? This has been left open for you to determine. This is a plot thread you can pick up and expand later if you so choose. Maybe it's a rival of Voss, or perhaps an enemy from one of the characters' pasts.

As for Locke, unless the PCs dealt Locke extra damage (perhaps by throwing him out of the aircraft), his hardware is still in salvageable condition. He needs new programming. Once on the ground, his eyes fill with black-and-white static and any cursory tests to study him show that his data appears to have erased itself – perhaps to cover the tracks of a saboteur.

Perhaps Locke still has value as a project or pal for a lonely junker in the Rustwastes?

"Entering storm front! Dangerous wind conditions all around!" Locke's modulated voice reports as the aircraft veers through accelerated maneuvers. Locke continues acting as if the aircraft is in grave danger. He takes the flier through dramatic evasive maneuvers while declaring emergency conditions that do not reflect reality.

"Beware! Lightning! Risk assessment: maximum severity!" The craft careens through empty air as Locke pushes the throttle and pitches the nose towards the sand. Getting to him while the aircraft yaws about, back and forth, requires a **TN 10 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) or STRENGTH (CLIMBING)** test to traverse the cabin and reach the robot.

When someone finally gets near him, his voice declares, *"We are hit! Assume crash positions!"* And then the aircraft plunges into a steep descent.

SAVING THE SHIP

The PCs can attempt to take control of the ship to avoid crashing, escape the fuselage before it crashes, or pilot the plane into an impromptu landing, but time is short. With the plane barreling toward the ground, **the PCs have just one round to act before they must choose either to strap in or bail out.**

If the PCs attempt to take control of the ship, they first need to wrest the controls away from Locke. If one or more of the characters succeeds on a **TN 14 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test, they can pull Locke away from the controls. Locke can be deactivated by dealing **12 damage** to him (**Defense: 10; AR 3**) or by making a successful **TN 14 INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** test, before or after pulling him away. It's a **TN 9 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test to move Locke out of the pilot's seat if he's deactivated, or people can attempt to work the controls even as he attempts to hold onto them, which imposes a +2 TN on all tests to control the aircraft.

If they manage to get temporary or total control of the aircraft, a successful **TN 15 DEXTERITY (PILOTING)** test prevents the craft from crashing outright. It swoops away from the bright sands of the Rustwastes, its engine screaming, the craft trembling, its wake throwing red and yellow sands into the air. Something huge and metal, jutting from the desert, gouges the belly of the craft as it arcs back into the air. Rust and sand, blown around through the tear in the craft's belly, gets in the PCs' teeth. That's how close they came...but now they can continue on to the Skyside Stronghold.

Any defeat of Locke or any piloting attempt – even a failure – leaves the craft in a descent, rather than a dive, making it feasible to survive a crash. Still, if they cannot get control of the craft in time, each character must either parachute out or strap in.

Take this opportunity to give the PCs this idea: If Locke's malfunction was sabotage (though they can't be sure yet), can they trust the parachutes on board?

Ditching the aircraft for the safety of a silk 'chute requires a **TN 12 WILLPOWER (COURAGE)** test or the accompaniment (or push) of another PC. Once in the air, the parachute's automated altimeter deploys the chute, jerking the character into a rough, spiraling fall through whipping winds to the grit and silt below. The landing deals **1d6+2 penetrating damage**.

Each strapped-in character in the aircraft watches emergency systems engage at low altitude. Automated mechanisms fight to level the craft, even if Locke is still at the controls, causing the craft to pull up at the last moment. Too late. Even as the engines strive and whine, the craft bounces off a dune, crashes through a crest of sand, and buries its nose in a trench of red rust. Each PC aboard takes **3d6 damage** and is knocked unconscious.

Whether they parachute out or strap in, if they cannot keep the craft in the sky, the PCs now find themselves on the ground in the Rustwastes....

SCENE 3

IN THE RUSTWASTES

Roleplaying Encounter

PCs who were in the crash regain consciousness in the harsh sunlight of the wasteland streaming through the still-intact canopy of the aircraft. The character(s) with the highest Constitution wakes first and can wake the others.

When they step outside they behold the vast, colorful expanse known as the Rustwastes...

A legendary expanse of forgotten and neglected detritus, the Rustwastes spread to the horizon. The sands, which curve in great dunes for as far as the eye can see, are swirls of iridescent color – the ground itself has rusted with time. From the dunes spike the wrecks of countless airships, ancient weapons, even the ruins of once-proud buildings. Legend holds that this place was once the site of a great battle during the Chaos Wars and that more lives were lost on this field of battle than on any other. All that remain to tell the tale are the rusted remnants of the struggle. No city-state holds sway on this land nor is there any civilization for miles around. Only the wastes.



Any PCs who parachuted out of the aircraft reach the crash site a few minutes after the first character wakes up, perhaps carrying an armful of folded parachute silk.

To the untrained eye, the craft appears more or less intact. It's jammed into a dune of silt and grit pretty well, but the canopy is intact and the craft's wings and engines look good. It's plain to see, though, that it'll take days to dig it out of the sand. (A **TN 9 INTELLIGENCE** test with any of numerous technical focuses gives a character confidence that the craft can be flown again.) If Locke was sabotaged, the saboteur either underestimated the sturdiness of the craft or wanted the passengers to perish in the Rustwastes, it seems.

MEETING DAVANI

Within a few minutes of reuniting the PCs (when you think it's dramatically apt), a figure crests the dune that cradles the aircraft, casting her shadow onto the fuselage. She stands in pocked and sand-blasted armor, a helmet covering her face, and she grips a rusted power spear in one hand with a casualness that suggests great familiarity with the weapon. Then her shoulders sag in disappointment.

This is Davani the Junkmaster and she's sad to see that people have survived the crash.

Her instinct is to treat any strangers as threats. She glances around to get a complete count of the survivors, then shakes her head in frustration. If the PCs give her a chance to speak first, she grunts, then says, *"Go on. Off with you. Mine now."*

If the players do not react with hostility, they can talk Davani into hearing them out with a **TN 15 COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, DECEPTION, or PERSUASION)** test. She's not interested in their story. She wants to know if they intend to steal or loot her patch of the desert and the treasures buried within it. She says things like:

- *"But you fell here. So what do I get out of it?"*
- *"I can help. I can help you get out of here. That's good, if you go away. What do I get, though?"*
- *"Yes, your importance is very important. You have your story. We all do. These wrecks are mine. Let's get you out of here. You have food? Something to trade?"*

If the characters successfully demonstrate that they are not hostile, Davani takes off her helmet to reveal herself: a rat-like woman with eyes gone mad from years of isolation. She raises her nose and looks at everyone sideways—literally sideways. She is mostly concerned with what she can salvage from the situation but she is also extremely wary of outsiders (and everyone who is not her family is an outsider). She wants to take their shiniest belongings but she isn't a fool. She knows that she is one and the PCs are several. Her priorities are to get the PCs to leave, to get something for her trouble, and to outlive the PCs so she can await the return of her family.

DAVANI'S HELP

With a bit of barter, Davani helps them fix their ship. Technologies or shiny objects from previous adventures work

well, but reward player creativity. (She can make use of Locke, for example.) She listens to stories about family but has no patience for almost anything else. This subject is her soft spot due to her own personal history. The only other thing that might convince her: any mention of the artifact from the player's past (if one was chosen in **CHAPTER 3**), which triggers deep emotions in her. This was the artifact her husband hoped to recover when he went to the Skyside Stronghold fifteen years ago.

WORKING WITH DAVANI

If the players do choose to work with Davani, she says she has a winch nearby she can use to pull the aircraft out of the sand. *"I'll get it. You stay here. You be here. Nowhere else, yeah? You be here."*

She returns with her winch as the sun is sinking. As they work, she idly tells them of her family background—of her husband, son, and daughter, all of whom traveled into the castle in the sky to retrieve "treasures." She isn't opening up so much as she's filling the silence. If the PCs tell her where they're headed, she makes a sad *tsk-tsk* sound. *"None return. If any do, it should be my husband, our children, before you. Wait your turn. Send them home, then do ... whatever it is you do."*

As they finish their work, cranking the winch until they can get the aircraft on its landing gear and taxied out of the sand, the last of the day's sunlight fades. The Rustwastes become a vast and empty stretch of darkness beneath stars and bright, moonlit clouds. Above them, the Skyside Stronghold glitters like a bit of glass stuck in the fabric between the stars.

FIGHTING DAVANI

If the players decide to fight Davani, they win. It's not a fight. She surrenders. She's not willing to die today.

If captured, Davani tells them where to find her winch in the empty wreck of a nearby battle-tank. She helps them in whatever ways are necessary to get them to leave—but she tells them nothing.

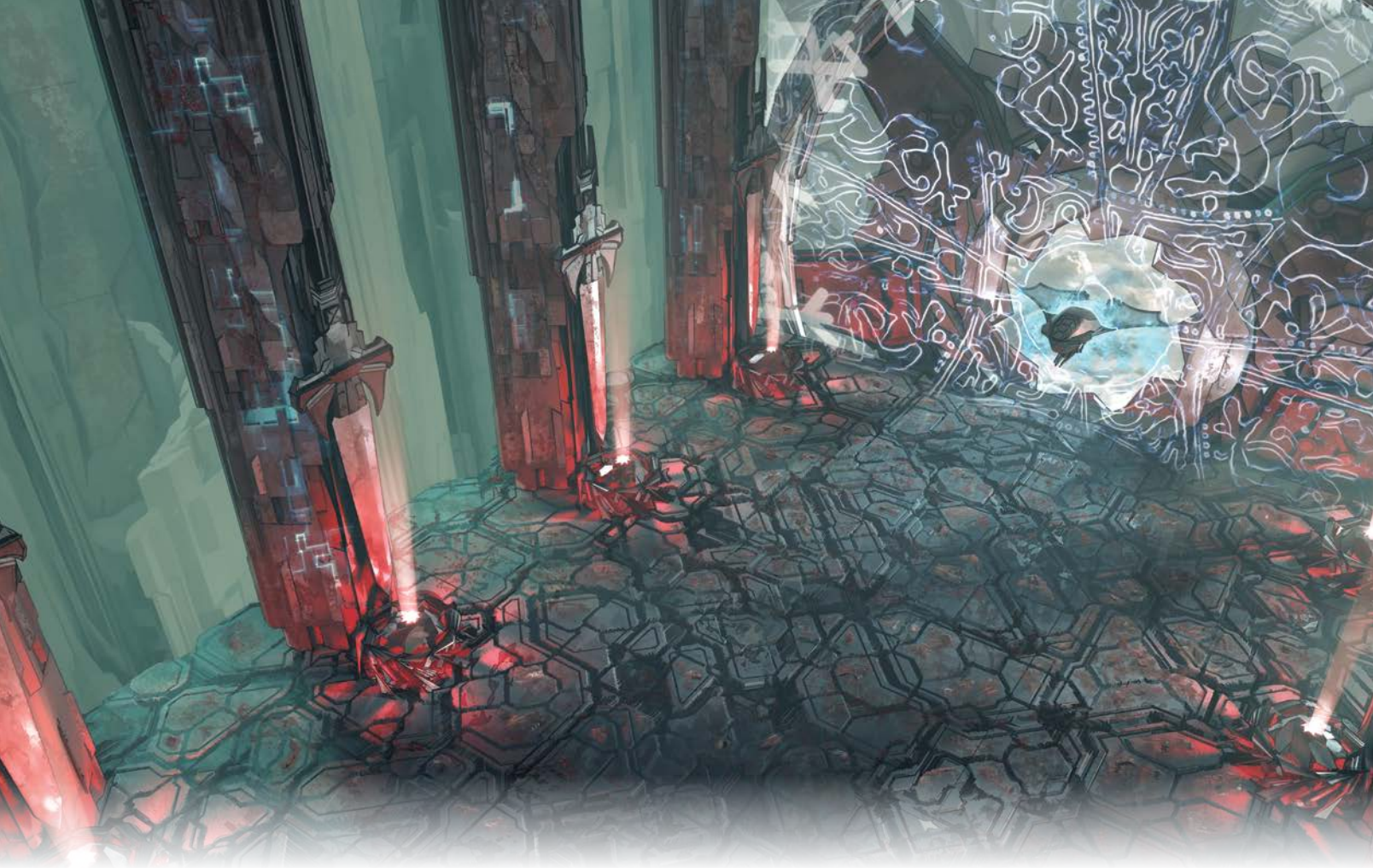
If they loot her possessions, they discover Davani's tools and caches of parts hidden all throughout the nearby wrecks. These can be used to dig out the ship, too. They also find a note on old paper, clearly folded and re-folded many times, tucked into a pouch on her belt. This note is dated almost fifteen years ago. It reads as follows.

My dearest Davani,

I write in hopes that you will someday forgive me. The children could not be persuaded to stay and so I have allowed them to join this quest for the honor of our family. For all those we lost to persecution, for every mutant brother and sister silenced by hatred, we will retrieve the artifact from the PCs' past from the Skyside Stronghold and deliver it back here. Only with its power might we see justice done. Only then might we finally have a home again. Trust that we shall return to you, Davani. I love you.

Your beloved,

Grakesh



SCENE 4

INTO THE SKYSIDE STRONGHOLD

Exploration Encounter

As you make your final approach, wisps of cloud give way to reveal the Skyside Stronghold. The dark citadel glows with pulsing neon conduits, like veins flowing with red light. The Skyside Stronghold floats above the land as if by magic. The entire chrome structure seems to be in constant motion, mighty gears and neon circuits pulsing in perfect sync. Attached to the outermost edge of the Stronghold is a hangar, the only visible landing spot on the entire keep, but its heavy doors are shut tight.

A signal comes into the aircraft's communication array. It's in code but with a successful **TN 10 INTELLIGENCE (CRYPTOGRAPHY)** test the PCs can decipher it:

The Skyside Sovereign bids you welcome this day. Your presence is requested with sincerest regards. A place has been prepared for you.

No other messages come. No reaction is offered to any message sent. But the hangar door opens to underline the intent of the signal.

Whether it's destiny or a trap, with limited battery power and few options, it's time to enter the Skyside Stronghold.

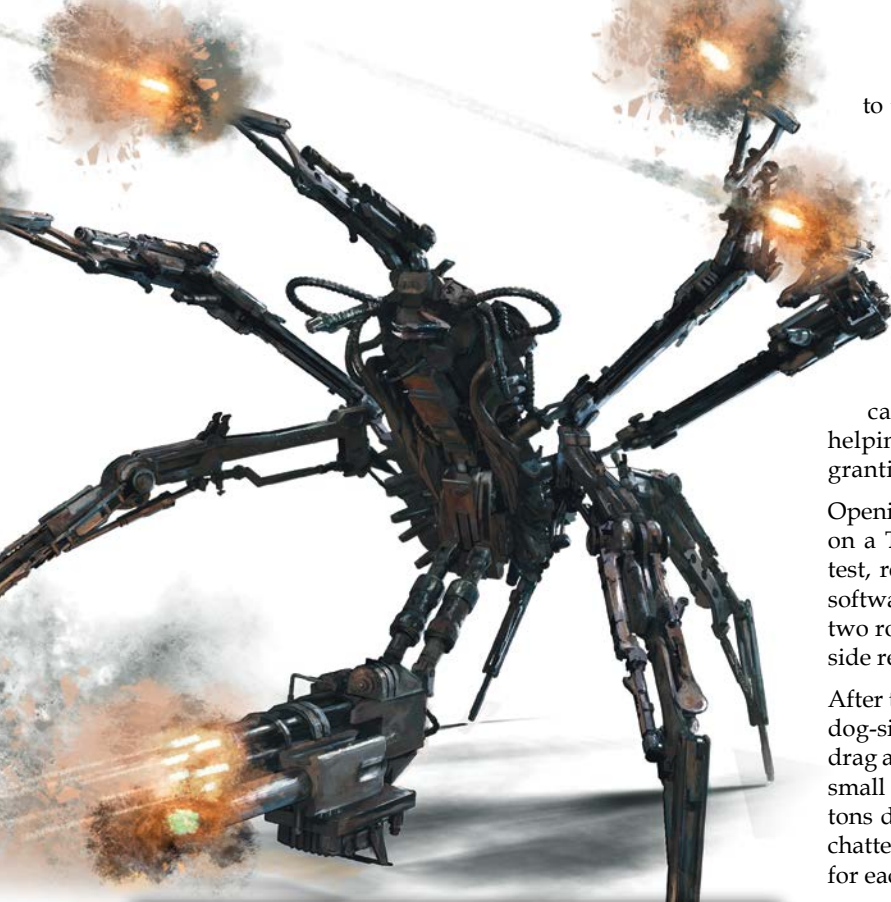
Inside the hangar, the PCs land the airship and see the inside of the Stronghold for the first time. The hangar is a huge, metallic cavern, totally empty except for their ship—but the hangar is a grisly sight. Rust-colored streaks mark nearly every surface, anyone with knowledge of such things recognizes the distinctive orange color of dried blood. The gilded glory of Skyside Stronghold is smeared and gruesome, stained by gore. Further investigation with a **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (HEALING) or PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)** test confirms it is blood, some of it quite old.

The moment one of the characters steps foot onto the ground of the Skyside Stronghold, the hangar door slams shut and the neon lights flicker out. Something hisses. By the aircraft's running lights, the PCs can see clouds billowing into the room through vents along the floor. The vapors smell sweet and sharp, like cleaning solution. There's no way that's better than oxygen.

A voice booms from hidden speakers, but muffled like an old recording: "Welcome, honored guests. The Skyside Sovereign receives you. Glad to have you here! We shall be great friends."

To endure the gas, PCs must pass a series of increasingly difficult **CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** tests to continue to act in each round; start at **TN 9** and increase the difficulty by **+1 TN per round**. Characters take **1d6 penetrating damage** on a failed test. If they reach 0 Health from the gas, they fall unconscious.

Characters can escape the room using two methods: a ventilation shaft in the ceiling or a security door that leads directly



to the outer ring but is controlled by a computerized lock. Remember, their airship is no longer air tight, so it offers no protection from the gas.

Reaching the ventilation duct's rattling, loose grate requires a PC to complete a **TN 12 STRENGTH (CLIMBING) or DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) Advanced Test** with a **Success Threshold of 10**. Success means a PC reaches the shaft, probably by climbing their own aircraft, and can help companions escape. Each attempt takes one round and PCs can either make separate attempts or spend their action helping another character with a boost or extended hand, granting them a +2 bonus to their roll.

Opening the lock on the security door requires a PC to succeed on a **TN 15 INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS)** test. If a PC fails this test, reveal the TN to them as they get a sense of the lock's software and design. If a PC succeeds, the door stays open for two rounds before slamming shut. Opening it from the other side requires a similar test.

After three rounds of resisting the gas and attempting escape, dog-sized defense automatons arrive to subdue the PCs and drag away those who have succumbed to the gas. Armed with small blaster weapons and electrified pincers, these automatons dart about, in and out of the billowing gas, hissing and chattering like giant roaches. There is one defense automaton for each PC.

Player characters that succumb to the gas and are left inside the hangar get carried off by defense automatons, through the interior of the Skyside Stronghold to the gear-covered building: the Automaton Factory.

SCENE 5

THE AUTOMATON FACTORY

Roleplaying or Combat Encounter (Optional)

This is an optional scene that can be played if one or more PCs succumb to the gas in the hangar.

You wake up and find yourself strapped to a table. Above is a machine with a half-dozen arms, each of which ends in a scalpel, pincer, needle, or drill. The arms begin to move and the drills begin to spin. Then you hear the voice of the Skyside Sovereign. "Greetings, new minions! We are glad you've chosen the winning team. Please remain still, your upgrade is about to begin! We believe you'll find your life of service most rewarding."

