

ZEITGEIST Adventure Path Act Three

The Age of Reason

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Sample file



The Reason for the Age

By Ryan Nock

Imagine if one day the whole world woke up and agreed with you.



That was the hook that led to this entire adventure path. I'd long had in mind the images of starry nights obscured by the steam of enchanted industry, of ghosts in a theater, a colossus broken free, and a woman standing on its shoulder regretting her role in the disaster. I was fascinated by all the revolutions that had gone on during the Age of Enlightenment, just slightly predating the era most 'steampunk' emulates. I'd been high on Obama's inauguration and crestfallen at political impediments to the changes I hoped he'd make.

But I didn't have a core idea, something complex enough to keep gamers involved for potentially years of adventures, and something compelling enough to me that my muse wouldn't keep shoving me until it was complete. Then, while brainstorming setting factions in an email thread with E.N. Publishing's owner Russ Morrissey, I wrote

"And here's what I think the Obscurati are up to. We've already got factions with clearly delineated philosophical differences. Insular homeland protection, technological superiority, nihilistic greed, the supremacy of secrets, revenge and the ascendancy of nature, and peacemaking. The conflict isn't existential, but philosophical. One age is about to end, another set to begin, as foretold in the stars."

I'm writing this foreword on November 5th. For Russ, it's Guy Fawkes Day, so I'll admit that a little conspiracy — with the right amount of explosions and villains burned on pyres — can be fun. I certainly hope the campaign we've written is fun for you. For me, though, this evening is mere days from the US Presidential election, and the fact that I don't actually live in a fantasy setting hasn't managed to stop America from believing in two distinct, barely compatible realities.

By the time any of you read this, the election will be decided, the seal closed, and the stars will turn along one course or another. The next morning we won't wake up and all agree with each other, but that doesn't mean we have to accept that this is how the world will always and forever be.

Roleplaying games are escapist, yes, but at their best they are also emboldening, empowering. We battle monsters that exist only as words in the air, and we triumph with the aid only of clever thoughts and clever friends. The dice won't always go our way, but through games we can be heroes.

If all you take away from your ZEITGEIST campaign are memories of heroism, grandeur, and adventure, I'll be honored I could be a part of that. But perhaps, as you and your friends grapple with forces that seek to dictate what the perfect world will be, you'll consider the works of great thinkers past and present, and be empowered with the courage to lend your voice too to the panoply of philosophies arguing the future into being.



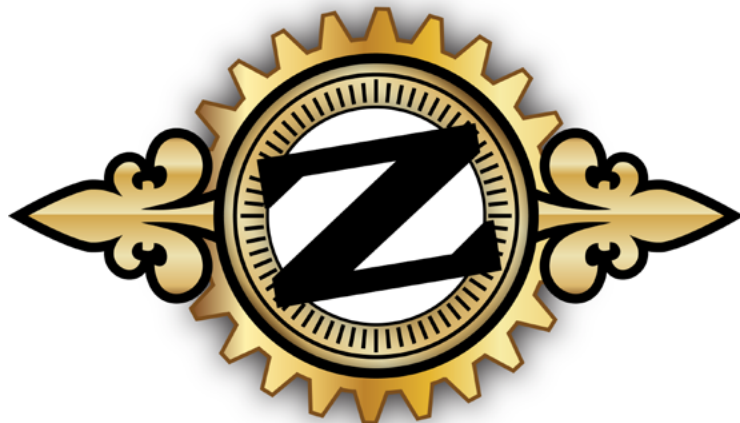
There are too many people to concisely thank for their contributions and support, but above all I must commend Russ for his confidence that we could complete this colossus of a series, Eric for creating the masterpiece aesthetics of the books, Frank for his unflappable professionalism as I risked burn-out near the finish line, Claudio for illustrating our vast cast and for allowing me to use his city as inspiration for Flint, and Thurston for . . . fuck, for being Thurston. Thursty, you made all this work far more fun than I could have imagined. Seriously he's awesome, just hang out with him.