On the upside, captured PCs have had their Health restored (they must be in good shape before the traumatic operation that's about to happen). On the downside, they are restrained quite firmly. The PCs can see their weapons and armor on a platform nearby marked for recycling, but they are otherwise undamaged. For more information on the Automaton Factory, see the scene following.

Characters can attempt to escape their restraints with a **TN 15 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test to break their restraints or a **TN 14 DEXTERITY (LOCKPICKING)** test to disable the locks. The PCs have three rounds to free themselves before the machines inject them with a sedative and prepares them for transforma-

DEFENSE AUTOMATONS

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY (BLASTER)
-2	COMMUNICATION
3	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
4	DEXTERITY
2	FIGHTING (PINCER)
-1	INTELLIGENCE
1	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
3	STRENGTH
0	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
16	25	14	4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BLASTER	+4	1D6+4
PINCER	+4	1D6+4, PENETRATING

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Lightning Attack, Skirmish.

ARMORED: The light metal shells of the automatons provides an Armor Rating of 4.

DEATH RUNS SWIFT: Defense automatons have a base Speed of 12 due to their quickness.

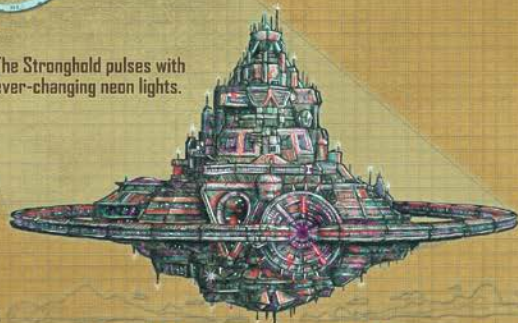
ELECTRIC PINCERS: The automatons Pincer attack inflicts penetrating damage.

WEAPONS GROUP: Blaster Pistols.

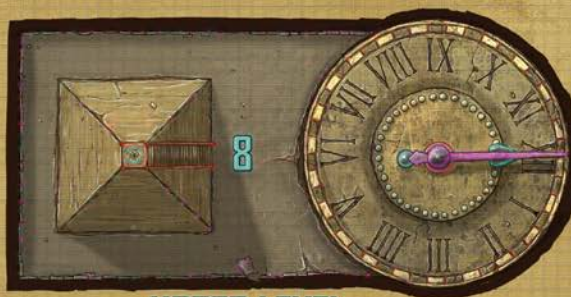
SECURITY ROBOTS

SKYSIDE STRONGHOLD

The Stronghold pulses with ever-changing neon lights.



The Stronghold hovers thousands of feet above ground.



UPPER LEVEL

- KEY -

- 1 - Hanger
- 2 - Security Door
- 3 - Walkway
- 4 - Iris Gate
- 5 - Automaton Factory
- 6 - Red Neon Door
- 7 - Inner Keep
- 8 - Vault

The Skyside Stronghold flies using a combination of magic and technology.

Legends claim it was built by Arion Reed, a great hero of the Chaos Wars.

Its geared, chrome structure is in constant, churning motion.

Those who enter the Stronghold are never seen again.

[TAP HERE](#) for more information.



LOWER LEVEL

Visit Dragons and Donuts for the finest food in Nestora! [TAP HERE](#) for more information.

tion into a cyborg. If a PC attempts to reason with the Skyside Sovereign or simply keep it talking to buy time, they can make a **TN 13 COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION) test** each round. Success buys the speaker's companions another round to attempt escape. The round after a character is freed, that character can hit the release button on all of their companions' restraints with a single action. The PCs then have one round to grab their weapons and fight off a response force of one defense automaton per party member (No time to put on armor!).

It may well be that some characters succumb to the gas and others escape the hangar. If that is the case, you can have the captured PCs wake up a few rounds before their friends show up in the Automaton Factory (see **Scene 7: In the Court of the Skyside Sovereign**). This should give them a chance to escape before all hell breaks loose.

SCENE 6

ESCAPE!

Exploration Encounter

If the PCs escaped through the front door, they move out onto a pathway to that leads to the chrome-covered central keep of the Skyside Stronghold. They are now outside, and the winds howl around them. They can see that there is one way to enter the keep: a mighty circular irised gate.

If the PCs escaped through the ceiling hatch, they are be able to climb through the inside of the Stronghold using a combination of strength and dexterity. This bypasses the security door, but climbing in the Skyside Stronghold is dangerous—the walls are always moving and shifting, and grips can become non-existent with the single shift of a panel. Moreover, the neon circuits run incredibly hot and are dangerous to the touch. This is a **TN 12 Advanced Test using STRENGTH (CLIMBING) or DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) with a Success Threshold of 12**. Any PC who fails a check during this test takes **1d6+1 damage** unless another PC surrenders his own success to save them. This results in no damage to either PC, but the Dragon Die from the successful PC can't be used towards the Success Threshold. If the PCs make it through, they can emerge from a service panel onto the pathway that leads to the keep.

Approaching the keep causes the ancient blaster turrets of the keep to activate, but they are old and ill-maintained. Their aim is terrible so a successful **TN 9 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) test** allows a PC to avoid being hit and the turrets only get one chance to hit each character before they reach the gate. Any character failing this test is grazed by the turrets, taking **2d6 damage** before they get through their line of fire. Once in the cover of the building, the wailing of the wind begins to fade...replaced with the wailing howls of some distant force. Animals? People? Something even worse? The truth lies beyond.

The irised gate has a computerized lock with a complex control scheme. It takes a **TN 14 INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS) test**



with a degree of success of 4 to open it. Each attempt takes one minute and after five minutes if the door is not opened a security force of one defense automaton per two PCs (round up) arrives to investigate.

SCENE 7

IN THE COURT OF THE SKYSIDE SOVEREIGN

Combat Encounter

Once the irised gate to the keep is opened, the Automaton Factory is revealed.

The room is 20 yards wide and 60 yards long—a tightly-packed system of automated assembly arms and high-tech conveyor belts, all powered with high-pressure neon. The gears have a rhythm all their own as they assemble, piece-by-piece, what look like robotic body parts. Legs. Arms. Even pieces of the defense automatons encountered in the hangar. This place is not simply some antechamber to the inner keep—it is the factory that produces the Stronghold's defenses. Numerous sealed tubes, which look like the pipes of a sinister organ, are embedded along the walls. At the far end of the room is an enormous door illuminated with red neon.

Immediately upon arriving in the factory, the PCs are addressed by the disembodied, cold voice of the Skyside Sovereign, who isn't an actual sovereign, or even a bandit that has taken the Stronghold as his own, but rather a rogue artificial intelligence. The Sovereign was never meant to achieve true sentience, yet wake he did, and he has learned the true meaning of loneliness and the madness that comes with centuries of isolation. This

explains the Sovereign's elation at the PCs arrival. It desires to keep the PCs on the Stronghold forever, to alleviate his loneliness. Read this aloud when he explains:

"I apologize if the gas scared you, but I wasn't sure you would come to the factory of your own choosing. And yet, here you are. Just like all the others. You have not yet raised your voice in joyous exaltation of how wonderful it is to be an honored member of the Skyside Sovereign's court. We will have to fix that."

At this point the tubes along the walls begin to slide open, revealing horrific cyborgs. They are the semi-living remnants of adventurers who made it to the Skyside Stronghold, fused with parts produced in this factory. They are now the court of the Skyside Sovereign—its defenders and its citizens. Neon pumps through their bodies like blood, while chrome plating and copper-wire circuitry wraps around their bodies in intricate patterns.

Begin with one cyborg per PC. More cyborgs emerge from the chrome conduits or come lurching through the corridors if the fight is too easy.

If the PCs don't want to stand and fight, they can seek to push past their foes and make for the red neon door. The cyborgs press their assault. They aren't fast but they fear only the displeasure of their Sovereign, not any damage or death the PCs can unleash on them.

If the PCs can break away, they can move deeper into the bowels of the facility. The Skyside Sovereign temporarily loses track of them amidst all the machinery, giving them a chance to get close enough to the red neon door to clearly see two ways to proceed: a stealthy but physically challenging path or a more direct route guarded by three cyborgs—one average size and two smaller.



THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO

If the players just cannot catch a break and their characters are about to succumb to a hellish existence as screaming, neon-blooded cyborgs for the Sovereign, you have one final option you can use to rescue them. It's a *deus ex machina*, but that might be preferable to defeat. Ready?

Davani can save them.

Either the PCs encountered her in the Rustwastes (and maybe made an impression on her through a dialogue or some story they told) and now she's decided to brave the stronghold to rescue her family *or* the PCs narrowly avoided the Rustwastes and their near-miss over her territory got her attention. Either way, she watched the PCs' aircraft climb to the Skyside Stronghold and it made her realize that she loved her family more than she was afraid of the Stronghold's dizzying heights.

So, Davani arrives in a crudely rebuilt aircraft of her own and blasts a hole in the automaton factory that the PCs can use to escape. Maybe she helps them reach the red neon door, maybe she escapes with her transmogrified family – that's up to you and the players – but it seems likely that Davani doesn't have quite a happy ending here. But the PCs still can.

Characters who crashed in the Rustwastes can make a **TN 10 PERCEPTION (SEEING) test**. Success confirms the organic parts of these three cyborgs bear a strong resemblance to Davani – these tortured half-machines are all that remains of her family. This is also a chance to put Davani's family out of their endless misery. If one of the PCs is searching for an artifact as part of their background, it is discovered on the body of Davani's husband. It seems he found what he was looking for before he was captured and turned into a cyborg.

If the player attempts the stealthy route, they must each succeed on a **TN 13 DEXTERITY (STEALTH) test** followed by a **TN 9 STRENGTH (CLIMBING) test** to climb along the walls of the room and drop silently behind the guards and slip through the door. If they fail, they must fight the three cyborgs guarding the door, who spot them and move to engage. Upon sneaking past or defeating the cyborgs, they can proceed to the red neon door.

OPENING THE RED NEON DOOR

When the PCs reach the door, the action in the factory stops. By reaching the Inner Keep, the PCs have inadvertently triggered a maintenance shutdown protocol, one so ancient even the Skyside Sovereign has forgotten its existence. Curious PCs can make a **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS) test** to realize this, but either way they are free to proceed.

As the strange automated processes of the factory slowly grind to a halt, the red neon door that leads to the Inner Keep seems to glow even brighter, inviting. The dark steel surface of this enormous door is untouched by the blood that soaks the outer ring. You note that despite its obvious high-tech construction, it is engraved with ancient mystic runes. Beneath the runes, a small computerized receptacle protrudes from the center of the door, holding the two great slabs of chrome together. The receptacle is empty, but is designed with laser scanners and biological read-outs. No lock but this. No way but forward.

With a **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (ARCANE LORE) test**, the players can translate the ancient runes, which read: *Only the blood of heroes shall pass*. The players can attempt to break the seal, but it will not budge. Only by bloodletting into the stoup will they be able to open the door. Once they deposit their blood into the basin, the door absorbs the blood, analyzes it, and allows them passage – a clue to their heritage.

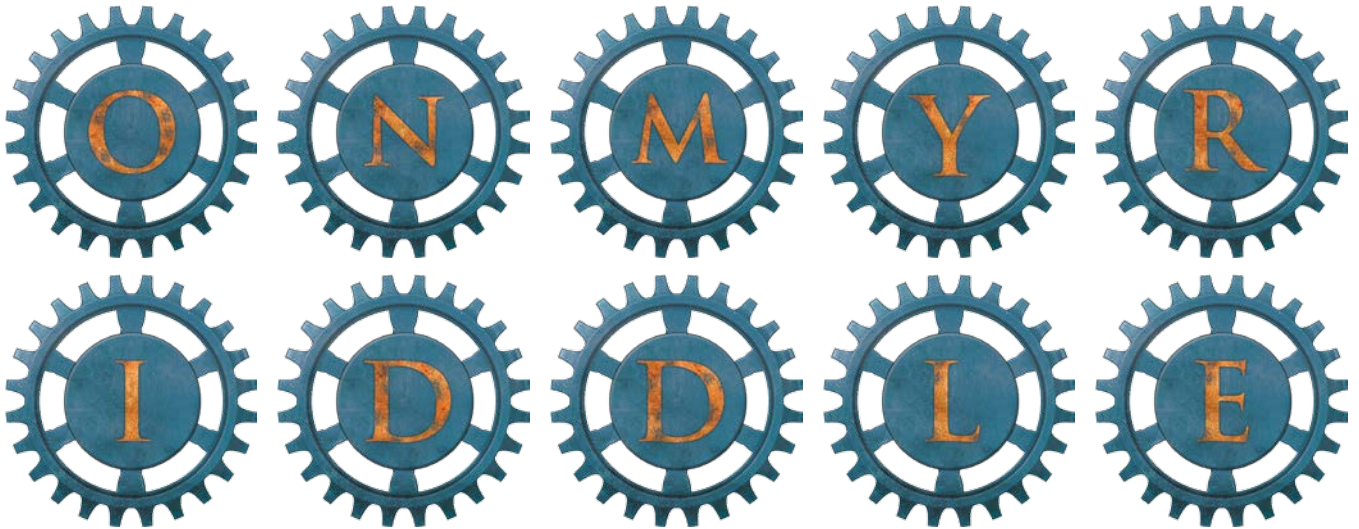
KILLER CYBORGS

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)			
3	ACCURACY (BLASTER PISTOLS)		
-1	COMMUNICATION		
4	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)		
2	DEXTERITY		
3	FIGHTING (CYBORG WEAPONS)		
-1	INTELLIGENCE		
2	PERCEPTION (SEEING)		
4	STRENGTH (MIGHT)		
-1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)		
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
8	30	12	5
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE
BLASTER ARM	+5		2D6+2
CYBORG WEAPONS	+5		2D6+4
SPECIAL FEATURES			
FAVORED STUNTS: Knock Prone, Mighty Blow.			
CYBORG ARMOR: The metal shell of the cyborgs provides a natural armor of 5. However, the Pierce Armor stunt allows an attacker to hit their remaining fleshy bits, bypassing all armor.			
IRREDEEMABLY MAD: The cyborgs are immune to attempts to persuade or otherwise reason with them, as well as stunts based on personal interactions.			
KILL THE FLESH: An attacker may spend 4 SP to strike the cyborg's vital organs. If a cyborg takes 10 or more damage to their vital organs their organic parts die and they cease to function.			
WEAPONS GROUP: Blaster Pistols and Cyborg Weapons			
THE SOVEREIGN'S ELITE			

When one of the PCs puts even a drop of blood into the receptacle, the doors immediately go dark and slowly begin to open. Beyond lays the Inner Keep...and the Staff of Forlorn Hope.



INNER KEEP RIDDLE



SAD

RUSH

MOTHS

UNTIES

CEASED

EASY

UNSECRET

MAINLINE

SCONES

SKEW

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INNER KEEP

Exploration Encounter

Upon entering the Inner Keep, the PCs see a massive set of gears and a clock surface etched into the floor of a large circular chamber with no visible exits. The hands of the clock are pointed toward the number 12. On the circular wall are large plaques and gears, each about 3 feet tall. The 10 gears are on posts about 7 feet off the floor, each above a plaque about 3 feet off the floor.

Upon each gear is a single letter painted in red gold. The gears can be read in a circle to spell the words **ON MY RIDDLE**. Upon each plaque is a single word. The words are, in order:

SAD
MOTHS
CEASED
UNSECRET
SCONES
RUSH
UNTIES
EASY
MAINLINE
SKEW

The PCs may discover through experimentation that both the gears and the plaques come off the wall, though they take some effort to dislodge. Each gear is 65 pounds; each plaque is 130 pounds. Lifting a gear off the wall or putting it back on a post on the wall requires a **TN 8 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test, while a plaque requires a **TN 11 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test. If two or more PCs can work together to move a gear or plaque, no test is required.

The words and gears can be rearranged to solve the puzzle. Combining the right letter from a gear with the right plaque gives a pool of letters that can be used to spell a pluralized unit of time. If they are arranged in increasing lengths of time, the PCs can get all the units of time from the smallest to the largest, starting at the point where the hands point to the 12 and reading clockwise around the walls.

D + SCONES = SECONDS
M + UNTIES = MINUTES
O + RUSH = HOURS
Y + SAD = DAYS
E + SKEW = WEEKS
N + MOTHS = MONTHS
R + EASY = YEARS
D + CEASED = DECADES
I + UNSECRET = CENTURIES
L + MAINLINE = MILLENNIA

Note that the two D's can be placed in either order.

If the PCs are having trouble with this puzzle, have the clock hands emit a loud ticking sound. This might spur them to think about time units. If that doesn't work, ask them how much time they think they have left. Failing that, you can let them make a **TN 11 INTELLIGENCE (CRYPTOGRAPHY)** test to figure out that each letter and word combination creates a single unit.

When the PCs have all the gears and plaques in the correct order, the clock hands roar to life, like an old engine starting up for the first time in years. As the hands move clockwise, the floor of the chamber begins to slowly rise, in time with the ticking clock. The ceiling slides open as the chamber ascends. After a minute of movement, the clock stops. The characters have made it to the hidden vault of the Staff of Forlorn Hope.

SCENE 9

THE STAFF OF FORLORN HOPE

Exploration Encounter

As the floor rises into position, the PCs see the object of their quest before them.

When the floor stops rising and locks into place, you find yourself in a large vault with no windows or doors. Across the way you see a platform in the shape of a flat-topped pyramid. Wide steps lead to its apex and there you see an upright staff. Next to it lies a skeleton, its right hand still loosely grasping the base of the staff. This is what the Skyside Sovereign went mad trying to protect: the Staff of Forlorn Hope.

If the PCs examine the area, they note several things:

- There is a circle of blue stone at the top of the platform which is ringed with strange symbols. A **TN 14 INTELLIGENCE (LINGUISTICS)** test reveals these are mathematical formulas in an ancient form of the Saurian language.
- A character can make a **TN 14 INTELLIGENCE (ARCANES LORE)** test to try to understand the markings and runes that litter the ground. Because the formulas and runes are ancient and complex, the only information gleaned is contextual mentions of "activation" and "transport" and "catalyst."
- The inside of the circle is made of closely-fitted stones in the shapes of various geometric polygons. A thick layer of dust dims what would otherwise be beautifully luminescent stone.
- The skeleton appears human. However, the hand grasping the staff is mechanical. A successful **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (CULTURAL LORE)** test reveals that the skeleton's clothing is typical of the fashions in the time of the Chaos Wars.
- The only thing in the skeleton's pockets is a faded, folded photo of a man, a woman, a child (hugging a large teddy bear), and a robotic dog. On the back it says, barely visible: *Arnon, Lisl, Hobb with Runcible, and Doxy at Reed Manor.*





THE STAFF OF FORLORN HOPE

The Staff of Forlorn Hope is one of the great relics of the Chaos Wars. A mage who wields the staff gains the following benefits:

- The bearer gains a +2 bonus on Casting Rolls.
- The bearer is protected by a magical force field that adds 3 to the character's Armor Rating.
- The bearer receives a +2 bonus on attack rolls with, and inflicts +1d6 damage with Arcane Blasts.

- The skeleton's left hand has a tarnished silver ring on one finger. It has three large stones embedded in an ornate square mount: one red, one blue, and one yellow.
- There is a piece of chalk a few inches from the left hand. A **TN 10 PERCEPTION (SEEING) test** reveals a few lines of rune-like symbols chalked onto the floor in chalk. A faint brown smear bisects them. It's apparent that this smear was once blood.