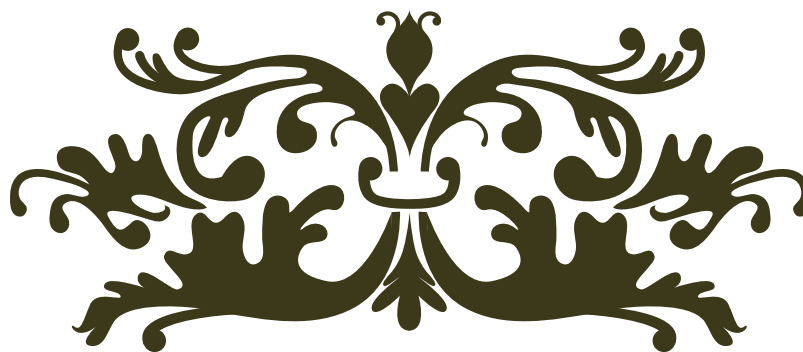
Also, to the ghost of my dad: thank you for getting the moniker "Nicotine Nock" in the Air Force, and thus inspiring my mastermind.



Adventure Number 10

Godmind





From the Pen of Thurston Hillman

Evocative Cover Illustration by ShenFei

Stunning Cartographic Displays by James Hazelett
Jonathan Roberts

Masterful Interior Illustrations by Claudio Pozas
ShenFei, and
artists of history

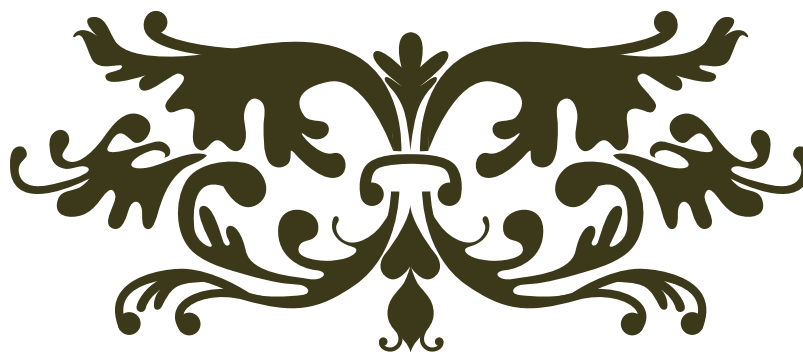
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Ably Produced and Facilitated by Russell Morrissey

Preeminent proofreading by “Nathan Meister” and
“Jack Tannery”

Creepy Poems by Jamie Isfeld

*Special Thanks to my mother Brenda. Because you'll never be a Grandma
(at least from me), so Granny Allswell will have to do.*



ADVENTURE TEN: Introduction

Wherein Everyone Actually is Out to Get You

The centuries-old Obscurati conspiracy has completed its masterstroke. By altering the world's cosmology they have shifted the nature of reality, and local rituals in each nation have made all of civilization loyal to them. All except the nation of Risur, where the party thwarted the local ritual. While the Risuri populace is still affected by the metaphysical shift—which guides people to be more rational, agreeable, and empathetic—they are still loyal to their homeland, and are the sole bulwark against the Obscurati's global domination.

The great change has created widespread turmoil, however. The sun has vanished, replaced by a gyre-shaped nebula barely brighter than the old moon, and the moon itself is black, visible only for the hole it cuts when it passes in front of the Gyre. Magic functions slightly differently, and it takes weeks of trial and error for spellcasters to regain their previous powers, but even then some magic like teleportation and long-distance communication have to be rediscovered. Nature itself begins to revolt as the fey titans who held sway over Risur

in the ancient past awaken and vie for control. And while the citizenry endure all these changes with excellent—almost frightening—calm, psychic manifestations start to appear wherever groups of too many like-minded people gather.