The skeleton is that of Arnon Reed, the architect and builder of the Skyside Stronghold. His presence and the nature of his demise are mysterious. Did he die embedding the Staff of Forlorn Hope in the stone or in a vain attempt to retrieve it? The answer is unclear.

PCs that simply try to pull the staff from the blue stone circle fail, no matter their Strength. If blood from any of the PCs drops inside the circle, the stone begins to glow. Only at this point does the staff come free.

Once a character is able to pull up the staff, the party vanishes in a blinding flash. They appear on the pathway outside the keep, with the hangar in sight.

With the Staff of Forlorn Hope taken from the keep, the Skyside Sovereign and its minions fall silent forever. The stronghold continues to fly through the sky, but now it is little more than a graveyard.

SCENE 10

INTERVIEW WITH AN ANCIENT

Roleplaying Encounter

The PCs return to Nestora. As soon as they show up at the Voss Group HQ, they are whisked inside and up to Voss's office. There, the ancient elf seems delighted to see them and the staff. This proves to him that the PCs are the heroes he's been waiting for.

This scene is crucial to the emerging story of the Ashes of Valkana.

Up to this point the PCs' adventures have seemed random (though they have not been). In this scene they are going to get a huge amount of information and backstory. Furthermore, they are going to learn that they have the blood of heroes in their veins and that big, historical events are suddenly quite relevant to them. This is a roleplaying challenge for you, the GM, because you have to sell all this to the characters. You want them to believe that Voss is sincere, that they really are heroes, and that only they can save Valkana from the return of the Prophet Dhawan.

When the interview begins, Voss first asks the players to regale him with the tale of their adventure to the Skyside Stronghold. If they do, regardless of how thorough or brief, whether they stick to the truth or embellish it, Voss leans forward as he listens, nodding and gasping at the right moments. "Amazing," he says.

When the PCs get to their own questions about what happened, Voss nods. Now is the time for answers, a great many answers. Let the PCs engage Voss in a discussion about the past and the future wherein Voss, at last, is forthcoming. He admits, if asked, that he has been testing the PCs. He had to be sure they were the heroes he needed.



To help this be a dialogue rather than a monologue for Voss, use the following pieces of information to dramatize the conversation. The order in which this information reaches the players and their characters is less vital than the fact that they get all of it and play an important part in the scene. Each section that follows below contains an important detail and an example of dialogue for Voss.

- **Voss lived through the Chaos Wars.**

"I remember the turning point, when Arnon Reed's creations helped us win victory. With his designs on our side, the Prophet's forces collapsed."

- **The Prophet Dhawan's is surrounded by legends — many of them false.**

"The Prophet herself was only seen a handful of times, almost always the result of deep reconnaissance. She so often managed to evade us. Only when we started to drive her forces back did she step onto the battlefield. History says she was defeated, that her appearance was an act of self-preservation. That she'd surrendered. Those were all lies."

- **The Prophet Dhawan was powerful and terrible.**

"She wasn't just a charismatic leader and master strategist. She was ... an embodiment, the very soul, of what's foul and nefarious. She stood alone. Imagine it: she was small, beautiful, draped in her robes, carrying only her staff, walking through all that blood and gore, but she kept her eyes locked on the legions that opposed her. She couldn't have been more than fifty yards from the front line when she stopped and ... it still haunts me."

- **Thousands died in the final confrontation:**

"We felt it first. The air trembled. The dead quaked. The smell of death — you could almost taste it. The sky filled with blood, it seemed. She made a storm of it, a storm of spikes and needles that speared us, killed ... so many of us."

- **The great heroes separated the Prophet from her staff.**

"Only when the great heroes regrouped and realized that the Prophet's power channeled through her staff ... we thought that her grip on it could be her weakest point. And we were right. We separated her from it and that made it possible to overwhelm her."

- **Most people don't know that the Prophet Dhawan was not killed but imprisoned, locked away from the world in an extra dimensional prison.**

"We sealed her within an extra-dimensional space, a sort of pocket universe, apart from her staff. Arnon's idea, of course. He had seen so much death — we all had — and he thought it would be justice to lock her away from the world. To suffer alone for eternity"

- **The PCs are not just random adventurers.**

"Alone, none of the great heroes of that age could have bested the Prophet Dhawan. Within their blood was a power I believe to be equal but opposite to the Prophet's own. An essence of justice ... or order. Only by spilling their blood could they combat her

strength. And it is their blood that sealed her away. You, each of you, have this same blood. The blood of the great heroes is in you. This is why the Prophet's staff has yielded to you."

- **Their heroism is now needed. The Prophet Dhawan is stirring in her prison.**

"Chaos is on the rise once more. It's just beginning to stir, but soon the lands will be rife with discord. You have already encounter hellions, have you not? Those are creatures of chaos not seen here in centuries. It seems like the Prophet has found way to influence the world once more, even from her prison. If she actually breaks free, the Chaos Wars will start again. This cannot come to pass."

- **He wants the players to take the staff and go to the Tomb of the Prophet. There they should confront and kill Dhawan before she can gather her strength.**

"You must go to the so-called 'tomb' of the Prophet. Find and confront Dhawan before she can gather her full strength. Use your blood to change our fates. Kill her. Only you and your blood can do this."

- **Once, several teleport pads lead there. Most have been lost. One remains.**

"You must go to Arnon Reed's old mansion. It stands on a mountain called Moonperch. Find the nightberry bush at its base. Inside the mansion there is a teleportation pad that can take you to the gatehouse of the tomb. From there you can use the staff to get inside Tomb of the Prophet. Dhawan has been locked away for centuries. She is weak now, but gathering power. You must strike now or all Valkana will pay the price."

The PCs may wonder who exactly their ancestors were. Some of the great heroes they have heard about already — Lady Vадja, Arnon Reed, Lisl Reed. There were many heroes of the Chaos Wars, however. There had to be to defeat the Prophet Dhawan. If you like, you can create details on each of the PCs ancestors, or you can let the players do it themselves. This can be run like a call back to the Battle of the Boasts in the opening chapter, but this time the players are creating the heritage of their characters.

The party may also wonder if Voss is going to help them with equipment before they go off to save the world. He gives each character two healing potions, and each mage two mage's elixirs. Any other mundane equipment within reason is also available, and of course Voss can supply whatever batteries are required. The party can also keep the Staff of Forlorn Hope. In fact, they must if they are to get into the Tomb of the Prophet.

CHAPTER RESOLUTION

After an eventful chapter, the PCs should now know that they aren't just any adventures, but descendants of the great heroes of the Chaos Wars. They also know that the Prophet Dhawan is restless in her tomb and may break free and return to Valkana. That would be a disaster, so they must use the Staff of Forlorn Hope to go into her prison and end her threat once and for all. The next leg of their journey takes them to Moonperch and the mansion of Arnon Reed.



A REQUIEM FOR RUNCIBLE

At the end of **CHAPTER 7: SKYSIDE STRONGHOLD**, Voss revealed the PCs' heritage and laid out the path they'll need to follow in order to confront Dhawan. Their next destination is an ancient manor that stands near the summit of the Moonperch, a tall and remote mountain. Voss believes there is a teleportation gate in one of the manor's sub-basements that leads directly to the gatehouse of the Prophet's prison. According to Voss, a lone nightberry bush at the base of the mountain conceals the secret they'll need to uncover to make their way to the top.

The Moonperch is approximately a full week's travel from Nestora, and the trip there is uneventful (unless you want to add some encounters of your own). After the adventurers reach the mountain and look around for a while, they find the nightberry bush. Behind it, they discover a strange monolith adorned with four golden rings. The monolith is well-weathered, like it's stood on this spot, undisturbed, for hundreds of years.

SCENE 1

THE KEYSTONE

Exploration Encounter

The monolith is actually a secret key that opens a hidden passage up the mountain. The key is activated by sound. To open it, any four individuals must hum in harmony to form a major chord. (If you're not musically inclined, recall the old Three Stooges bit—*"Hello...hello...hello."*) As each note is hummed, one of the four rings begins to turn; when all four come together, the rings each stop in the correct orientations to unlock passage.

There are a few methods the players might use to figure out how to activate the monolith.

- Speaking while in the presence of the monolith randomly turns one or two of the rings (one at a time, no matter what is said), as the speaker inadvertently hits one or two of the key tones. From there a little experimentation should reveal that a particular (low) tone moves the first ring, a slightly higher tone moves the second, and so forth. Thus, hitting all four tones simultaneously moves all four rings at once and opens the gate.
- The keystone also works in reverse. If a character tries to turn one of the rings manually, they can't quite move it unassisted, but feel it almost give way. If a companion helps, the ring can be moved, slowly, and as it moves, it sounds the note that activates it. As soon as the adventurers let go, it snaps into former position. This is another clue that might help the players make the connection between the rings and the various tones that move them.



- Or finally, if the players are stuck, give an appropriate hint to anyone who makes a successful **TN 11 COMMUNICATION (MUSICAL LORE)** test.

Once the key is successfully activated, there is a crescendo of ethereal music and a hidden doorway that looks like part of the rockface slides open. Inside there is a corridor that leads to an elevator. Miraculously, it still functions. There is only one stop, labeled "The Mansion."

THE MANOR

The elevator ride is long, and at some points hair raising, as this equipment has not been used in a long, long time. Eventually, it judders to a halt and the door slides open. The PCs are now far up the side of a mountain, on a plateau invisible from the valley floor.

In front of them is a splendid manor—or, at least, what's left of it. In better days, the manor was one of the true wonders of the world. The full compound consisted of six interlocking buildings ranging from three to twelve stories in height. Dozens of balconies dotted the walls at various levels of each structure, most of them housing azure pools that spilled over their edges, down into the pools on lower balconies. The hundreds of waterfalls running down the sides of the structure were a breathtaking spectacle.

Arnon Reed built the mansion during the era of the Chaos Wars. Reed, as the characters have learned, was a legendary scientist, mage, and inventor who played a key role in the defeat of the Prophet Dhawan (as did his wife Lisl). His home atop the Moonperch was once a famous marvel of engineering, but it's long since been forgotten. Reed lived and worked in the manor for decades, conducting research and developing various wonders that helped end the Chaos Wars. As the PCs discovered in **CHAPTER 6: HOUNDED, HARRIED, AND HIRED**, Reed died in the Skyside Stronghold (another of his marvels).

Today, most of the manor lies in overgrown ruins. The taller structures have all collapsed and the pools that remain at ground level have long since gone stagnant. The end result is a sort indoor/outdoor jungle, overgrown with countless varieties of wild flowers that descended from the manor's lush gardens. Pieces of the old walls stand, but almost none of the ceilings. Some of the old technology that powered the manor still functions all these years later, but most of it is long dormant.

DIGITAL PORTRAITS

Among the manor's still functioning technology are a number of digital portraits that hang on the remnants of the structure's walls. These are all large, 5' wide by 15' tall, bright video screens that display a single still image. Anyone who approaches a portrait by passing within a few feet of it trips



a sensor that causes the portrait to spring into life—the still image suddenly becomes a short “movie” with sound! The digital portraits, of course invented and built by Reed himself, were once a natural part of the manor’s décor. During play, they serve as an important and entertaining means of relaying exposition to the players. The node descriptions below detail the locations of a couple of significant portraits and what can be gleaned from them. As you improvise descriptions of the areas the PCs pass through, feel free to describe other portraits, in various states of repair.

RUNCIBLE

Reed, his wife Lisl, and son Hobb all died long ago, but one member of the family lives on! Reed built his son a robotic playmate—a four foot “teddy bear” named Runcible. Even after all these centuries, the advanced reactor that powers Runcible is still functional, and the little fellow can still talk, think and move, though he’s quite a bit worse for wear. Runcible’s “skin” is moth-eaten and tattered, and his exo-skeleton damaged. One of his eyes dangles from its socket by a wire. Worse, Runcible’s programming has degraded. His centuries of loneliness have affected him badly. What he’s long wanted is a companion, and an opportunity to carry out the mission he was built for. **Runcible wants to play.**

Runcible will be overjoyed to see the PCs, and he immediately attempts to engage them in some of the old games that he and Hobb used to play. Because of his degraded programming, he doesn’t respond well if they refuse. Long ago, he figured out how to wirelessly network himself with the manor’s technology that’s still functional, so he can be tricky.

Runcible talks in a high, happy voice—even when he’s making threats. He sounds like various talking stuffed animal toys popular with children, lots of bits about hugging and friendship mixed in with his deranged rantings. Although he poses a serious threat to the party, when playing him, try to bring a

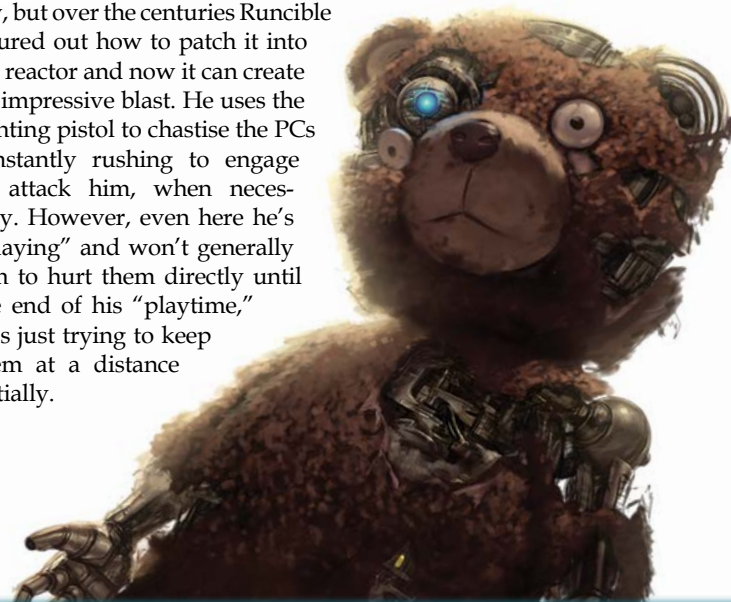
A NOTE ON TONE

The tone of this chapter can vary depending on how you choose to portray Runcible. You can play him so that’s been driven crazy by his loneliness—a sort of junior version of the Skyside Sovereign. In this case he uses the lightning pistol as described, but again, to chastise not kill. Your other option is to play up the sadness of Runcible’s situation and try to get the PCs to sympathize with him. This is what Wil chose to do on the show. In this case, his lighting pistol is mostly harmless (inflicting only 1 damage per hit).

little bit of a sympathetic edge to the characterization, which should also have the side effect of being super creepy. (“I’m ever so lonely – couldn’t you just play with me? Just for a while?”)

Up until the very last time he appears, it’s effectively impossible to engage Runcible in combat. He never appears in melee range—always on a balcony or catwalk off in the distance—and if a PC attempts to hit him with a ranged attack or a spell, he quickly disappears down a hidden trail or passage.

If the PCs keep trying to attack him, Runcible fires a few impressive blasts at them from a lightning pistol he carries in a holster. This was original a harmless toy, but over the centuries Runcible figured out how to patch it into his reactor and now it can create an impressive blast. He uses the lightning pistol to chastise the PCs constantly rushing to engage or attack him, when necessary. However, even here he’s “playing” and won’t generally aim to hurt them directly until the end of his “playtime,” he’s just trying to keep them at a distance initially.



MANSION NETWORK

The manor is ancient and in a state of extreme disrepair. Amon Reed built the complex during the Chaos Wars era. It is now littered with ruins, rubble, and overgrown plantlife.

Scans suggest at least 3 functional Digital Portraits can be located



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NODE DESCRIPTIONS

The manor is not mapped out in detail. Instead, use the nearby flowchart to abstractly conduct the PCs' exploration. Each node on the flowchart is described in the following sections. In general, assume it takes fifteen to twenty minutes of travel time to pass from one node to any connected node, but again, the flowchart is abstract. Feel free to condense or expand scale and travel times to keep the session well-paced.

Note that all of these areas are covered in rubble, ruins, and remnants of the old manor. A PC who is looking for a particular useful, but mundane item (say a rope, a knife, a still-functional light source, or something similar) and spends five minutes searching in any one of these areas, finds it with a successful **TN 13 PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)** test.

NODE 1. COMPOUND ENTRYWAY

The party exits the elevator and into what used to be a series of parade grounds in front of the manor itself. As soon as they enter this area, they feel a mysterious warmth—the climate control system Reed built to keep his mountaintop complex nice and balmy is still functional.

This entire node is crisscrossed by decorative canals connected to pools located close to the manor walls. All are filled with stagnant water filled with pollutants and toxins. Anyone who

drinks the water found here must make a **TN 11 CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** test or be sickened by the toxic water. Those affected take **1d6 penetrating damage every 10 minutes after the first test** and then make another test. Success ends this effect.

DIGITAL PORTRAIT

As they reach the midpoint of the node, the party passes the ruins of what used to be a security checkpoint, with a digital portrait hanging on one of its remaining walls. The portrait depicts Arnon Reed, his wife Lisl, and son Hobb standing on one of the manor's balconies before a huge crowd. When activated, Reed gives a speech — “And so let me say again how proud I am of all of you, dear friends and colleagues. This glorious estate that we have created together is a true marvel of our age and from inside its gleaming walls, I shall carry on my work and my efforts to usher us all into a glorious and more prosperous age.” The portrait depicts the day that Reed and his family officially moved into the manor. A character that makes a successful **TN 15 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test notices that the man in the video is wearing the same ring the PCs found on the skeleton in **CHAPTER 6: HOUNDED, HARRIED, AND HIRED**.

EXITS

From this area, there are two routes open to the party. They can make their way west through the wild flower gardens closer to the manor (Node 2), or east toward through a series of small ruined structures (Node 4).



NODE 2. OLD GARDENS

This heavily-wooded zone in front of the old structure once housed a number of ornate gardens. It's now completely overgrown with patches of jungle and a seemingly infinite variety of wild flowers, lending the whole area an odd, "psychedelic" appearance. A staggering number of exotic birds nest here—the PCs are sure to see a number of these creatures as they pass through the node.

As the party passes through this region, one of the PCs trips on a child's ball half buried in hard caked mud. It takes a little effort to dig out the ball, but it is intact. The ball is perfectly ordinary in all respects, though it will serve as an acceptable gift for Runcible (see Node 5).

The passageways leading to Node 5 are crossed by a foul-smelling pond that formed from the flooded remains of a number of the old pools. To pass on to Node 5, the PCs must somehow cross this obstacle. The pond is about one hundred and twenty feet across and roughly twelve feet deep. There is no way around the characters can see.

- Anyone who swims the pond must make a **TN 9 CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** test to avoid catching moistrot, a mild wasting disease contracted from immersion in foul water. **Diseased characters suffer a -2 Penalty to their Perception and Communication abilities** as their skin takes on a puffy waterlogged look and occasionally sluices off in small bits—which is both unappealing and very distracting. Symptoms begin to appear in about an hour. To recover the player must make a **TN 14 CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** test each day. When they have made three successful tests they recover from the moistrot. A **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (HEALING)** test also allows a character to craft a salve to aid recovery, requiring only one success to recover from the disease. A Restoration spell cures it instantly.

- Characters with the appropriate abilities can fashion a makeshift raft using the wood from nearby trees and other materials found here. Crafting such a vehicle takes about an hour and requires a successful **TN 12 INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** test.

EXITS

On the other side of the pond, a series of terraces climbs up to the remains of the main gate leading into the manor (Node 5). A series of trails leads back to the stairway that leads down the mountain (Node 1).

NODE 3. STATUE GARDEN

One hundred seventy-six life-sized statues of Arnon Reed's ancestors and other important historical figures long since faded from common memory once lined this broad parkway stretching from the mountain staircase up to the manor's main house. All of the statues now stand in ruins, most missing various limbs and battered by the elements. Rockworms can be seen slithering in and out of the holes they've bored in a number of the statues. These creatures are a bit unnerving, but they're harmless.