Meanwhile across the sea, Nicodemus, leader of the Obscurati and now tacit ruler of the world, has called the leaders and greatest thinkers of the various nations to gather in Cherage, capital of Danor. He plans to unify them to create his vision of a utopia, and the first step on the agenda is the conquest of Risur. If the party can stabilize Risur in time to reach this gathering, they might have a chance to undo what the conspiracy has wrought, but they'll find that other forces are already eyeing their newly-vulnerable world.

Background

Three elements are at play in this adventure—the Ob's ritual to change the world, the awakening of the fey titans, and the Ob's efforts to consolidate control of the world.

The Great Eclipse

The world is fed by eight planes, providing energies of fire, air, water, earth, space, time, life, and death. The Obscurati's ritual has changed which planes this world is linked to, and so has altered the nature of reality itself.

Two years ago, the Ob's research into the planes accidentally roused the fey titan known as the **Voice of Rot**, and he has plotted ever since. A primordial manifestation of death, the Voice of Rot sensed the approaching reality shift, and realized it would give him a chance to actually witness the world's destruction. He subtly influenced agents and long-dormant cultists around the world to disrupt the Ob's ritual on Axis Island. Their interference prevented the Obscurati's colossus Borne from closing the Axis Seal, which has left the world drifting away from its sun, pulled toward **The Gyre**.

The Gyre is visible in the charcoal-black sky as a churning cloud of flickering stars, moving like a pair of immense gears. Over the coming months it will grow alarmingly close, and within a year the world will be pulled into that vortex. In truth, the Gyre is a graveyard of the multiverse, where dead or abandoned worlds are drawn in, ripped apart, and scattered in order to create new planes. In later adventures the party will have to go there to recover the planes this world was once linked to—or choose new planes from among the dying remnants—in order to undo the Obscurati's designs.

For now, the nature of magic has notably changed. See *Reality Shift*, (page 311) for full details, but the most pressing one for the party's interests likely is that, unless you can see your destination, it's impossible to teleport somewhere if you have not been there since the Ob's ritual occurred. Similarly, long-range communication like *sendings* only can contact people you have interacted with since the world changed. For at least the immediate future, if the party is curious what's going on somewhere in the world, they will need to trek there the old-fashioned way.



ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE

As a stand-alone adventure outside the ZEITGEIST campaign, you'll want to strip away most of the background of *Godmind* and focus on the present. Have the awakening fey titans be a consequence of the same psychic phenomena that are creating the hiveminds. In this way, the adventure deals with 'titans' of forest and field, mountain and sea, and then civilization itself. The Axis Island elements don't fit cleanly into this abridged adventure.

Alternately, if you just want to mine this adventure for your own high-level campaign, the fey titans could show up as reawakened primordial entities or extraplanar invaders. The Axis Island events could be a rescue mission for an inventor who is using the island's strange magic to craft an airship, and who's being pursued by a hostile army. The titular godmind could be summoned by an eldritch ritual, or the result of a person's psychic powers activating and going out of control.

KEEP AN OPEN PLOT

At this point, your players have access to ridiculous powers and resources, and so expecting a particular outcome for any given challenge is foolish. The temporary limits on teleportation and long-distance communication at the beginning of the adventure allow us to at least encourage a starting position, but we expect the PCs to come up with myriad courses after that. Throughout the ZEITGEIST campaign we've enjoyed crafting complex, interlocking series of scenes, but we recognize that at this high level it's best to just throw up interesting obstacles and let the PCs figure out their own path.

We suggest you keep an open mind, and not get worried if they win a few encounters too handily. We'll push them to their limits eventually.

The Fey Titans

The fey titans have over the centuries since Risur's founding occasionally risen up one at a time to vie for control of their domain—the **Ash Wolf's** forests, the **Father of Thunder's** fields, **Granny Allswell's** mountains, **She Who Writhes's** seas, and the Voice of Rot's swamps. Not since the nation's founding have all the titans awoken simultaneously, but the Voice of Rot's battle with the party in adventure nine, combined with the sudden reality shift, has roused their ire.

Traditionally the monarch of Risur has been responsible for subduing any rebellious titans, typically using some mix of physical might and a canny abuse of fey quirks to trick them into defeating themselves. After any such defeat, the titan is compelled to offer a boon and then return to its slumber.

Much of the first act of this adventure occurs in and around the city of Bole, located south of Flint, in more a fey-friendly region of the nation. In the farmlands west of Bole, the gazelle-like fey titan Father of Thunder rampages. Attracting an ever-growing herd of animals to his side, he devastates Risur's breadbasket and will cause a famine if not dealt with.

In the Antwalk Thicket east of Bole, important lumber-providing forests have been caught in rampant blazes. While locals blame the fires on the Ash Wolf, the truth is more complicated. Salamander hunters from the plane of fire, Jiese, came through a portal and killed one of the lupine titan's pups. The titan mistakenly blamed the loggers, and so the Ash Wolf hunts in the infernos to punish them. The fires themselves are the salamanders' doing, since they hope to claim this land as their own.

In Anthras Mountain mines south of Bole, tremors and quakes herald raids by gremlins, minions of Granny Allswell, who desires children to raise as her own. With the mines forced to shut down, Risur is threatened by a shortage of ore for industry.

The party might be willing to leave those problems alone to deal with more urgent threats, but they will need at least to defeat She Who Writhes before they can access the rest of the world. The tentacled titan madly lashes out at any vessel attempting to travel the seas around Risur. Her sheer size, speed, and ability to detect intruders in her waters make any sort of naval travel nigh impossible. While this titan's attacks effectively land-lock the party and the Risuri navy, it also keeps Danor and other nations from attacking. The party might be best-served to deal with all the other titans before confronting the she-kraken.

By contrast, though, the Voice of Rot avoids the party. Indeed, he has already traveled through a portal, and is making his way through the Gyre toward its center, feeding off all the death around him. He will pose a great threat to the party in Adventure Twelve, *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*.

Obscured No More

During the Obscurati's ritual on Axis Island, the conspiracy's leader **Nicodemus the Gnostic** watched as the great colossus Borne opened the hundred-foot diameter golden Axis Seal, which unleashed devastating magical energies from across the multiverse. The forces damaged the colossus, but Ob mages were present to mitigate some of the destructive power, and the industrial titan was able to rearrange enchanted stone pillars buried beneath the seal. This adjusted which planes the world was linked to, bringing about the new world the Obscurati desired.

To complete the ritual, Borne needed to lower the seal back over the ritual ground, which would create a new star for these worlds to orbit. At this critical juncture, though, cultists of the Voice of Rot who had infiltrated the Ob set off explosions that killed most of those





present and slew the body Nicodemus inhabited. Borne was blasted by waves of planar energy that tore him apart before he could close the seal. The three-hundred-foot tall colossus collapsed in pieces at the edge of the ritual valley, and the Axis Seal fell upon him, pinning the crippled construct.

Nicodemus's spirit form remanifested in Methia where he first died centuries earlier, and it took him several days to find a new host body and reach Cherage, the capital of Danor. Since then he has fumed, not knowing what went wrong with his ritual but suspecting Risur was responsible (which, by a small technicality, it was). The predations of She Who Writhes thwarted his first attempt to reach Axis Island (and cost him another body), and so he is forced to wait and turn his attention to other affairs.

Recognizing Risur and the PCs as a threat, Nicodemus has sent out word to the leaders and the most enlightened thinkers of Danor, Drakr, and Crisillyir, as well as the various smaller nations north of the Avery Sea. He has invited them to Cherage for the Forward Symposium, where he will explain what has happened, and use their mutual worries to unify them into a global government. With the new reality making people more reasonable, he can actually accomplish this goal with relative ease, after which his plan is to launch a massive invasion of Risur in order to wipe out any resistance. Then he'll turn his attention to fixing whatever went wrong at the Axis Seal.