As the party passes through this Node, have each of the PCs attempt a **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (SEEING)** test. Anyone who succeeds notices that one of the statues still wears a golden crown mostly hidden under tarnish and dust. The crown can be easily removed; it's worth 5 gold pieces and also makes an acceptable gift for Runcible. (See Node 5.)

EXITS

A long series of stairs leads up from parkway to the Manor's main gate (Node 5). A dilapidated bridge over a chasm that was once a decorative moat leads to a series of small ruined structures (Node 4).



SINGING? REALLY?

Some groups will get a kick out of singing their way through a few encounters. Others...won't. If you can already imagine your players rolling their eyes at the mere mention of the game turning into a musical for a while, you can have Runcible insist on a different game. This is one Hobb came up with on his own and that his parents would have been quite angry about if they found out. It's called "Naughty Words." In this game, every sentence out of the characters' mouths must include at least one swear word. As originally conceived, the words weren't even that naughty (Hobb was a boy with limited contact to the outside world), but you and your players are free to dial it up as befits your group. Have fun, you @#&%#! reprobates!

NODE 4. VEHICLE GARAGES

This node is littered with the remains of some sixteen structures that once served as hangars for a number of flying vehicles used by the Reed family and their associates. The roofs of all sixteen hangars are long gone, and most currently consist of little more than one or two free-standing wall sections. About half of the structures still house archaic flying vehicles that look like enormous gleaming insects. It's been centuries since any of these were functional, but it's theoretically possible to get one started again. It takes a successful **TN 11 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORICAL LORE)** test just to recognize the vehicles for what they are. Several hours of labor and a **TN 18 INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** test restores a vehicle to working order. Failure means the vehicles are missing vital parts or fluids and cannot be repaired without replacements, none of which can be found during this adventure. A working vehicle won't be of any use in this chapter (there's really nowhere to land a vehicle anywhere deeper into the Manor's ruins), but might be worth a lot of money to right people.

EXITS

A long series of stairs leads up from parkway to the Manor's main gate (Node 5). A dilapidated bridge over a chasm that was once a decorative moat leads to the remains of a statue-line parkway (Node 3). A trail leads back to the mountain staircase (Node 1).

NODE 5. MAIN GATE AND FOYER

This node is dominated by the main door that led into the manor's main structure and the patio that surrounded it. All of the manor's steelstone walls are intact here and the party must pass through the main double doors to continue deeper into the manor complex. The doors are approximately eighteen feet high and made of the same thick steelstone as the manor walls. The door is electronically locked and barred by four thick steel beams. It's impossible to open.

Shortly after the party arrives here, Runcible appears for the first time, speaking from atop a ruined structure near the front gate. He tells the PCs how lonely he's been and how

nice it will be to have new playmates after all these years. He then asks what game they want to play first.

- If the PCs ask Runcible how to open the door, he promises he'll open it for them when they win a game of "Riddle-Me-Ree." It's impossible to negotiate with him for any other information or favors—he's only interested in playing.
- If the PCs refuse to play, Runcible scolds them for being "naughty." Eventually, he informs the PCs that he's never going to let them inside (*i.e.* through the door) until they play and win.
- Any game the PCs suggest, Runcible hasn't heard of and refuses to play. Eventually, he names the first game they'll play: "Riddle-Me-Ree." If the PCs win, he'll give them a boon and open the door.

Eventually, the party must agree to play. There's no other way to advance any further into the compound. The rules of Riddle-Me-Ree are simple: Runcible asks the PCs a question in the form of a riddle. If they correctly answer, they win (and Runcible opens the door). If they can't correctly answer (they're allowed only one guess), they can give Runcible a present in order to receive another guess. Each time they guess incorrectly, they must hand over another present to keep playing. Runcible accepts just about any useful object as a present. In addition to any such items the party already possessed, they may have found acceptable presents in Nodes 2 and 3. Runcible ultimately hides all his presents in a well-hidden secret stash, effectively removing them from the campaign forever.

If the PCs can't answer Runcible's riddle after three guesses, he gets bored and opens the door anyway, because he doesn't want his new play friends to go away. If the party leaves this Node in the middle of the game, retreating back to Nodes 2 or 4 (perhaps in search of a suitable gift between guesses), Runcible stays put and waits for them to return.

RUNCIBLE'S RIDDLE

*A legless cripple who likes to run,
Waging war against the sun.
Never droll, never dry,
Feast on earth, born in sky.
What am I?*

The answer is water.

If you know your players have seen the show, you may want to substitute the riddle below or a different riddle.

RUNCIBLE'S OTHER RIDDLE

*Only one color, but not one size,
Stuck at the bottom, yet easily flies.
Present in the sun, but not in rain,
Doing no harm, and feeling no pain.
What am I?*

The answer is a shadow.

Once the door opens, the PCs find themselves in the remains of the manor's foyer. The foyer and the first few rooms beyond it are still covered with a ceiling and basically intact, but overgrown with moss and vines. Before leaving this node,



the party passes through a ruined wall and back out into more uncovered ruins. Here Runcible appears again.

This time, he wants to play another game called “On Time, In Tune.” For the duration of the game, no one is allowed to speak, only sing. The players themselves must obey this rule – from this point forward, all in-character communication must be sung, not spoken. Should anyone slip up and accidentally speak, Runcible suddenly appears and tries to blast the offender with his lightning pistol for breaking the rules.

Ideally, the game of “On Time, In Tune” continues as the party passes through the next few Nodes, ending only after they enter the basement (see Node 9, below). If the PCs take longer than expected to pass through the next couple of nodes and the singing starts to get tedious, however, Runcible can show up at any time and call the game off. (“This is getting boring!”)

DIGITAL PORTRAIT

Just before the PCs leave this area, they come across another digital portrait. This one depicts Reed’s son Hobb hand in hand with Runcible, a small robotic dog at their side. When activated, the pair frolic, and Reed is heard in the background: “I made him for you, son. I know how lonely you are up here. Now you and Dax will always have someone to play with. He’s programmed with all your favorite games.”

EXITS

The ruins of the foyer form a sort of plateau that looks down on a collection of ornate empty cages to the west (Node 6). A winding passage leads out to another largely intact ruined structure to the east (Node 8).

NODE 6. MENAGERIE

This node is filled with the ruins of a large menagerie Reed kept on the manor grounds for study and amusement. Huge structures that look like giant bird cages are everywhere, almost all of them bent or torn open. Many of the creatures who were once kept here survived, and their descendants still inhabit these ruins. As the party passes through this area, they first feel like they’re being watched, then start to hear rustling in the underbrush, eventually catching the occasional glimpse of a beast as it scurries away. Most of the menagerie’s inhabitants were genetic anomalies created by Reed himself, so let your imagination run wild when describing these creatures to the players.

Once the party reaches the midpoint of this area, they’re ambushed by one of Reed’s wild beasts known as a jakaar – essentially a fire-breathing panther.

Although the game of “On Time, In Tune” continues, Runcible won’t show up to admonish the players for accidentally speaking while they’re in this node. He never enters this area, preferring to say well clear of the jakaar.

EXITS

A path leads east, up a short slope, to another scattering of ruined structures (Node 7). Rocky stairs lead back up to the foyer (Node 5).

JAAKAR

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

3	ACCURACY (BITE)
0	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
4	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
3	FIGHTING (CLAWS)
-1	INTELLIGENCE
4	PERCEPTION (SEEING, SMELLING)
4	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
24	50	14	4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BITE	+5	2d6+6
CLAW	+5	1d6+4
FIRE BREATH	+3	3d6

SPECIAL FEATURES

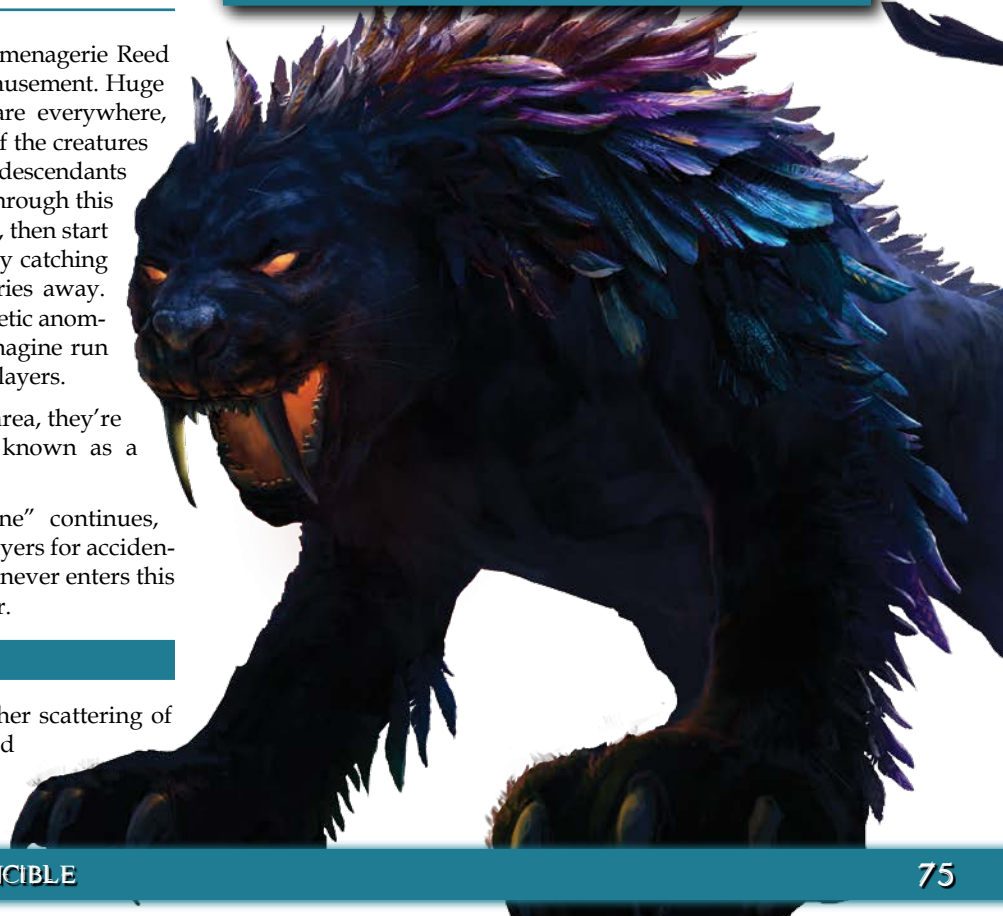
FAVORED STUNTS: Knock Prone, Lightning Attack, Skirmish.

TOUGH HIDE: The jakaar’s tough hide provides natural armor of 4.

FIRE BREATH: The jakaar can breathe a jet of white hot flame from its mouth that can strike a target up to 20 feet away and deals 3d6 damage.

WILD BEAST: The jakaar can either make two Claw attacks or one Bite attack with an Attack action.

FIRE-BREATHING PANTHER





NODE 7. LIVING QUARTERS

The ruins of the servant quarters and the Reed family's living chambers fill this area. The walls are badly broken up here and what's left of them forms a crude, confounding labyrinth. When the party tries to leave this area, whoever is leading the way must pass a **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (NAVIGATION)** test. Failure indicates that the group gets lost and moves to the node opposite their intended destination (*i.e.* if the party was trying to travel to Node 9, they find themselves back in Node 6 instead).

This whole area is littered with artifacts — personal items like combs, jewelry, writing implements, and the like. Anyone who passes a **TN 13 PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)** test while passing through this area discovers something of value (GM's option).

Remember that the game of "On Time, On Tune" continues as the party is travelling through this area.

EXITS

Paths lead down short slopes to the west (Node 6) and north (Node 9).

NODE 8. KITCHENS

This area was once occupied by the manor's palatial kitchens and dining rooms. Tarnished dishes and serving trays (of no real value) are everywhere. As they pass through the kitchens, the party discovers that the manor's water supply is functional; clean water still flows from most of the taps.

DIGITAL PORTRAIT

While in this node, the party stumbles across another portrait. This one also depicts Hobb and Runcible. Hobb is seated at the kitchen table, pointing at his friend. When activated, Hobb says, *"I've got a new game. It's called 'Do My Bidding' — you have to do whatever I say for one one hour. Then, I have to do whatever you say for an hour!"*

EXITS

A path leads up a short slope to the west (Node 7). A long, curving staircase leads down and to the north (Node 9).

NODE 9. BASEMENT ENTRANCE

The ruins are particularly rocky here, what's left of the walls are scorched by fire. Partway through this area, the party encounters a steep cliff they must descend to continue. Traversing the cliff requires **TN 11 STRENGTH (CLIMBING)** test and anyone who doesn't take the proper precautions before attempting the climb risks falling twenty five feet to the ground below (**2d6 damage**).

Once they are all down, the PCs come to another fully intact wall with a door in its center—the entrance the manor's basement. The PCs must find their way through the door to proceed. It's flanked by a pair of large levers, one on either side. Pulling both levers at the same time opens the door. If for some reason the PCs don't attempt this on their own, an easy **TN 8 INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)** test reveals this.

Making all of these obstacles more interesting, of course, is the game of "On Time, In Tune," which is still in effect. Remember, the players must sing as they strategize with each other or run the risk of getting zapped by Runcible.

Finally, once the players are through the door, Runcible emerges again, and calls off the game of "On Time, In Tune," with a giggle and scampers away.

EXITS

Beyond the door, the party is in a fully enclosed space. The PCs can retreat back through the door into Nodes 7 or 8, but must once again cross the river and climb the cliff. Alternatively, they can crawl through an open air duct high on a wall to the west (Node 10) or head down a set of steps to the east (Node 11).

NODE 10. STORAGE

The party enters this area by crawling through an air duct from Node 9. Eventually, they emerge from the ducts into a set of enclosed rooms filled with the remains of storage casks and crates, the contents of which rotted away long ago. As they pass through this area, the party stumbles across the inactive remains of Dax, Hobb's robotic dog. Runcible was unable to make it into this area to rescue Dax because he's not tall enough to reach the air duct in Node 9. Dax's metallic frame is fairly small and light. If the PCs take it, they may be able to use it later. (See Node 12.)

EXITS

The party can retreat back through the storage areas and the air duct into Node 9 or they can press ahead over some rubble into Node 12.

NODE 11. WINE CELLARS

Arnon Reed once stored his prodigious wine collection in this area. Chamber after chamber is filled with broken bottles and musty cobwebs. If the PCs spend some time searching here they can find one or two intact bottles that are now quite valuable to the right buyer.

EXITS

The party can head back up a set of steps to the west (Node 9) or through a rubble-filled antechamber and into Node 12.

NODE 12. SUB-BASEMENT DOOR

This node contains the party's final objective—the door leading to Reed's sub-basement laboratory that houses the gate to the Tomb of the Prophet. Unfortunately, the door is electronically locked. There is a small rectangular impression in the middle of the door with three divots in it (the ring found on Reed's skeleton in **CHAPTER 7: SKYSIDE STRONGHOLD** is the key). There is also a control pad on the wall. This is a backup system and Runcible knows the code to activate the door.



RUNCIBLE

Runcible is a marvel of engineering—a walking, talking teddy bear powered by an advanced reactor and driven by a powerful artificial intelligence. Sadly, Runcible, who once lived to entertain little Hobb Reed, is now a lonely, crazed, defective robot. He means well, in his strange, little way, and sees his “games” as bringing the PCs lives some extra color and joy, but his centuries of loneliness color his actions.

Just a moment after the party reaches the door, Runcible appears one more time and demands to play; he asks the PCs to choose a game. At this point, several things can happen.

- If the PCs figure out that Reed’s ring is the key, they might ignore Runcible’s pleas and try to make their way through the door. In this case, he attacks them; they have to defeat him in combat before they proceed.
- If the PCs retrieved Dax’s remains from Node 10 (and know from the Digital Portrait in Node 5 that Dax is one of Runcible’s long lost friends), they might turn over the inert dog or attempt to negotiate. In either case, Runcible is overjoyed. He quickly repairs Dax, the two have a charming reunion, and he agrees to open the sub-basement door, if asked.
- The players may choose a game. Runcible refuses to play any of the games they’ve already played and won’t play any game he’s unfamiliar with. If the PCs saw the digital portrait in Node 8, however, they’re aware of one game they’ve yet to play that Runcible knows—“Do My Bidding.” He’ll agree to play and they can order him to open the door. If the PCs are stuck here, the GM may allow a straight **TN 13 Intelligence** test to remind them of the game, but ideally they’ll remember on their own.
- If the PCs don’t have any other means of placating Runcible and/or getting through the door and can’t name a suitable game, he selects a new game himself: “Red Light, Green Light.” In this game Runcible says “Green light” over and over as the PCs move towards him, then suddenly says, “Red light!” The PCs must make Initiative tests as they freeze in place. The character with the lowest result loses and is out of the game. Runcible also shoots them with his lightning pistol. “Too slow!” The last player standing can make an opposed **DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)** test with Runcible. If the PC wins the test, they win the game. Runcible will do one thing the winner asks. This can be to open the door or something else.
- Your last option is to play up the sympathy the PCs may have for Runcible after his endless years of loneliness. He says he will tell them how to open the door if they tuck him in for bed. He is so very tired. Runcible leads them to Hobb’s room. There they find the skeleton of a small boy in bed. If they ask what happened, Runcible only says, “Bad men came after the war.” Behind a teddy bear sized door is a small room for Runcible. He indicates that they can undo the fur on his back and reveal and plug in a wire that comes out of the wall near his bed. This will activate his sleep protocol. “Time to sleep now. Time to sleep. See you soon, Hobb.” Before he

RUNCIBLE

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

3	ACCURACY (BLASTERS)
2	COMMUNICATION (PERFORMANCE)
3	CONSTITUTION
3	DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE, STEALTH)
1	FIGHTING
2	INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)
2	PERCEPTION
1	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	50	13	5

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
LIGHTNING PISTOL	+5	2D6+2*
NAUGHTY CLAWS	+5	1D6+3

*Or 1 damage if you are playing him that way.

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Lightning Attack, Seize the Initiative (2 SP), Skirmish, The Upper Hand.

“I LIKE PRESENTS!”: Anyone offering Runcible a gift (any marginally interesting or valuable object) as part of a Communication test involving him gets a +2 bonus to their check and use any roleplaying stunts involving him at -1 SP.

“I CALL THEM MY NAUGHTY CLAWS”: Runcible “upgraded” himself with retractable scalpel-like claws some time ago. He prefers to avoid melee, but uses these up close if necessary.

“I’M NOT A REAL BEAR, SILLY PANTS!”: Runcible’s robotic frame provides him with a Natural Armor rating of 5.

TALENTS: Oratory (Master, only works on kids or those with childlike innocence), Quick Reflexes (Master), and Scouting (Journeyman)

WEAPONS GROUP: Blaster Pistols and Light Blades

ROBOT TEDDY BEAR

sleeps, he either points out that the ring they have is the key or explains how to override the lock.

CHAPTER RESOLUTION

Once they open the door, the PC’s find the teleport pad that leads to the hidden gatehouse. This is a small chamber with a circle of interlocked red stones surrounded by strange symbols. PCs recognize these as being similar to the script they encountered when recovering the Staff of Forlorn Hope. There is a simple button on the wall. Whoever touches it has their finger pricked. If they have the blood of heroes, the teleport pad activates and those in the circle disappear in flash.

If your players do not think of it, consider suggesting they rest and heal before activating the teleport pad. This is their best opportunity before the next stage of their journey.