What he doesn't realize, though, is that one of the planes he chose to link the world to, Ratios, had been assimilated by an extraplanar race known as the **Gidim**. These creatures, formed of psychic energies manifested into physical form, tried to invade the world thousands of years ago, but the Axis Seal cut them off. Now they return, and they find the mix of psionic energies the Obscurati have woven into the new reality a handy tool. While the **Gidim** will play a more prominent role in Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*, a familiar one of them—the wayfarer **Sijhen**—will attend Nicodemus's conference and help provoke a devastating psychic manifestation.

The Wildcard

In Adventure Six, *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the party thwarted a plot by **Benedict Pemberton** to conquer the nation of Ber. The former dragon tyrant, long disguised as a human industrialist, might even have lost a daughter to the party. But despite his megalomaniacal desire to conquer an entire nation, Pemberton realized the threat posed by the Ob, who were trying to conquer the *whole* world.

In the immediate aftermath of the Axis Seal ritual, Pemberton and his minions invaded Axis Island and defeated the defenders, who were panicked by the failure of the colossus. Expecting a counterattack by the Ob, he had his minions seize the Axis Fortress. But when no attack came (thanks to defense by She Who Writhes), Pemberton began to repurpose the fortress's factories to produce his own inventions.

More importantly, Pemberton can actually see the aftermath of the Obscurati's ritual, and while he doesn't have the acumen to undo it himself, he is inspired by the PCs' perspicacity in discovering his own plot. He intends to contact them and propose an alliance against the Obscurati.

Adventure Overview

The first act is contained to Risur, which the party will likely not be able to leave until they defeat She Who Writhes. If the party does this early without handling the other fey titans, they can handle that threat as they see fit later. In the second act, an ally encourages them to visit Axis Island, and then they'll have a chance to interrupt an effort of the Obscurati to consolidate power, but the party could deal with these two challenges in the other order.

Act One: Against the Titans

The party finds themselves in charge of a changed Risur, where there is no sun and the rules of magic have changed, forcing them to spend at least a few weeks reinventing the wheel, as it were, to regain access to necessary magic. During that time they start to learn about the new nature of the planes, hear reports of the fey titans causing trouble, and witness people's behaviors change toward cooperation and reason.

This last one wouldn't seem so bad, except when a protest against inhumane work conditions turns into bedlam when the unified psychic will of the protesters manifests as a tentacled 'hivemind.' The party has to handle these troubles while cut off from news of the outside world.

In order to get beyond Risur's shores they must subdue She Who Writhes, but allies offer to help, including the mighty eladrin dreadnought **Asrabey Varal** and the archfey of the sea **Beshela**, who believes she can convince She Who Writhes to fight for them if the party can get her close enough. But when the party sails out to confront the fey titan, Asrabey betrays them and tries to kill Beshela and take control of the kraken. Swayed by the power of the new reality, he has decided to ally with the Obscurati.

Act Two: The New Conspiracy

A blood tide rises after the battle with She Who Writhes. The blood carries a message from the demoness **Ashima-Shimtu** (see Adventure Four, *Always on Time*), offering them cryptic advice to investigate Axis Island, deal with their most pressing problems, and then rescue her in due time (detailed in Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*).

At Axis Island, the party sees a massive bloom of uncontrolled planar flux erupting into the sky from the island's central valley. Pemberton invites them to explore the Axis Seal for clues on how to undo the Ob's ritual, and if they agree to cooperate on defeating the new rulers of the world, he offers to share one of his innovations with them—airship technology. They'll need it to cross the world quickly and round up allies against the conspiracy. In fact, Pemberton styles himself leader of a *new* conspiracy, since after all he and the rest of the party are now the underdogs fighting against the global order.

Divinations and other clues alert the party to the upcoming Forward Symposium, where dignitaries will discuss plans for a world government founded with Nicodemus's ideology. Pemberton wants to send a sleeper agent in—**Brakken of Heffanita**, a telepathic minotaur and the former ambassador from Ber to Risur. He can form a psychic link with the party so they can see what he sees inside the symposium, and then decide how to respond.



The Ob launch an attack to reclaim Axis Island. Recognizing he can't sustain a prolonged assault, Pemberton invites the party to board their newly-upgraded airship, blow the joint, and fly the hell out of there. The party can then land and hide out near Cherage, since they need to stay within range of Brakken's link.