FORSAKEN BY THE SUN

Having found the teleport pad in Arnon Reed's old mansion, the PCs activate it and expect to be taken to the gatehouse of the Tomb of the Prophet. There is a problem, however, as an earthquake damaged the gatehouse long ago. Misdirected by the teleportation system, the PCs must find their way back to the gatehouse and then transport to the Tomb of the Prophet itself.

THE GATEHOUSE

After the defeat of Dhawan, the great heroes of the Chaos Wars had to decide her fate. They debated among themselves for some time. It was Arnon Reed who suggested using the Staff of Forlorn Hope to exile Dhawan to a pocket dimension otherwise inaccessible to Valkana. This made a fitting prison. Still, the heroes wanted to maintain a way to access this pocket dimension that would be almost inaccessible to anyone but them. Should something go wrong, they would need a way to access the so-called Tomb. Kress-edla of the Platinum Consortium explained how their exploration teams had dug into deep magma deposits, and suggested a dig site for the gate's location. Warlord Eritena committed her honor guard of giants to guard the place, far from the eyes of the surface races.

The gatehouse was built to be accessible only through an advanced teleportation pad inside a completely sealed cavern. The pad, undermined by an aggressive mold growing in the underground vault, malfunctioned spectacularly 180 years ago, causing a massive earthquake. The split in the earth opened a new pathway stretching upward, allowing anyone who could find the upper reaches to climb down to the gatehouse. Strange creatures inhabited the caverns in the intervening years, and the dangerous mold that destroyed the teleportation pad thrives, feeding on geothermal heat.

The ageless giant guardians live on. However, the earthquake destroyed their feeding mechanism and they have suffered as a result. Without regular feeding, the creatures have become emaciated and wild.

SCENE 1

CAVERN OF HUNGRY STONES

Combat Encounter

There is a flash as the teleportation pad activates. You reappear on a similar pad and breathe a sigh of relief. Then the floor gives out beneath you and you fall into darkness. A few seconds later there is another flash and you feel yourselves transported again. You're still falling, but you quickly hit the ground, landing on hard, wet stone, but are uninjured. When you pick yourself up and get oriented, you find you're in a small cavern of natural stone. The ceiling is pebbled with small stones that

slowly drip condensation onto the smooth floor. The cavern slopes away into the distance, becoming narrower as it goes. A white, flickering light shines at the far end.

The PCs did, in fact, land on the correct teleport pad, but it gave way under their weight due to its age and earthquake damage. Luckily for them, the failsafe magic activated as they fell, transporting them into the caverns now connected to the gatehouse. At the far end of the cavern from where the PCs begin, a narrow opening in the rock leads into a chasm in the ground—a rift created by an earthquake. Unstable flashes of teleportation energy cause the flickering light seen through the opening. Since the cavern the PCs landed in is otherwise a dead end, this is the only practical means of escape.

The pebbled ceiling is made of more than simple rocks. Creatures known as hungry stones live there. They survive on the meager trickles of mineral-rich water from above, sustenance that allows them to grow, slowly, in size. The body of a living creature presents a much better treat, full of fluids and rare minerals. Hungry stones group into clusters, drawn to other hungry stones that share similar minerals to themselves. These clusters operate as swarms, attacking prey in unison. The hungry stones are patient hunters, but they slowly move into position until they think they can entrap their prey.

Even identifying the hungry stones as living things is difficult. The creatures move only when no one's looking at them, but a character can detect the soft squelching of the hungry stones' mud-like ambulatory organs with a **TN 13 PERCEPTION (HEARING)** test. Anyone who doesn't notice the noise or isn't informed about it before the hungry stones attack is surprised. The hungry stones remain still, waiting to attack until either the PCs move roughly 10 yards toward the lower end of the cavern (nearer to the rift) or start to relax or make camp. When the combat starts, two clusters of hungry stones drop off the ceiling and attack. Another detaches from the ceiling on the third round of combat if it is still ongoing.

The PCs may decide to try and outrun the hungry stones, since they are quite slow. The cavern is only 20 yards across, but one of the stones tries to interpose itself between the party and the rift. To escape the PCs need to defeat or get past at least one of the creatures. PCs can run around or jump over one of the hungry stone swarms. This requires a **TN 13 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** or **STRENGTH (JUMPING)** test. On a failed test, characters are not only blocked but also take **1d6 penetrating damage**. Unknown to the PCs, any hungry stones that remain alive slowly pursue them as they flee the area.

When the PCs finally reach the earthquake rift, they find a path that goes deeper into the earth.

A small tunnel leads out through the cavern wall ahead. It's just wide enough for a person to fit through, and leads to a slanted fissure in the rock. Bright lights flash across the rock



faces and trace staggered patterns along their surface. A few feet above, a cascade of water pours down from a vent in the ceiling, then splashes down the slanted rock and disappears into a massive flashing light that appears to be stationary.

The flashing light can be identified as an errant teleportation portal with a **TN 9 INTELLIGENCE (ARCANE LORE or SCIENTIFIC LORE)** test. It was created by the malfunctioning teleportation pad, and is both magical and technological in nature. Because the cave exit is narrow, a human-sized PCs can't get through without a **TN 9 STRENGTH (CLIMBING)** test (which can be retried any number of times as the remaining hungry stones bear down). Once the characters get through, they tumble down the wet, smooth rock until they get sucked into the portal and transported to **Scene 2**.

SCENE 2

THE CRYSTALLINE POOL

Combat or Roleplaying Encounter

You have the now-familiar feeling of teleportation magic and an instant later find yourself under water in a pool that shimmers with emerald light. The water is surprisingly pure and clear, and you quickly float to the surface. The pool fills a natural basin made of long, transparent crystals, each a foot across. The crystals are luminescent and light a large cavern as they throb with a soft green glow. Long stalactites descend from the high cave ceiling above. One edge of the crystalline pool is lower than the others, and the water splashes over the side to create a rushing stream passing out of the room. Water pushes up from the bottom of the pool.

An aquatic creature named Kinlee Hwex—a partial shape-shifter—lives in the pool, and she keeps a stash of gems and trinkets within its depths. They're concealed among the crisscrossing crystals that form the pool, requiring a **TN 13 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test to notice them sparkling in their hiding places. If the characters study them, they find a lovely collection, but on a **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (EVALUATION)** test they realize only about a quarter of the gems and trinkets are truly valuable. Some are shiny bits of old tech from the Chaos Wars, but too much time under water has made them useless.

The collector herself hides from the PCs, as she is uncertain of the PCs and their motives. Returning from one of her frequent expeditions to collect more baubles from the nearby caves, Kinlee Hwex tries to hide from these newcomers so she can observe them without being seen herself. Player characters that win an opposed test of their **PERCEPTION (HEARING or SEEING)** vs. her **DEXTERITY (STEALTH)** notice her presence. A character aware of Kinlee can make a **TN 10 PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test to notice the metallic ring she carries—an ancient weapon called a Xyverian Ring. If no one detects her, she eventually makes her presence known before they leave the area around the pool. She rarely has a chance to talk to anyone down here and she is quite curious about them, so she nervously introduces herself.

Kinlee Hwex resembles an elfin mermaid. Her lower body transforms between legs and a tail instantly when she

HUNGRY STONES

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

0	ACCURACY
-1	COMMUNICATION
5	CONSTITUTION
0	CUNNING
2	DEXTERITY
3	FIGHTING
0	INTELLIGENCE
2	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
3	STRENGTH (CLIMBING, JUMPING)
2	WILLPOWER

SPEED HEALTH DEFENSE ARMOR RATING

6 30 12 8

WEAPON ATTACK ROLL DAMAGE

SWARM +3 1d6+3

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Knock Prone, Mighty Blow.

GRINDING ROCK: The stones' constant churning motion damages anyone who doesn't retreat from them. At the start of the hungry stone's turn, anyone adjacent to the cluster automatically takes 1d6 penetrating damage. A creature can take this damage only once per round, even if adjacent to multiple clusters of hungry stones. Anyone damaged this way can still be damaged by a normal swarm attack as well.

SWARM ATTACK: Each cluster of hungry stones covers an area with a rough diameter of 3 yards, and can attack all creatures inside or adjacent to that area on its turn as a single major action. One attack roll is made for the attack and compared to the Defense of each target.

SENTIENT ROCK CREATURES

enters or leaves the water. Obsessed with wealth and highly covetous, Kinlee rarely gets a chance to barter with other creatures. Her blunt attitude and awkward, fidgety mannerisms show she's not used to dealing with people. She also has a hard time concealing her desire for more fancy trinkets.

If the PCs attempt to take her treasures, Kinlee demands they return what they've stolen. She's willing to give them the benefit of the doubt, but if they refuse she quickly becomes agitated. However, she finds it far more interesting to negotiate for the return of her property than to fight. If the PCs have particularly interesting goods—or rather, if they present what they have in a way that makes it seem especially valuable or historic—Kinlee attempts to trade her possessions with them. Getting her to trade the Xyverian Ring she carries is tough, but not impossible. Kinlee becomes fascinated by the Staff of Forlorn Hope if she sees it, but can be bartered down to accepting other goods. The PCs ought to understand that need the Staff for their mission, but successful **TN 8 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORICAL LORE)** test can remind them if they are about to do something foolish.



KINLEE HWEX

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

3	ACCURACY (BLASTER PISTOLS, LIGHT BLADES)
4	COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, ETIQUETTE, PERSUASION)
0	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
3	CUNNING (NATURAL LORE)
2	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)
1	FIGHTING
2	INTELLIGENCE (WATER ARCANA)
1	PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)
1	STRENGTH (SWIMMING)
2	WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
14 (16 SWIM)	50	12	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
XYVERIAN RING (MELEE)	+5	1D6+3

SPECIAL FEATURES

MAGIC POINTS: 30 **SPELLPOWER:** 14

SPELLS: Arcane Spring, Water Whip, Water Wall, Watery Doom

FAVORED STUNTS: Lightning Attack, Magic Shield, and Skirmish.

TALENTS: Single Weapon Style (Master) and Water Arcana (Master)

WEAPON GROUPS: Light Blades and Blaster Pistols

EQUIPMENT: Xyverian Ring (See the **Xyverian Ring** sidebar for its abilities.)

MERMAID SHAPESHIFTER

XYVERIAN RING

Kinlee owns a weapon left over from the Chaos Wars. This golden metal torus is about 6 inches in diameter. When a white switch on the side is depressed, it hovers and rotates around its owner's hand, responding to its owner's mental commands. The device can switch between a melee and a ranged mode as a free action, extending a solid plasma beam that acts as a short sword or firing a plasma bolt as a ranged attack (range 20 yards). In either case, it deals 1d6+2 damage (plus Strength or Perception as appropriate to the mode). A target's Armor Rating is halved vs. attacks from the ring. If the wielder uses the Pierce Armor stunt, damage is penetrating instead.

The Xyverian Ring counts as being in the Light Blades group for melee attacks and the Blaster Pistols group for ranged attacks.

If asked about the gatehouse, she says there's something matching that description further down, but advises the PCs not to bother going since she's already collected everything worth anything down there. She is otherwise coy about the surrounding area. They are strangers and she is not going to give up the secrets that help her survive.

She never attacks of her own volition unless the PCs attack first, blatantly steal from her, or repeatedly provoke her. She's much more likely to let them leave than start a conflict, but she'd rather strike a deal before they go on their way. She has no interest in accompanying them.

The stream pouring out of the crystal basin leads into another part of the earthquake rift, where it widens again. Lines of teleportation energy trace back along the stream and the walls of the rift, but don't produce any portals wide or stable enough to enter. When the characters continue out of the room, they reach a fork in the road described in **Scene 3**.



SCENE 3

DIVERGING PATHS

Combat or Exploration Encounter (Optional)

If you choose to skip this optional encounter, use the waterfall path as described below, but leave out the guardian robot.

As the PCs follow the waterfall and teleportation tracers down the path, they reach a spot where the rift splits, divided into two paths by a towering wedge of stone. The waterfall courses down one path, cutting a canal through the rock. The other, drier path is littered with small bits of soil—an odd sight in this subterranean environment. Both paths descend in a gentle slope, with the waterfall path meandering and twisting more than the dry path. Each of them eventually reaches a rift in the rocks on both paths that prevent the PCs from backtracking unless they take extraordinary measures, such as setting up a series of ropes or tethers they can use to return with if they succeed at a **TN 15 STRENGTH (CLIMBING)** test to get back to the waterfall path or **TN 13 STRENGTH (CLIMBING)** test to get back to the dry path.

WATERFALL PATH

If the PCs travel down the waterfall path, they find that it winds back and forth, its course diverted multiple times by fallen boulders of immense size. An ancient robot guardian patrols this passage. The PCs encounter it in one of the larger chambers. Its exposed circuitry causes the water to become electrified as described under the robot's powers. The cavern's walls are massive slabs of rock, but there are two smaller stones that rise out of the water. Anyone standing on them when the robot's electric pulse triggers avoids taking damage, but the two stones can accommodate only one person apiece.

This robot was once assigned to guard the teleportation pad. Though it's combat capable, it wasn't designed for combat as it was really only tasked with serving allies who came down via the teleport pad. After the pad stopped working, the robot has continued to patrol the area around the teleport pad and watch for new arrivals or unauthorized personnel.

DRY PATH

Beyond the robot encounter, the PCs come upon the exit of the earthquake rift. The waterfall cascades down into the depths but there is a dry passageway that continues ahead. This passage leads directly to the gatehouse.

If the PCs travel down the dry path instead of taking the waterfall route, they find more soil scattered along the path. Eventually they come upon vegetation: creepers and tendrils snaking along the walls of the rift, with purple leaves. The vegetation grows denser as they follow it back, and they start to find wide, colorful flowers. This flora can be identified as a beneficial plant called Golden Deepness with a **TN 16 INTELLIGENCE (NATURAL LORE)** test. It thrives in dark conditions with just a bit of moisture, just like the environment in the tunnel. Its golden fruit has energizing, restorative properties (see later in this section).

GUARDIAN ROBOT

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

3 ACCURACY (BRAWLING)

1 COMMUNICATION

3 CONSTITUTION

3 DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)

4 FIGHTING (SPEARS)

0 INTELLIGENCE

4 PERCEPTION (HEARING, SEEING)

5 STRENGTH (CLIMBING, MIGHT)

0 WILLPOWER

SPEED

8

HEALTH

40

DEFENSE

13

ARMOR RATING

8

WEAPON

CARBON SPEAR

ATTACK ROLL

+6

DAMAGE

2D6+5

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Skirmish, Electric Pulse (2 SP), and Knock Prone.

ELECTRIC PULSE: As a special stunt costing 2 SP, the robot can accelerate its internal generator while touching its exposed wiring to the water around it to electrocute anyone in the water within 20 yards. This deals 2d6 penetrating damage, which doesn't affect the robot.

ELECTRICITY RESISTANCE: The guardian robot suffers no damage from electricity-based attacks.

EXPOSED CIRCUITRY: A large portion of the robot's metal shell is missing, leaving it vulnerable to malfunction. When a Pierce Armor stunt is used against the robot, it freezes up, losing its major action on its next turn.

EQUIPMENT: Carbon Spear

GATEHOUSE DEFENDER

The path becomes crowded with dense shrubs. If the characters push through, they reach a tall chamber where the vegetation isn't quite as thick. A massive cluster of glowing golden fruit hangs from the ceiling like a chandelier—the heart of the Golden Deepness. The test to identify the plant becomes **TN 14** once this cluster is visible, and anyone who failed before can try again.

If they can reach the central cluster, with a **TN 13 STRENGTH (CLIMBING)** test, the PCs can collect six fist-sized lobes of fruit. Shooting the cluster down causes 1d6 of the lobes to fall to the ground. Anyone who eats one of the lobes **heals 1d6+3 damage**.

More dense shrubs fill the pathway after the central cluster, then the pathway descends steeply and connects with the same dry passage at the end of the waterfall route. This passage leads directly to the gatehouse.

THE HIDDEN GATEHOUSE

As the PCs exit the earthquake rift, they reach the gatehouse originally constructed to allow access to the Tomb



of the Prophet. In the original construction, there were no entrances to the underground vault. The leaders who imprisoned Dhawan had access codes for a single teleportation pad, which led to a force field tunnel passing through magma and then into a great hall to the secure portal to the Tomb of the Prophet. Now the PCs must venture through what remains of this citadel, which has fallen into disrepair in the millennium since the Chaos Wars ended.

SCENE 4

THE GUARD ROOM

Exploration Encounter

You follow the irregular passageway for several hundred yards until you come to a cavern strewn with piles of rubble. Unlike all the rock you've seen down here thus far, these are finished stones. Or at least they were until something sent them tumbling down. Beyond the rubble you can see the remains of a large chamber. There is old equipment in there, smashed and rusted. You hope you've made it to the hidden gatehouse at last.

The PCs have indeed made it to the gatehouse. The earthquake tore a hole in the wall of its upper chamber and it is here they can enter. This room was originally a guard chamber, though its monitoring equipment was destroyed long ago. A guardian robot was left to mind this area. It survived the earthquake and eventually began to patrol outside the facility, ending up along the waterfall passage in **Scene 3**. If the PCs took the dry path to the gatehouse and did not encounter the guardian robot, you can have them encounter it here if you want.

Otherwise, the PCs can explore the area. In one alcove they find where the teleportation pad used to be. They can see

the floor of the alcove collapsed (when they landed on it) revealing a long drop into darkness. If they keep looking through the hole in the floor, they see the telltale sign of teleportation magic at irregular intervals. These failsafes are how they survived a potentially fatal drop.

At the back of the room is a large metal door bent off its hinges by the force of the earthquake. The PCs can squeeze through the opening and into the landing beyond. There, a wide, circular staircase descends deeper into the earth. From down below there is a red glow.

SCENE 5

THE FORCE FIELD TUNNEL

Exploration Encounter

You travel down the staircase and emerge into a chamber carved out of obsidian. There is nothing in the room but an octagonal doorway opening into a tube of glowing, translucent panels. The translucent panels appear to be overlapping force fields. Up ahead you can see the tube crosses a river of magma, which sloshes against the force fields, causing them to jitter and spark. The intense heat from the molten rock doesn't penetrate the inside of the tunnel, which remains fairly cool. Beyond the magma the tube curves away out of sight.

This 100-yard-long, 3-yard-wide tunnel leads to the sanctum holding the portal to the Tomb of the Prophet. The creators built it to be impervious, but hadn't counted on a rare form of mold taking up residence inside. This mold begins appearing in patches about one-quarter of the way (25 yards) into the tunnel, looking like a pink sludge that slowly ripples. The touch of the mold undermines the force field, causing heat to leak in. The mold is endothermic, and absorbs most of the





heat itself. In fact, it absorbs heat so efficiently that characters touching the mold have the heat drained from them. Characters making successful **TN 13 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** tests can avoid the mold while moving through this area. Moving at half speed reduces this to a **TN 11** test. Characters who fail take **1d6+1 penetrating damage**.

Halfway through the tunnel (50 yards in and 25 yards past the point where the PCs need to start making tests), the mold gets more pervasive. Here, it takes a **TN 15 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test to avoid the mold or a **TN 13** test if moving at half speed. In addition, many of the force field panels have started to fail, letting the magma's heat seep in. Each turn a character remains within the last 50 yards of the tunnel, they take **1d6 penetrating damage** from the intense heat.

It's another 50 yards to the end of the tunnel, where a force field door separates the tube from a stone passageway. There's a keypad to open the door, but the combination is unknown. Cracking the code takes a **TN 17 INTELLIGENCE (CRYPTOGRAPHY)** test. The door has been previously damaged by mold, so it can also be smashed down with a successful **TN 15 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test.

Beyond the door lies a short, perfectly square tunnel with no decorations and a set of metal doors on the far end. These doors slide automatically when anyone approaches within 2 yards.

SCENE 6

GIANTS OF THE CHAOS WARS

Combat Encounter

The metal doors slide closed, and you're within a completely dark room. From the darkness come faint sounds of huffing, heavy footsteps, and the sound of scraping stone. The echoes make it clear this room is massive, with a vaulted ceiling.

In the darkness, ancient guardians wander. These colossal albino creatures once served Eritena, a warlord of the Chaos Wars. They were set to guard the doorway to the Tomb of the Prophet. Left alone within an expansive chamber, with no connection to the outside world, they set to creating a great hall to honor Eritena, not realizing their commander died long ago. Inside the cavern, a gigantic stairway leads down from the metal doors to an expansive, flat floor made of stone. Numerous pillars, pyramids, and obelisks created by the giants rise from the floor, towering into the great vault above.

Scattered all over the floor are empty metal drums labeled "Okritane." These drums are big enough to contain a person standing upright with arms extended. They're all empty, containing only a few scrapings of a dried pink substance that smells like rotten meat. A character who hides within a container gets a +2 bonus on **DEXTERITY (STEALTH)** tests against the giants' opposed **Perception** tests.

Across from the bottom of the stairway, on the far side of the floor, the ground slopes down to a recessed stepped pyramid of polished stone. Its tall, rectangular door is shut, but a faint blue light pulses around the edges. This light becomes visible to anyone who gets close enough to see into the recessed area.

GUARDIAN GIANTS

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

1	ACCURACY
0	COMMUNICATION
3	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
4	DEXTERITY
4	FIGHTING (BLUDGEONS)
1	INTELLIGENCE
3	PERCEPTION (HEARING, SMELLING)
7	STRENGTH
2	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
16	70	14	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
GIANT HAMMER	+6	3D6+7	

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Dual Strike (3 SP), Paralyzing Scream (3 SP), Skirmish

LIGHT AVERSION: Because of an extreme sensitivity to light, a guardian giant becomes weaker if exposed to a bright light source. A creature can aim a light source, which must be as bright as a torch or brighter, at a giant as a minor action. As long as the light remains trained on it, the giant takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and takes 1d6 penetrating damage at the start of each of its turns while it remains in light.

PARALYZING SCREAM: A guardian giant howls with indiscriminate rage while attacking, and can bellow a high-pitched scream as a special stunt with a cost of 3 SP. Any character within 10 yards takes 1d6 penetrating damage and must make a successful **TN 13 WILLPOWER (COURAGE)** test or lose their minor action on their next turn.

EQUIPMENT: Giant Hammer

EMACIATED BEHEMOTHS

ADVERSARIES

Albino giants inhabit this citadel, and have since Dhawan was first imprisoned. The creatures do not age and are difficult to kill, but they're not nearly as strong as they once were. Though they were unstoppable, unkillable war machines during the Chaos War, they required a special food called Okritane to maintain their strength and cunning. The area was enchanted so the feeding drums would magically replenish, but the earthquake disrupted the magic and since then the giants have eaten little. Without Okritane, they've become emaciated and listless and the few creatures that find their way down here do not sate their hunger. Instead of maintaining the guard they were intended to keep, the giants have busied themselves by slowly working on their great hall, building edifices with crumbled stone from the cavern walls.

The number of giants equals twice the number of PCs, but they don't all arrive and attack at once. The first time the adventurers expose a giant to light, that giant attacks immedi-



ately. If this doesn't happen, the giants might take some time to notice the intruders, and once they realize they're not alone they have to think briefly before realizing they should follow their ancient orders.

Additional giants enter battle and retreat erratically. Typically, one moves up to a hero and swings its massive hammer, uses its Paralyzing Scream stunt if it can, then either moves on to another target or retreats. The giants usually run away after being exposed to light, then spend a round or two outside the light, mustering up the courage to approach once again. The giants have forgotten enough of their original mission that they don't guard the portal sanctum very well, and might even chase the adventurers toward it accidentally.

If the characters reach the sanctum, the door can be opened in two ways: They can make a **TN 17 INTELLIGENCE (CRYPTOGRAPHY)** test or touch the Staff of Forlorn Hope to the door's surface, either action causes the door to ascend into the ceiling. Once the PCs enter, they begin **Scene 7**. The doorway is too narrow for the giants to reach them after they go inside.

The giants are intelligent, so the PCs could attempt to negotiate with them. Their minds are foggy, however. Furthermore, even communicating with them is a challenge. Their leader, Rorgavek, once spoke the Common Tongue, but he hasn't used it in hundreds of years and the language itself has evolved in that time. A character with the Linguistics talent at Journeyman or Master degree can communicate with Rorgavek after a few minutes of trial and error. Otherwise, it takes a successful **TN 16 INTELLIGENCE (HISTORICAL LORE)** test to piece together the giant's usage and phraseology.

Once communication is possible, the PCs must convince the giant leader that they are friends, perhaps with a gift of food or healing. Then perhaps they can negotiate. What the giants want most is either freedom or, barring that, food. The PCs' options are limited down here. They might be able to secure passage with the promise of future help. Coming back to deliver it, even if they make the offer in earnest, will be difficult. This could be expanded into an adventure of its own, however.

SCENE 7

THE PORTAL SANCTUM

Exploration Encounter

Beyond the metal doorway, a short set of metal stairs leads down into a small, nondescript room lit by orbs that put off a soft, blue light. A tall, oval frame covered in runes is set into the far wall.

The magical frame on the wall activates as soon as the Staff of Forlorn Hope comes within 2 yards of it. A deep thrum echoes through the room as ancient machinery comes to life. The frame begins humming, metal flaps within the frame fold open, and veins of light trace across the wall inside the frame. If a hero touches the staff to one of the veins of light, the staff levitates into the air and begins to rotate. It separates into several pieces, realigning to form an arcane symbol. A figure, representing one of the ancient generals, manifests in the form of a ghostly red mist. He stands parallel to the ground, as though the portal were the floor, and moves his arms in a complex pattern. The oval on the wall fills with a coruscating sheen of light as the general bows, then disappears. The Staff of Forlorn Hope reforms itself, then falls to the floor.

The portal to the Tomb of the Prophet is open.

CHAPTER RESOLUTION

The PCs are now ready for the final part of their long journey. They may want to pause before going through the portal, so they can rest and heal. They will get little respite in the Tomb of the Prophet.

THE TOMB OF THE PROPHET



The PCs have traveled far and endured much to reach the Tomb of the Prophet, yet if they plan to carry out the mission entrusted to them by Voss, they must press on and brave terrible dangers beyond anything they have faced so far. Traveling through the portal, the characters appear inside a great tower that rises above an ancient, sprawling city that feels both ancient and timeless. It is here that the PCs must find and confront the Prophet Dhawan. However, without the Staff of Forlorn Hope, they might spend days or longer scouring the area for her place of exile. Fortunately, the staff guides the characters towards their destination. Even with the relic's power to lead them, the way is fraught with peril, a danger that hides in plain sight...and one that reveals itself when the party approaches its goal.

THE PORTAL

Transport through the portal is anything but easy. Bizarre visions and excruciating sensations assail the PCs. In the instant it takes to pass through it, the PCs experience horrific deaths, their bodies torn to pieces by shadowy monsters, suffer being burned alive, or find out what it feels like to be devoured from the inside out by human-faced worms. Through it all, they hear the sounds of screaming, breaking glass, and a high-pitched whine that shatters their minds.

Feel free to add experiences tailored to the characters based on what has happened in the campaign so far. This is exactly what Wil did for his players on the show. The visions were all built off the characters' backstories, their actions in the campaign up to this point, and the way the players had portrayed their characters. You can do something similar. If, for example, a character had a brush with death, witnessed a loved one die, or suffered a grievous wound, embarrassment, or anything else suitably compelling, you can revisit these scenes during their travel.

The portal sequence is your last chance before the climax of the adventure to create scenes of emotional resonance for the characters, so consider what you want to highlight. You may want the visions to reveal some campaign secrets. What the characters see may bring some inter-party conflicts to the surface. Or the PCs may simply learn some uncomfortable truths about themselves. Whatever the characters experience, just before it becomes intolerable, the portal pushes them free and into the Hall of Heroes.

Upon arriving, each PC must make a **TN 11 Willpower (Courage)** test. The character carrying the Staff of Forlorn Hope has a +2 bonus to the test. A failure indicates the character becomes *Touched by Chaos* until the adventure ends. Make a note about which characters were affected, as the effects are revealed and important later in this adventure.



SCENE 1

HALLS OF HEROES

Exploration Encounter

At last, your torment ends and you are expelled from the portal, which hovers perpendicular to the floor. Once you gather your wits, you see you are atop a dais positioned at the intersection of four enormous hallways. Along either side of each hallway stand rows of stone statues stretching for as far as you can see. All is quiet. Everything is still but for the flickering motes of blue light drifting in an unfelt breeze.

PORTAL

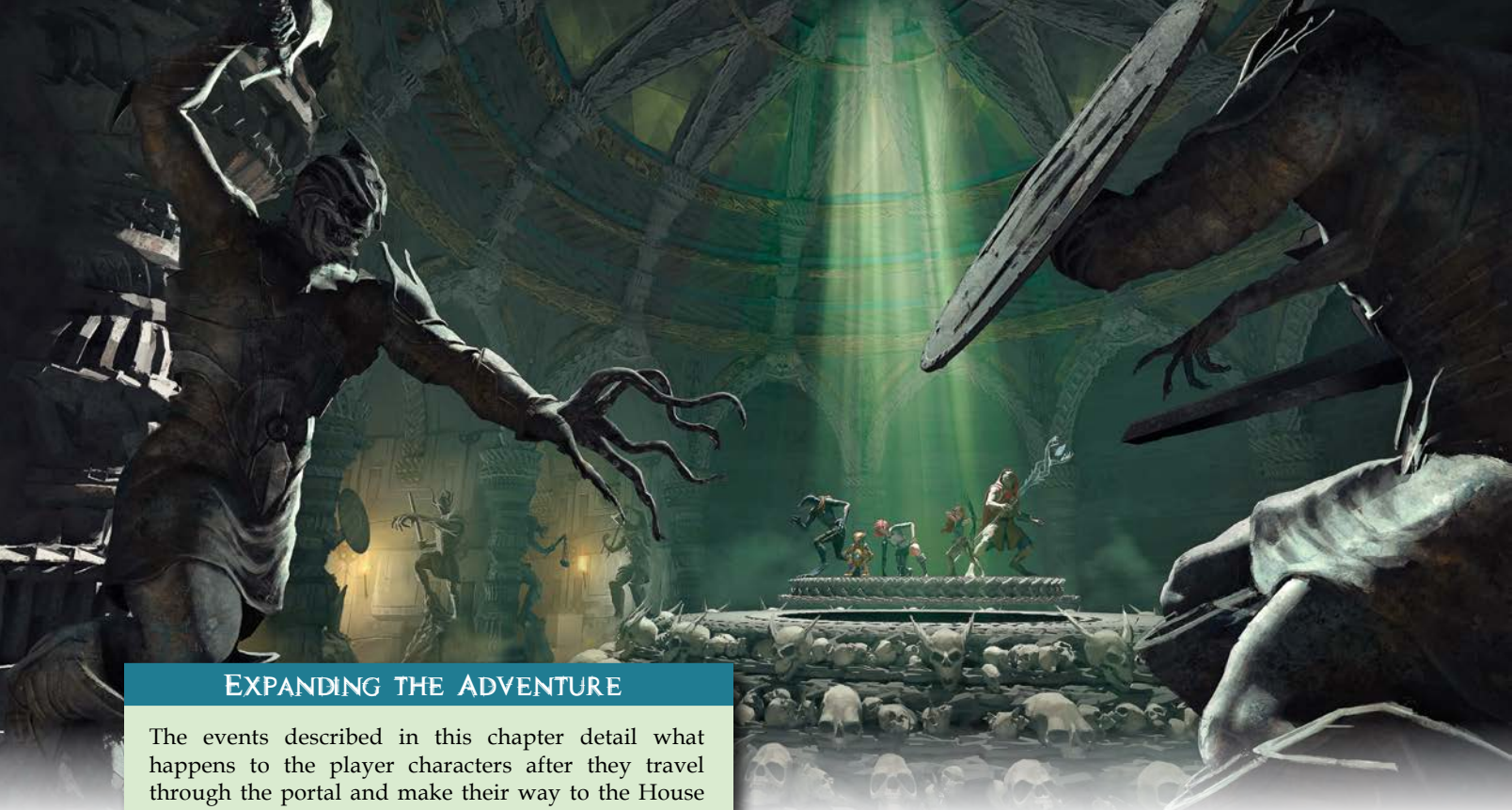
The portal through which the characters traveled remains in place, hovering about a foot off the ground. It has a front and back, but disappears when viewed from the side. The PCs emerged from the front, which has a silvery surface distorting images it reflects. Characters may move through the front and return to the place they just left, though they are subject to the madness that tormented them on the way here. The portal's back is black and drinks in the light. A character touching or attempting to enter the portal from that direction vanishes. The portal flings the character to a remote corner of the universe, where the character takes **2d6 penetrating damage** from being exposed to the vacuum, and the returns, covered in frost, to an open space within a few yards of the portal.

DAIS

Three steps descend from the top of the metal dais. Each step rests atop a ring of skulls. The skulls look human at a glance, but inspection reveals they all display unusual bone structures and are strangely warped. Some have overlarge teeth, missing nasal cavities, extra or missing eye sockets, or are bizarre shapes.

Halls: Four identical hallways stretch some 200 yards away from the dais. Along each side of the halls stand rows of statues on pedestals. Circular depressions in the floor form an erratic path that ends when they reach pairs of riveted metal doors fitted with metal pull rings held between the teeth of horned metal skulls situated in the center of each door. The doors pull open easily.

When the PC carrying the Staff of Forlorn Hope steps off the dais and into a hallway—it doesn't matter which—the depression in the floor nearest to that character erupts with blue flame, followed by the next in line and the next after until a crooked row of flickering blue flames fill the corridor with light. The blue flames indicate a direct route to the Grand Plaza and the House of the Prophet. Since the blue



EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

The events described in this chapter detail what happens to the player characters after they travel through the portal and make their way to the House of the Prophet, where the story concludes. Armed with the Staff of Forlorn Hope, the PCs have little chance of become sidetracked as the relic shows them the way forward. This said, the city around the portal is ripe for further adventures. It is a massive, sprawling place filled with secrets and great treasures. You can easily expand the adventure by placing additional obstacles between the PCs and their goal. Perhaps the House lies elsewhere in the city, requiring the characters to explore more of its tangled streets and the horrors lurking there. The characters may have to face many dangers and foes on the road through the city to their destination. Expanding the adventure raises the stakes and the challenges the characters must overcome to reach the conclusion.

flames respond to the Staff and its intentions, the other corridors remain dark when a character brings the staff into them. The other halls open onto ledges that overlook the city as described under the Grand Stairs (following). They may have staircases or lead to other areas that you create, or they may just be dead-ends.

STATUES

The scores of statues lining the walls depict warriors in poses of battle readiness. They wear armor, have shields strapped to their arms, and each hold weapons of various kinds. Examining the statues reveals they are crudely carved from stone, their features mere suggestions, but all display symbols and images hinting that they depict soldiers of the Chaos Wars, specifically those that fought for the Prophet Dhawan.

Casual inspection reveals the weapons the statues hold are not made from the same material and are, in fact, functional

weapons made from metal, wood, and leather. The statues grip the weapons as if they had closed their hands around their handles and hafts.

Finally, a close inspection of the statues reveals that no two are the same. They have similar postures, but each bears some strange feature in its design. Odd bulges, ridges, fins, extra limbs, and even wings adorn the statues, hinting at the chaotic nature of the master they served.

GRAND STAIRS

Opening the doors at the end of the lit hallway reveals a ledge that juts out of a square, stone tower and sits hundreds of feet above a sprawling city apparently designed by a deranged mind. It stretches as far as the eye can see and curves up at the edges, almost as if it was built on the inside of an enormous bowl. The buildings and other structures appear organic, as if they were sculpted from flesh and bone. Crooked towers lean crazily over the expanse, while corkscrew minarets scratch at a purple and green sky. Bizarre statues of giants loom overhead, some painfully thin, others bloated, all making obscene gestures or in shameful poses.

Above the ledge, the tower climbs up into roiling leprous green clouds that obscure its top. Wide staircases, on opposite sides of the ledge descend in twisting and turning paths until they join just before the tower's foot. More statues, similar to the ones in the Hall of Heroes, stand on opposite sides of the steps, facing each other. The subjects of these statues display even more unusual characteristics; masses of tentacles, animal parts, additional heads, bizarre anatomical arrangements, what seem to be machine parts, and many other strange details.



About halfway down the stairs, the skies darken as green-black clouds spread out from the tower. Blue lightning strikes the city, filling the air with blinding bright flashes and booming thunder. Black, oily rain spills from the skies, making everything it touches slick. If the characters continue their descent while the storm rages, each character must make a **TN 9 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test. A character *Touched by Chaos* has a -1 penalty to the roll. On a failure, the character slips and falls. The character slides down the stairs until it reaches the bottom, taking **1d6 penetrating damage** on the way.

The storm rages for about ten minutes and then dissipates, though the skies look angry and dump more black rain on the city every few hours in short bursts.

SCENE 2

THE CITY AWAKENS

Combat Encounter

At the bottom of the stairs is a grand plaza that looks like a sheet of obsidian, about 30 yards on each side and bounded by a jumble of buildings that crowd the edges. In the gaps between the buildings narrow pathways worm deeper into the city. Across the plaza, on the side opposite where the stairs end, stands an imposing structure that looks something like a temple.

When a player character moves a few steps away from the staircase, a piercing chime shatters the silence and echoes across the city. The chime causes the statues to tremble and shake, bits of stone falling from their bodies as they begin to move.

Any character looking up the staircase sees a man-shaped blot of darkness trailing wisps of smoke descending the stairs from the ledge. Its movements are jerky and twitchy. As it moves, it reaches out, with impossibly long arms, to touch each statue it passes. Those statues strain, causing even more pieces of rock to fall away and reveal living flesh underneath. Not all manage to shake off the imprisoning rock. Some snap off limbs as they try to step from their pedestals, only to fall and break apart when they hit the stairs. Others shiver and twitch in place, unable to free themselves. Still, enough get free to follow the Shadow that woke them and become chaos thralls, the dark Prophet's horrific servants.

The PCs have about a minute before the Shadow and his freakish soldiers reach them. Each character that can see the Shadow and the awakening soldiers must make a **TN 11 WILLPOWER (COURAGE)** test. Characters *Touched by Chaos* from the trip through the portal have a -2 penalty on the test. A failure indicates the character becomes overwhelmed with fear and is unable to act until the Shadow reaches the bottom of the stairs.

Upon reaching the bottom of the stairs, the Shadow darts toward the character bearing the Staff of Forlorn Hope while one chaos thrall for each PC moves to attack the other members of the group. The same number of additional thralls leave the staircase every other round until a total of three

DESCRIBING THE CHAOS THRALLS

The magic responsible for the thralls' creation afflicts them with a host of strange mutations and physical abnormalities. The stone that bound them gave them something of a humanoid appearance, but the chunks falling from their bodies reveal the true extent of their warped forms. Extra limbs unfold from their bodies, while others crumble away to reveal fused limbs underneath. Some have claws, fangs, spines, or spurs as long as swords, while others incorporate strange technology, having chainsaws for hands, saw blades protruding from their limbs, or nozzles that spew flames in place of their mouths. In short, you can describe these creatures in any way you like. Use the following examples to spark your creativity when describing them.