The Forward Symposium

Heads of state, military leaders, and great thinkers arrive in Cherage, including familiar faces from previous adventures. Nicodemus espouses a prosperous new world of cooperation, and paints Risur and the PCs as villains who will try to stop them. He succeeds in getting an agreement from several nations to unify and attack Risur, and orders are sent out to begin preparations for an attack within a week. But when Nicodemus opens the floor to discussion of other ways to improve the world with the benefits of newfound cooperation, the group's aligned thoughts start to manifest a hivemind, like the one in Flint.

Philosophers suggest ways to improve the quality of life, economists recommend improving labor efficiency, and politicians propose a solution they've always secretly wanted but never have been able to voice: kill everyone who doesn't pull their weight. The normally abhorrent idea is greeted with near-unanimous approval by the assembled group. Possessing a clear purpose, the hivemind grows a tentacle cocoon around the thinkers and sets out to cull the city of Cherage of all undesirables. It has become the Godmind.

Nicodemus flees in horror, but Brakken—trapped inside the cocoon yet able to resist having his consciousness subsumed—is able to communicate with the party and guide them should they try to save the capital of the nation that has long been Risur's enemy.

While the party can totally sit back and let Cherage be consumed by the psychic vortex of murder-philosophers that value economic efficiency over human life, if they swoop in on their airship and save the day, they'll have planted the seeds for Danor to break free from the Ob's control. Now all they have to do is stop every other country's armies, but that's for Adventure Eleven.

Rewards

The party begins this adventure at 17th level, and should reach 18th level after act one, then 19th level at its end. Use the following guidelines for what resources the PCs have access to, now that they're basically in charge of an entire country. We don't provide much specific treasure in these adventures, though the party can acquire various boons. Any miscellaneous 'loot' is probably better used by lesser subjects of Risur, and as usual, count any such gear the PCs keep against their monetary resources.

At the start of this adventure, the royal coffers can provide the PCs 95,000 gp each. At the beginning of adventure eleven they can each access a further 110,000 gp, and 350,000 gp in adventure twelve. The pace of adventure thirteen isn't conducive to shopping.

CAMPAIGN VARIETY

This far into a campaign, different groups may have very different webs of allies and enemies for the PCs. Consider how each of these NPCs will fit into the campaign from here on.

Alexander Grappa. The mindmaker was likely killed in Adventure Seven, though he has enough mind magic to possibly have survived by burrowing into the subconscious of another Obscurati officer. If the party had a close bond with him, he might fill in the role of Brakken of Heffanita.

Amielle Latimer. The tiefling ghost gunsmith might have flown back to Danor and could be spying on the Obscurati. If she was found out, though, she'll want to stay in Flint to help protect it. However, she doesn't want to be privy to any secrets, because if she's destroyed and rejuvenates among the ghost council, they'll be able to compel her to talk. It might be best to keep her off-stage until the campaign climax, when she can make a pivotal sniper shot to save an endangered PC.

Copperhat the Headless. If he survives, Copperhat remains in the Dreaming, spying for the Voice of Rot and poised to cause chaos in Adventure Twelve.

Kasvarina Varal. If she rejoined the conspiracy, she's with Nicodemus running things. Her focus is on military and defense, and she'll direct the multi-pronged assault on Risur in Adventure Eleven.

If she helped the party escape at the end of Adventure Eight, she likely ended up in Elfaivar, where she and Athrylla Valanar prepare the eladrin enclave Sentosa to resist the Obscurati's world dominion. If the party visits her, they can call upon her loyal dreadnoughts for minor missions throughout the world.

Lya Jierre. Likely a member of the ghost council, Lya adopts the role of chief of staff for Nicodemus, which also keeps her by his side as a bodyguard. Nicodemus intends to place her in charge of Risur once the nation is conquered.