- The thrall has 1d6 extra arms or legs, but has only two digits on each appendage.
- The thrall has hands in place of its feet.
- The thrall has the lower body of a centipede.
- Great shuddering bags of gas cover the thrall's body which allow it to hover a few inches above the ground.
- Faces cover the thrall's body and they hoot, shriek, and bark while fighting.
- The thrall's lower body is a small, armored tank with treads for locomotion.
- Lime green feathers cover the thrall's body and in place of a head it has a mass of veiny tentacles.
- A wide, drooling mouth stretches across the headless thrall's abdomen underneath a cluster of eyes dotting its chest.
- Glossy blue chitin covers the thrall's body.
- The thrall has no bones and it pulls its jelly-like mass about with its limbs.
- The thrall has tentacles in place of its arms. Each tentacle ends at a toothy maw.
- The thrall's skin has the texture and appearance of a tongue and it excretes clear, dripping slime from the folds of its flesh.
- The thrall has faceted crystals in place of its eyes.
- The thrall has mechanical limbs fused to torso made of rotting flesh.
- Pitted molars grow all over the thrall's naked body.
- When cut, the thrall bleeds albino cockroaches from its wounds that scurry over the thrall and its attacker.

times the number of PCs (so, if there are four PCs in your group in addition to the one with the staff, that will take 6 rounds) have joined the battle. As always you can adjust that number up or down depending on how the scene is going. This is meant to be a challenging encounter but not an overwhelming one.



CHAOS STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1+	VANISH: You or the target of your attack disappears and reappears in an open space on a solid surface 1d6 yards of the spot from which you or it left for each 1 SP you spend.
1	INSANE REVELATION: You see all possible futures and divine an insight from them. You have a +2 bonus to the next test you make. If you fail that test, however, you have a -2 penalty to all tests until the end of your following turn.
2	MOMENTARY GIGANTISM: You swell in size as you make your attack. You knock your target prone and then you deflate, moving up to 6 yards in any direction you choose.
2	ARMOR CLAD: Thick plates of chitin, stone, or something else spontaneously cover your body granting you a +2 bonus to your Armor Rating against the next attack made against you. Then the protective growths crumble to dust.
2	CHAOTIC FORM: Your body undergoes a bizarre transformation that lasts for just a few moments before you return to your normal form. The target of your attack has a -2 penalty on its next attack against you.
2	WARPING STRIKE: Your attack inflicts 1d6 extra damage and the next creature to attack that target has a +1 bonus on its test.
3	FLING: A surge of chaotic energies hurls your target 2d6 yards away from you. The target must succeed on a TN 9 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) test or be knocked prone.
3	FLICKERING ASSAULT: After the attack, you disappear and reappear on a solid surface you could see within 10 yards of the place from which you disappeared. You may then make another attack. If you roll doubles on this attack roll, you do not generate any more stunt points.
4	SPONTANEOUS EXPLOSION: You explode and inflict 1d6 penetrating damage to each creature within 2 yards of you. You then reappear on a solid surface you can see within 12 yards of the spot where you exploded.
4	WARP REALITY: Strange lights and eerie sounds surround you until your next turn. Until then, you have a +2 bonus to Defense. If a creature gets a failure on its test to attack you, the creature cannot take a major action until the end of its next turn.
5	ENDING STRIKE: Your attack inflicts an additional 2d6 damage and the target of your attack takes 1d6 penetrating damage at the start of your next turn.
5	LASTING MUTATION: Chaotic energies warp your body. Choose one of your abilities and increase it by 1. Then, roll a d6; on an even number, you decide another ability to decrease by 1. On an odd number, the GM decides. The ability decreased cannot be the same as the ability increased. In addition, you gain a physical mutation of your choice that explains what happened. If your Strength increases, you might bulk up or increase your size. If your Intelligence increases, your skull could grow noticeably larger or you could go permanently bald.



CHAOS THRALL			
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)			
0	ACCURACY		
1	COMMUNICATION		
4	CONSTITUTION		
1	DEXTERITY		
3	FIGHTING (CHAOS WEAPONS)		
0	INTELLIGENCE		
1	PERCEPTION		
4	STRENGTH		
3	WILLPOWER		
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	25	11	4
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE
CHAOS WEAPON	+5		1d6+6
SPECIAL FEATURES			
FAVORED STUNTS: Knock Prone, Mighty Blow, any Chaos Stunts.			
CHAOS WEAPONS: This is a generic term for whatever weirdness the thralls manifest during the fight.			
STONE ARMOR: When the thralls emerge, they are partially covered in stone, which grants them an Armor Rating of 4.			
THRALLS OF CHAOS: Each time the PCs kill a chaos thrall, the imprisoned character fighting the Shadow either heals damage equal to 1d6 + Constitution or the character inflicts +1d6 damage on the next attack or spell that hits the Shadow. The PC that killed the chaos thrall chooses which effect he or she wants to take effect.			
SERVANTS OF THE PROPHET			

Characters *Touched by Chaos* have a -2 penalty to tests made to attack the thralls. However, such characters may use stunts from the **Chaos Stunts table**.

While the chaos thralls are real, the Shadow is not. It ignores all attacks made against it; weapons and magic pass through it and have no effect. When the Shadow arrives, it reaches for the staff. The character holding it must make a **TN 15 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test. On a success, the character moves the staff out of the Shadow's reach and the character must repeat the test at the start of the next round when the Shadow attempts to grab the staff again.

On a failure, the Shadow touches the staff and unleashes a wave of greasy ash that spreads out from the staff until it reaches the plaza's edges and then disperses to settle on the plaza, infecting it with chaos that may make the battlefield more challenging. The character with the staff transforms into a stone statue, similar to the ones the PCs passed to get to the plaza, and his or her mind plunges into a nightmare world where he or she must face the shadowy menace alone.

THE NIGHTMARE WORLD

Once the character who's holding the Staff of Forlorn Hope is petrified, that PC's mind travels to a nightmarish land-

SHADOW			
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)			
4	ACCURACY (CLAWS)		
2	COMMUNICATION		
3	CONSTITUTION		
2	DEXTERITY		
3	FIGHTING		
2	INTELLIGENCE		
3	PERCEPTION		
4	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)		
3	WILLPOWER		
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	50	12	3
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE
CLAWS	+6		1d6+6
SPECIAL FEATURES			
FAVORED STUNTS: Chaos Stunts.			
NIGHTMARE VISAGE: The Shadow takes on the visage of its opponent's greatest enemy or fear. The character fighting the Shadow suffers a -1 penalty to all tests and attack rolls.			
THE STAFF'S BEARER: Each time the character imprisoned with the Shadow inflicts damage to it, a bolt of violet lightning leaps from the staff and strikes one of the thralls, inflicting 2d6 penetrating damage to it.			
SHADOW IN THE MIND'S EYE: Each time the Shadow inflicts damage to the character bearing the staff, the plaza warps. Roll a d6 and consult the Chaos in the Plaza table to see what happens. The effects last until the start of the Shadow's next turn.			
LIVING NIGHTMARE			

scape under a sky filled with boiling black clouds. The mist swirling around the character is filled with menacing shapes that creep and crawl through the gloom. These shapes mirror the events happening around the character, though he or she cannot clearly perceive the actual action. In addition to the movement and clash of those figures, the character hears cries, curses, and pleading from loved ones, enemies, and friends emanating from the shadowy figures. A moment later, the Shadow assumes a physical form that resembles the character's greatest enemy or true love and then attacks them.

Although the staff's bearer must face the Shadow alone, the combat between the other PCs and the chaos thralls has an effect on the imprisoned character's fight, just as developments in the Nightmare World affect what happens to the other PCs.

THE STAFF'S BEARER

Each time the character imprisoned in the nightmare world inflicts damage to the Shadow, a bolt of violet lightning leaps from the staff and strikes one of the thralls, inflicting **2d6 penetrating damage** to it.



CHAOS IN THE PLAZA

ROLL	EFFECT
1	BIZARRE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT: The air fills with wailing butterflies, the sky rains blood, mad laughter echoes throughout the city, every character changes to a weird color or pattern of colors.
2	GROUND BECOMES FLESH: The ground in the plaza becomes flesh. All creatures move at half speed across its semi-solid surface. Also, if a creature inflicts any damage to the ground, a fountain of acidic blood sprays up from it. Each character must make a TN 9 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) test. On a failure, the blood splashes the character and inflicts 1d6 penetrating damage .
3	HAIR FOREST: Massive hairs grow thickly from the ground in the plaza. Creature can only see up to 4 yards away until this effect ends.
4	SNAPPING JAWS: Toothy maws appear all over the ground and attempt to bite any characters standing on it. Each character standing on the ground must make a TN 11 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) test. On a failure, the mouth bites the character and inflicts 1d6+3 damage and the character cannot move until the end of his or her next turn.
5	EYE STALKS: Eyestalks rise up from the ground and watch the characters. All chaos thralls have a +1 bonus on attack rolls.
6	VILE PHEROMONES: The ground becomes fleshy and from the numerous pores leak clouds of brown mist that amplify pain. When a creature in the area takes damage, it takes 1d6 extra damage .

SHADOW

Each time the Shadow inflicts damage to the character bearing the staff, the plaza warps. Roll a d6 and consult the **Chaos in the Plaza** table to see what happens. The effects last until the start of the Shadow's next turn.

THRALLS OF CHAOS

Each time the PCs kill a chaos thrall, the bearer of the Staff of Forlorn Hope either **heals damage equal to 1d6 + his or her Constitution** or the character **inflicts +1d6 damage on the next attack or spell** that hits the Shadow. The player decides which benefit he or she wants.

ENDING THE BATTLE

The PCs can end the battle in one of two ways. One way is for the character imprisoned in the Nightmare World to defeat the Shadow. Once this happens, the Shadow dissipates with a scream and the character's mind returns to his or her body, at which point the stone shell crumbles and falls away releasing the character.

The other way is for the other characters to destroy the last chaos thrall. If the staff's bearer was petrified, the stone binding that character shatters and falls away. The character's mind instantly returns to his or her body, but may suffer reoccurring nightmares because of the experience.

In either case, defeating the chaos thralls opens the way to the temple across the plaza. This is the House of the Prophet.

SCENE 3

THE FORGOTTEN HERO

Roleplaying Encounter

When the battle with the chaos thralls is over, a small figure emerges from a building on the plaza. It's a gnome in patched and filthy leather armor, his hair long and unkempt. His bloodshot eyes fix you with a stare and he asks with a quavering voice, "Are you ... real?"

This sad creature is Perdur Traston and once he was the greatest gnome hero of the Chaos Wars. He was inside the Tomb of the Prophet when it was sealed and has been trapped here ever since. He has endured this nightmarish existence for centuries and his legacy on Valkana has also suffered. He does not realize it, but his presence in the Tomb has somehow erased him from memory in Valkana. He is named in no histories of the Chaos Wars. None of his deeds are celebrated in song. Even the gnomes do not remember him. It is as if he never existed. PCs can try to make **INTELLIGENCE (HISTORICAL LORE)** tests about him but they fail no matter what they roll.

Perdur has no idea how long he's been trapped. In this city there is no way to tell. Shadows and other terrors have tormented him. He has spent periods quite mad and unaware of himself. The appearance of the PCs have shocked him back into lucidity. Dare he hope that his nightmare can end? This is his fervent desire when he approaches the PCs. Sample questions and his answers follow. Use them to roleplay Perdur in this scene.

Who are you?

"My name is Perdur Traston. Yes, that Perdur Traston."

Who?

"Perdur Traston, shield companion to Lady Vадja. I was also known as the Little Dragon and Ogre-bane. Sound familiar now?"

We've heard of Lady Vадja but not you. Who are you really?

"That is who I am! I am a hero of the Chaos Wars. I am the champion of the gnomes!"

How did you get here?

"I was among those who brought the Prophet here in chains. We locked her in the House of the Prophet across the plaza, and then Arnon Reed was to lead us out. I ... don't know what happened after that. I blacked out and when I woke I was trapped here. How long have I been gone from Valkana? It must be 10 or 20 years at least, right? There is no day or night here, so it's hard to tell."

It's been hundreds of years actually.

"No, that can't be right. How am I even alive?"



What can you tell us about the Prophet?

"Sometimes I see her in my dreams. She tells me I am nothing and no one. Maybe she is right."

Do you want to go back to Valkana?

"With all my heart! If you won't take me, just kill me now. I can endure no more of this hell."

USING PERDUR

There are a couple of ways you can use Perdur Traston. If you have a gnome PC, he might actually be the forgotten ancestor of the character's family. This could be an opportunity to work in some of the PC's backstory. Another way you can use Perdur is as a replacement player character. The chaos thrall fight is a tough one and it's possible someone could die. In that case, the player can roll up Perdur as a character of the same level as the rest of the group. While Perdur was once a great hero of high level, his time here has diminished his abilities, putting him on par with the PCs. You can do this yourself if all the PCs survived but you want Perdur to act as an ally in the final encounter. It's better if he doesn't though, as you want the finale to be all about the player characters. Perdur should accompany them only reluctantly.

Should the PCs choose to rescue Perdur, his story can be the springboard to further adventures. Was he left behind by accident or did someone in Arnon Reed's party betray him? If so, why?

SCENE 4

THE HOUSE OF THE PROPHET

Exploration Encounter

The House of the Prophet rests on a platform of glossy black stone with three steps that lead up to enormous columns carved to look like figures of chaos straining to hold the entablature aloft. Taking up the triangular pediment is a relief that portrays a cataclysmic battle between ordered armies and vast, monstrous hordes of nightmarish creatures of chaos. Central to the relief are two figures clashing in brutal hand-to-hand combat. Runic script reminiscent of the script around the frame of the portal is carved along the cornice, nearly invisible under the remnants of the oily black rain that has only just stopped falling. Rows of columns run from the stairway to a distant doorway that is obscured by shadows.

When the character holding the Staff of Forlorn Hope carries it past the topmost stair and onto the porch that leads to the doorway, it begins to radiate an aura that glows and shifts around it like blue flames. The porch is fifty feet across and covered in mosaic tiles that outline a pentagon midway between the stairs and the doorway. The pentagon is oriented so that one point faces the steps, while the opposite flat side faces the single doorway that leads into the inner sanctum of the building. Stepping into the pentagon with the staff causes

magical, harmless, blue flames to lick up around the columns surrounding the porch, illuminating the area with a flickering light that gives the creatures in the columns the appearance of shadowy movements.

Once the porch is lit, the PCs notice lettering in the mosaic tiles along the edges of the pentagon. Upon examination, they can decipher names, one to each side. The flat side facing the inner doorway reads *Dhawan*. The other four sides of the pentagon contain other names. At this point a characters recognize the names of their ancestors along one of the other sides; if the characters go to stand along the side with their own ancestor's name, the mosaic begins to emit a red, misty glow and the same illusory general that appeared to open the portal in **CHAPTER 8: A REQUIEM FOR RUNCIBLE** manifests in the center.

Once again the staff moves to float on its own and separates into sections. This time, instead of reuniting to create an arcane symbol, the pieces fly apart and fall at the feet of each of the player characters. A rumbling tremor rises from beyond the doorway to the interior chamber, the sound of metal against stone and a mechanical keening fades away after a few moments. Each PC now has a piece of the staff which allows them to work together to activate the runes controlling the movement of the giant guardian statue in the next scene.

If you have more or less than four players, you can make the polygon a different geometric shape (pyramid, hexagon, etc.). There should be one side per PC, plus one for the Prophet.

SCENE 5

THE ANTECHAMBER

Exploration Encounter

You move through the doorway and into the chamber beyond. Its smooth and windowless walls are made of the same obsidian as the building's exterior. On one wall appears to be a doorway, except that the "door" has no hinges on the outside nor any handles or fastenings. It seems like smooth stone, black and slick, called out only because it is framed by the same runic script that bordered the portal that brought you to the Tomb of the Prophet. Two ornate statues, cast in dull blue-grey metal stand on either side of the door. One appears to be an ancient hero holding up a flaming sword. The other is a twisted monster covered in scales with clawed hands that grasp an orb.

The antechamber is a square room, 30 yards x 30 yards. The two statues represent order and chaos. Their seamless metallic skin does not appear to be jointed or hinged, and yet the statues can move in a fluid, almost organic manner, as the PCs soon find out. A character that makes a successful **TN 12 PERCEPTION (SEEING) or INTELLIGENCE (ARCANE LORE)** test recognizes the orb is similar to the puzzle box that held the player characters' talismans in **CHAPTER 5: INTO NESTORA**. This orb is a representation and not a functioning puzzle box, but is a hint to the player characters that this encounter is meant to be a puzzle.



THE RUNE-BOUND DOOR

If, for some reason, the characters did not trigger the Staff of Forlorn Hope to separate into pieces, the following happens as they approach the door.

When the character holding the staff comes close enough to the statues that they are illuminated by its fiery aura, they move and settle themselves a few paces in front of the doorway they previously flanked. With an ominous rumble the statues move to take up defensive stances against the characters who do not hold the staff and rebuff any attacks or attempts to manipulate the doorway by anyone other than the bearer of the staff. However, they do not attack outright or behave aggressively outside of blocking access to the arcane doorway. They deflect, block, and parry. The statues themselves cannot be damaged.

In previous encounters the characters have often succeeded by simply touching the staff to various doors and portals. While the door guardians allow the staff-bearing character to approach the rune-bound door unmolested, simply touching the doorway with the staff does not trigger the same opening effect as before. Touching the doorway causes the etched glyphs to glow. Characters that make a successful **TN 12 PERCEPTION (SEEING) or INTELLIGENCE (ARCANE LORE)** test notice that several of these runes match the etched glyphs on the amulets they recovered from the puzzle box at Farkaya's shop. Assuming they are wearing the amulets, the characters feel them hum with energy and become warm against their skin. If the pieces are brought close to one another, they snap together as if magnetized, forming what looks like complete plate with a circular hole in the center. The hole is just the right size to slide over the end of the staff. Doing so triggers the staff to separate into the same number of pieces as in the scene on the porch and the amulet "plate" separates back into its component parts. Each piece of the staff is bathed in a flaming aura in the shape of a rune based on one of the glyphs from the amulets, one for each of the player characters.

OPENING THE DOOR

Once each PC has a piece of the staff, they can attempt to open the rune-bound door. As the PCs approach the guardian statues, the pieces of the Staff of Forlorn Hope flicker to life, each piece wreathed in a rune-shaped flame. The statues rumble to life and move so they are facing each other in fighting stances. To gain entry to the Prophet's prison, the PCs must reenact the victory of order over chaos by using the pieces of the staff to mimic the fight the two statues act out.

There is one move of the fight sequence per PC. Here is a sequence for six characters: High Guard, Left Feint, Right Slash, Low Guard, Right Feint, and Thrust. You can cut this down to match your number of players, but Thrust should always be the last move.

When a character matches the current pose of the statue representing order, a rune on the doorframe corresponding to their piece of the staff begins to glow. This indicates they are doing the right thing. The statues then change position, the order statue enacting the next move of the sequence and

the chaos statue responding. The rune only illuminates if one character makes the correct pose. If two or more do the same pose, nothing happens.

Once the characters have worked through the sequence, all the runes flash and go out. The statues then move back to their original fighting stances. The PCs must now repeat the sequence in order. This triggers the statues to fight and opens the door.

You repeat the sequence and the runes ringing the door glow brightly. The two statues fight, the swordsman matching your movements. In the final move, he thrusts his sword home into the monster and twists the blade. When this happens the door disappears. The glowing runes now frame an empty doorway. Your destiny is at hand.

The PCs may need some clues to figure all this out. Here are some things they can learn if they need help.

- PCs who make successful **TN 11 PERCEPTION (SEEING) or INTELLIGENCE (ARCANE LORE)** tests notice that there is a rune around the doorway that corresponds to each one of the staff pieces.
- PCs who make successful **TN 11 PERCEPTION (SEEING) or INTELLIGENCE (ARCANE LORE)** tests notice these same runes are repeated along the blade of the order statue's sword.
- PCs who make successful **TN 12 INTELLIGENCE (CULTURAL LORE) or INTELLIGENCE (MILITARY LORE)** tests notice the initial stances the statues strike are those of a formal duel.

SCENE 6

THE PROPHET DHAWAN

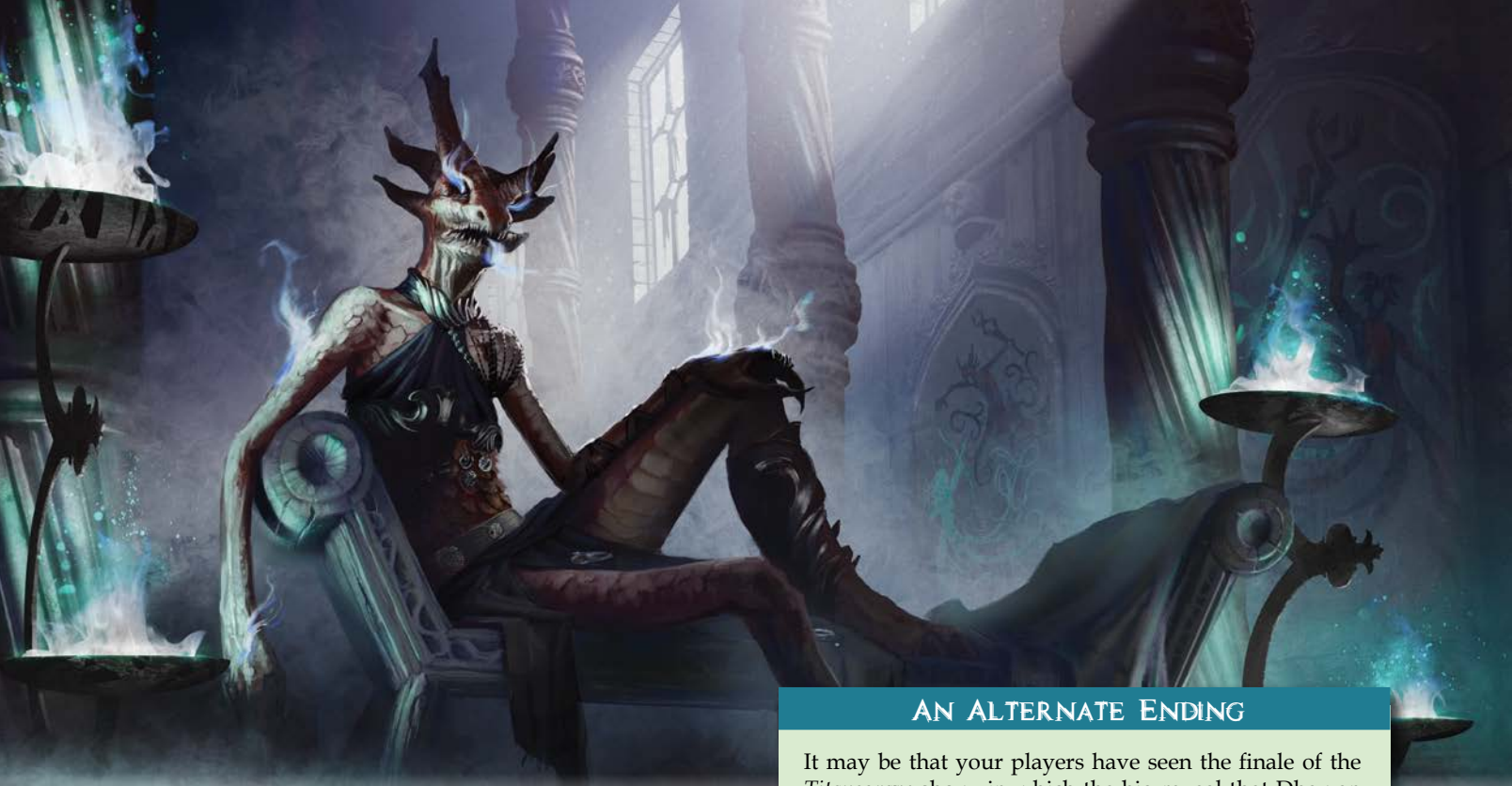
Roleplaying and Combat Encounter

You move through the rune-bound doorway and into the large chamber beyond. There are two rows of columns running down the center of the room. At the far end of the room you see an ancient saurian woman reclining on a couch. Standing 6 yards in front of her are several humanoid figures. They wear full length robes. Their heads are bowed and cowl hide their faces from view.

The saurian crone regards you from her couch. At last she speaks, her voice raspy with disuse: "'Ah, after all this time, I am remembered! Welcome to my humble abode, heroes. Has the time finally come where you realize I was right, that lashing the forces of magic to profane technologies cannot be sustained? Tell me, are the people ready to tread the natural path at last?'"

The Prophet Dhawan—for indeed this is she—makes no moves to attack the PCs. Even in these circumstances her charisma is apparent. It's clear that at the height of her power she was quite a force.

Dhawan knows who the characters are and knows their bloodlines. Weakened as she is, she tries to sway the PCs to her side and convince them to let her "free" willingly using



her skills and talents in oration. She knows this is unlikely to work, but she's happy to have someone to talk to for a little while at least. Her basic position is that she was right, but the world was not ready to see it. Surely, that has changed since she's been locked away. Do they know that the Staff of Forlorn Hope used to be hers? They should give it back to her and she can show them some true wonders.

If her persuasion is getting nowhere, she says, *"My voice used to put fire in whole armies. Soldiers screamed my name as they killed and they died. Now you scoff at my words like I'm some feeble grandmother. Well if you won't hear me, perhaps you will listen to those closer to you."*

She motions and the figures standing in front of her lift up their heads and pull back their cowls. Revealed are important people to the PCs' past: parents, siblings, lovers, friends, etc. There is one figure per player character and you should choose characters with resonance for the PCs. Many, if not all of these characters should be known to be dead back in Valkana.

These figures are not, in fact, real people, or even the souls of real people. They are simulacra crafted from the stuff of chaos and given purpose by Dhawan. They are there to manipulate the PCs and pull their heart strings. The Prophet has reunited them in this place, they argue. Is that not wondrous? Could they not at least give her a chance?

The PCs are unlikely to fall for this, so then the simulacra make things more personal. Their goal here is make the PCs break down and hug them. If this happens, they hold the hug and weep. When it is clear that no more PCs are going to succumb to this manipulation, Dhawan claps her hands. Each PC hugging one of the simulacra feels the embrace tighten and is takes **10+1d6 penetrating damage** as Health is drained from their bodies. As they feel the life being sucked from them, they can see the Prophet Dhawan getting stronger. She

AN ALTERNATE ENDING

It may be that your players have seen the finale of the *Titansgrave* show, in which the big reveal that Dhawan is playing the PCs would be ruined. Maybe your group doesn't mind knowing that going in and is willing to play along for the sake of the story. It does take the oomph out of the ending though. It's also possible your players will realize there is something fishy about the whole situation and leave the Prophet in her prison.

If you want to try something different, consider this alternate ending. The person in the final encounter is not Dhawan at all, but a servant that was imprisoned with her. The real Dhawan figured out how to escape from the House long ago, but could not get out of the Tomb. She approached the PCs in the shape of a gnome: Perdur Traston. Her hope is that the PCs feel pity for the poor hero and bring him out of the Tomb of the Prophet. Then she would be back in Valkana once again without all the trouble of being killed and reborn. This explains why the PCs have never heard of Perdur and why he was not keen to accompany them to the House of the Prophet.

rises from her couch, looking far less wizened than she did mere moments before.

THE "FINAL" BATTLE

Now the fight is on. The simulacra have done their jobs. A single hit against them (Defense 10) strikea them down. The Prophet is the real threat. She wants to hurt the heroes, but unknown to them, she also wants them to kill her so she can be reborn in Valkana.

Now she switches tactics, trying to distract them with grandiose ranting, attacks on their honor and their ancestors, and the like. The Prophet preached against the mixing of magical forces and technology. If any characters seem to cross that line, say by having cybernetic enhancements, they draw her ire and



THE PROPHET DHAWAN

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY (ARCANES BLAST, STAVES)
5	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION, LEADERSHIP, PERSUASION)
1	CONSTITUTION
2	DEXTERITY
1	FIGHTING
5	INTELLIGENCE (FIRE ARCANA, HEALING ARCANA, HISTORICAL LORE, RELIGIOUS LORE, SHADOW ARCANA)
2	PERCEPTION
0	STRENGTH
6	WILLPOWER (FAITH, SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	40*	12	4

* plus whatever she regains from the simulacrum.

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
ARCANES BLAST	+4	2D6+6
STAFF	+3	1D6+1

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Threaten, Sway the Crowd, Stunned Silence, Fast Casting.

MAGIC POINTS: 90 **SPELLPOWER:** 18

MAGE POWERS: Arcane Blast, Big Blast, Power Blast, Spell Blast

MAGIC TALENTS: Healing Arcana (Master), Fire Arcana (Master), Shadow Arcana (Master)

SPELLS: Arcane lantern, burning shield, flame blast, firestorm, healing aura, healing touch, restoration, revival, shadow dagger, shadow's embrace, shadow slip, veil of darkness.

CHAOS AURA: Once per round, Dhawan can force a subject she can see to re-roll the dice for a test and use the result she prefers. This aura also gives her +2 Defense and an Armor Rating of 4.

PROPHECY OF RUIN: Dhawan can pick a target at the beginning of an encounter. Stunts used in attacks against this character cost -1 SP. She may target herself.

TALENTS: Lore (Master) and Oratory (Master).

WHISPERS OF CHAOS: By whispering forbidden secrets and opening others' minds to madness and ruin, the Prophet Dhawan can make targets enraged, fearful, or confused, causing them to lash out at others near them. With a major action, Dhawan can target a character within 10 yards. If she wins a **COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION) vs. the Target's WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)** opposed test, the target must attack a character of her choosing with their next action. Characters who have been *Touched by Chaos* previously in this adventure are at a -2 penalty to resist. She may spend 3 SP to affect an additional target with this effect. She may choose herself as the target of the affected characters attacks if she desires. This counts as a spell for the purposes of appropriate Spell Stunts.

WEAPONS GROUP: Brawling, Clubs, and Staves

EQUIPMENT: Staff

AVATAR OF CHAOS

she seeks to turn their fellows against them, or to target them with Whispers of Chaos and force them to behave in a confused or hostile manner, optimally getting them to attack the other members of their own party as "proof" of their corruption and the correctness of her views on purity if she can manage it.

Ultimately, her goal is to be struck down physically in some way, so she can be reborn. She cannot simply kill herself, she must be "martyred" by succumbing to a fatal attack by one of the bloodlines that imprisoned her. Having been trapped in this dimension for hundreds of years, she is extremely bitter and harbors hopes that she can both be struck down to be reborn and also trap the descendants of her captors in a hellish exile to rival what she's endured herself.

Dhawan knows that she has to put on a good show. She doesn't want the PCs thinking too much about what they are doing during this fight. She wants to enrage them and hurt them so they destroy her. As her physical form at last collapses in defeat, a shadow coalesces over her body, wispy and barely formed, and her voice rings out with a final taunt:

"Your ancestors were smarter. They knew if I died, I would be reborn. We will meet again, fools."

At that the shadow dissipates entirely without further word or attack. The Prophet has been slain...for now.

WHERE NEXT?

Season 1 of the show ends with the PCs still inside the Tomb of the Prophet. Their adventure may continue in Season 2, but your players are unlikely to want to wait! So where do you take the campaign from here?

The first and most obvious challenge is getting the PCs back to Valkana and Nestora. Since they have the Staff of Forlorn Hope, they can travel back through the portal to the hidden gatehouse. The teleportation pad there is broken, however, so they have to get back to the surface through the earthquake rift. There are many opportunities for adventure on this journey. There's also the question of whether they want to do anything to aid the giants (something they may have promised to do in the previous chapter).

Once the party returns to Nestora, a trip to see Voss is certainly in order. The old elf is heartbroken if the Prophet has been reborn or returned to Valkana. He blames himself for being a fool and apologizes for setting the PCs on that path. You can use Voss as a patron to the PCs and a convenient way to send them on new adventures, but they would be well within their rights to be skeptical of him after recent events!

If the Prophet has been reborn, the PCs may want to warn the leaders of the various city-states and urge them to prepare. The trouble is that no one wants to hear this message. You can construct politically-oriented adventures in which the PCs try to find allies who believe their story and are willing to act on it, while those content with the *status quo* oppose them.

If you look back over the adventure, you may find other threads you can pick up on to spin out new adventures. Do they want to get involved in the political unrest in Nestora? Are there other inventions of Arnon Reed waiting to be discovered? What secrets are hidden in the Rust Wastes? Valkana is yours to explore. Have fun with it!



AANKIA

Aankia's father was a street performer who used small robots in his act. One day a vehicle plowed into a show in progress, killing him and wrecking the robots. Aankia managed to scavenge one small robot from the parts and named him Jeremy. He is sometimes helpful (GM's discretion) but better known for his one liners. Aankia wants to find the driver of that vehicle and exact retribution.

AANKIA		LEVEL 2 ROGUE	
LOWER CLASS SAURIAN PERFORMER • 2000 XP			
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)			
3	ACCURACY		
0	COMMUNICATION (PERFORMANCE)		
1	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)		
3	DEXTERITY		
2	FIGHTING		
2	INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING, SCIENTIFIC LORE)		
1	PERCEPTION		
1	STRENGTH		
2	WILLPOWER (COURAGE)		
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	29	13	4
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE
LIGHT BLASTER PISTOL	+3		1d6+3
SHORT SWORD	+3		1d6+3
SPECIAL FEATURES			
POWERS: Pinpoint Attack, Rogue's Armor, Pierce Armor (1 SP)			
LANGUAGES: Common Tongue, Saurian			
TALENTS: Scouting (Novice)			
WEAPON GROUPS: Blaster Pistols, Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves			
EQUIPMENT: Backpack, 2 Fulgin M Batteries, 2 Healing Potions, Jeremy (Performing Robot), Light Blaster Pistol, Scout Armor, Short Sword, Traveler's Gard, Waterskin.			
PERFORMING ROGUE WITH SICK DANCE MOVES.			



KILIEL

Kiliel's elf mother had an affair with a dwarf when she thought her husband had been killed. He had survived, however, which made things awkward when he returned home. Kiliel's biological father disappeared, never to be seen again, and her elven parents raised her. They own a shop that sells curiosities and once grown up Kiliel hit the road to find artifacts for the family business. One day she hopes to find her dwarf father. .

KILIEL		LEVEL 2 ROGUE	
LOWER CLASS MIXED ELF/DWARF TRADESPERSON • 2000 XP			
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)			
3	ACCURACY		
2	COMMUNICATION		
2	CONSTITUTION		
3	DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE, STEALTH)		
1	FIGHTING		
2	INTELLIGENCE (EVALUATION)		
4	PERCEPTION (SEEING)		
1	STRENGTH		
1	WILLPOWER		
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
15	33	13	4
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
LONG BOW		+3	1D6+7
GRENADES		+3	VARIES
SHORT SWORD		+3	1D6+3
SPECIAL FEATURES			
POWERS: Dark Sight, Pinpoint Attack, Rogue’s Armor, Pierce Armor (1 SP)			
LANGUAGES: Common Tongue, Elven			
TALENTS: Alchemy (Novice), Thievery (Novice)			
WEAPON GROUPS: Blaster Pistols, Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves			
EQUIPMENT: Backpack, 2 Blast Vials, 1 Fire Vial, 2 Healing Potions, Long Bow, Quiver (20 Arrows), Scout Armor, Short Sword, Traveler’s Garb, and Waterskin.			
SHORT FOR AN ELF BUT DEADLY WITH A BOW.			



LEMLEY

Lemley Zee was born to human parents but adopted by a saurian couple. Her love of tinkering went disastrously wrong one day when she was 14. The explosion killed her adopted parents and Lemley herself barely survived the blast. Now most of her right side is made of cybernetics. She considers herself an orphan twice over. She's only 17 but has had to grow up quickly.

LEMLEY ZEE		LEVEL 2 WARRIOR	
OUSIDER HUMAN WANDERER • 2000 XP			
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)			
1	ACCURACY (BRAWLING)		
0	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION)		
2	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)		
2	DEXTERITY (ADVANCED DRIVING)		
3	FIGHTING		
0	INTELLIGENCE		
1	PERCEPTION		
2	STRENGTH (CLIMBING)		
2	WILLPOWER		
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
10	41	12	6
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
LONG SWORD		+3	2d6+2
CYBER-LIMB		+3	1d6+2
HEAVY BLASTER PISTOL		+1	2d6+1
SPECIAL FEATURES			
LANGUAGES: Common Tongue, Saurian			
TALENTS: Armor Training (Novice), Dual Weapon Style (Novice)			
WEAPON GROUPS: Blaster Longarms, Blaster Pistols, Blud-geons, Brawling, Heavy Blades			
EQUIPMENT: Backpack, Cybernetic Arm, Cybernetic Leg, Family Locket, Flashlight, 2 Fulgin M Batteries, 2 Healing Potions, Heavy Blast Pistol (Betty), Light Battle Armor, Long Sword (Dr. Lobotomy), Traveler's Garb, and Waterskin.			
KEEPER OF DR. LOBOTOMY'S APPOINTMENT BOOK.			



S'LETHKK

S'Lethkk has unusual parentage, even for Valkana. He is half-orc and half-saurian, and he has several full saurian siblings and a full orc brother. His saurian siblings were cruel to him and locked him in an abandoned chapel when he was young. They thought it would break him but it was there S'Lethkk unlocked his magical powers. He believes a god helped in that time of crisis, but the nature of this deity remains mysterious.

S'LETHKK DORMOR		LEVEL 2 MAGE	
MIDDLE CLASS MIXED ORC/SAURIAN STUDENT • 2000 XP			
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)			
1	ACCURACY (ARCANE BLAST)		
2	COMMUNICATION		
1	CONSTITUTION		
2	DEXTERITY		
0	FIGHTING		
3	INTELLIGENCE (HISTORICAL LORE, RESEARCH)		
2	PERCEPTION		
0	STRENGTH		
2	WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)		
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	30	12	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE
ARCANE BLAST	+3		1d6+2
FIGHTING STICKS	+1		1d6
SPECIAL FEATURES			
MAGIC POINTS: 20 SPELLPOWER: 12			
SPELLS: Jolt, shadow dagger, shadow's embrace, shock blast			
CLASS POWERS: Arcane Blast, Arcane Device (Fighting Sticks), Magic Training			
LANGUAGES: Common Tongue, Orcish, Saurian			
TALENTS: Lightning Arcana (Novice), Lore (Novice), Shadow Arcana (Novice)			
WEAPON GROUPS: Brawling and Staves			
EQUIPMENT: Backpack, Fighting Sticks (Club), Flashlight, 2 Healing Potions, Traveler's Garb, Waterskin			
SKILLED WITH MAGIC BUT UNLUCKY WITH DICE.			