Terakalir. If Pemberton's daughter survived adventure six, she is present on Axis Island, polymorphed to resemble a teenaged human with a mechanical prosthetic arm and eye. She doesn't have a significant role, though.

Tinker Oddcog. If he lives, either as an ally of Risur or of Benedict Pemberton, it would be smart to get him onto Axis Island in Act Two (he might ask to go along, or stow away—since he's so, so tiny—on their ship) so he can put the finishing touches on their airship. He could then disappear in the chaos of battle and show up again to help the party deal with the colossus in the campaign's finale.

Remember to highlight any technological innovations the party gained by recovering his designs, but there is not time for further innovation during the rest of the campaign.

Viscount Inspector Nigel Price-Hill. Viscount Price-Hill still runs the RHC, but will operate 'off-screen' for the rest of the campaign unless your party responded to him favorably. His main role is to provide a foil for the party if they decide to ally with the conspiracy. In that case, he assumes leadership of Risur and tries (likely futilely) to defend the nation.

PROLOGUE:

That Was One Hell of an Apocalypse

The party is assumed to begin *Godmind* in the city of Flint immediately following the end of Adventure Nine, *The Last Starry Sky*. Before the real ‘adventure’ begins, the party needs time to settle in after the climax of defeating Governor Stanfield and disrupting his ritual. A montage of scenes highlights in what ways the world has changed.

World of Ruin

Exploration. Montage.

The world has been shattered. Things are forever changed.

While the PCs witnessed the effects of the ritual firsthand during their conflict with the emergent Obscurati forces, only as the adventure begins does the full breadth of the Obscurati’s grand scheme become obvious. The world has changed; the balance of the planar cosmology is upset and new planes of existence align themselves with the world. As the adventure begins, the PCs should have some opportunity to learn about these changes.

Magical Mishaps

One of the Risuri soldiers tries to give a healing potion to an injured comrade. The man swallows, coughs and writhes, then suffocates and dies (barring a surgery kit and a Heal check DC 30). His throat sealed shut with new flesh, blocking his windpipe.

Any magic the PCs attempt above cantrips and orisons either fails outright or goes awry (10% chance of mishap per spell level; it fails if it doesn’t mishap). Activated magic items have a similar chance of failure.

MEANWHILE — AROUND THE WORLD

Other adventures have started with news of events in Risur and beyond, but now the party is cut off. They might discover this information by divination, but due to She Who Writhes cutting off Risur’s sea lanes, the PCs don’t get any firsthand news for months.

Stable Transition. Unlike Risur, other nations have strong cells of Obscurati agents who made sure their local brands of ancient monsters didn’t wake up and start causing trouble. (Even if the party killed some of the Ob’s officers in Adventure Seven, *Schism*, their underlings probably could have taken over.)

Magic now functions normally in Danor and the Malice Lands.

Danor is firmly in league with Nicodemus the Gnostic, who reveals himself and pens letters to several newspapers to explain what has happened (in layman’s terms) and encourage cooperation. He does not assume an official government position, but supported by **Sovereign Han Jierre**, Nicodemus lets the people of the world know that he has answers to their many questions, and invites the leaders and most prominent thinkers of these nations—all except Risur and Ber, which cannot be reached because of She Who Writhes.

I Knew This Was Coming. The eschatologist movement in Drakr prevents almost any chaos, as many simply accept what they’ve seen as another step towards the End Times. In the far north of Drakr, though, **Grandis Komanov** encourages her radical eschatologist sect to raise an apocalyptic army of the dead to sweep across the world. Komanov’s doomsday army is further detailed in Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*.

Damned Lies. Crisillyir’s ruling hierarchs have long been subtly swayed by the Obscurati, but the nation sees the greatest turmoil of any. All those who would have resisted were visited in the hour of transition and killed. They left behind

cleverly-forged suicide notes, confessing that their faith was a lie, and that they used myths of gods only so they could hold onto power over the common people.

Meanwhile, the demon **Ashima-Shimtu**, imprisoned for over a thousand years in the *Crypta Hereticarum*, uses blood magic to manifest around Crisillyir and disseminate the *sacrament of apotheosis* (see Adventure Eight). As she hoped, desperate people caught in crises of faith use the ritual to call forth their gods and put them on trial. The fallout of the *sacrament of apotheosis* and its use is further detailed in Adventure Eleven, *Gorged on Ruins*.

Wait and See. The nation of Ber suffers small upheavals as Obscurati agents attempt to seize control, but they are brutally quashed by Bruse Shantus. Sensing the precariousness of his position, he charismatically proclaims that the darkening of the sky heralds that this is Ber’s time to prosper. Since many of the Beran races possess darkvision, the nation of recently-savage people actually remains mostly orderly. Bruse Shantus is wary of Nicodemus, but plans to attend the conference in hopes of maintaining his rule without unnecessary war.

Old Wounds, New Wounds. Even the eladrin living in the colonies that have overtaken Elfaivar respond positively to Nicodemus and the Obscurati. However, those eladrin who hid for centuries in the fey enclaves—which existed between this world and the Dreaming—begin to stream into colonial cities, telling of their enclaves splitting apart and disintegrating. Thousands died. Only one enclave survived; **Athrylla Valanar**, matriarch of the Sentosa enclave, managed to pull her city back into the real world as the Ob’s ritual cut the Dreaming off from the rest of reality. She urges her people not to be tricked, but her voice is mostly drowned out by optimism for reconciliation.



A centuries-old eladrin warrior, Asrabey became one of the many husbands of Kasvarina Varal. For years he trained, and undertook many daring raids until he became famous as one of the greatest eladrin warriors in the world. Two centuries ago Kasvarina sent Asrabey to Risur to offer his services to the Unseen Court, and he unwittingly acted as a critical source of information and influence for the Obscurati.

Stern and unsympathetic to outsiders, Asrabey displays few emotions other than righteous fury. Even with his wife he felt not so much love as intense devotion. After Kasvarina lost her memories, Asrabey rescued her and protected her. However, his foremost loyalty was to the woman he'd married, and *that* Kasvarina was co-running the Obscurati. In the new world order, Asrabey decides that he must serve the Obscurati, which means betraying the party.



An eladrin woman just over 100 years old, Hana can fly at will, control winds, and speak with birds, plus since she received the favor of a member of the Unseen Court she can wield offensive weather magic. Bitter for her treatment by her Danoran 'foster family,' she originally used her powers to sabotage Danor-owned industry, earning the moniker "fey terrorist." After the Great Eclipse she puts aside her political aspirations in order to help Flint defend itself from the Obscurati, though her ultimate loyalty lies with the common people and the followers of traditional druidic faiths.



WHAT'S UP WITH CAULDRON HILL?

The cursed mountain once had a close connection to the Bleak Gate, which was a dark reflection of the real world. That reflection was created by Av, the plane of life with traits of Dreams and Reflections. The Obscurati shifted Av to fill the role of plane of death, which put it at the edge of the 'solar system' of planes that feed energy into the real world.

This has the effect that the old Bleak Gate and Dreaming have been cut off from the rest of the world. They were pulled into the mass of doomed planes around the Gyre. With no specific plane for the dead to linger in, their spirits remain on the real world and are drawn toward places like Cauldron Hill where they can find passage to Av, since it is the new plane of death. Most of these spirits are invisible, but can be seen in reflections.

But Av is still metaphysically linked to the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate, and so every time the Gyre passes above Cauldron Hill (and similar places where 'the veil is thin'), all the spirits collected there are pulled into their appropriate afterlife. Some pieces of the physical world are also torn away and sucked across the cosmos into the Gyre. Within a few weeks, the peak of Cauldron Hill is bald, stripped of all its trees.

Going there during 'noon' when the Gyre is overhead is perilous. PCs would probably just suffer some negative energy damage and feel vertigo. Weaker people might be sucked bodily into the Gyre, lost forever.

Permanent magic items function mostly normally, though perhaps with odd side-effects. Simple *detect magic* reveals that magical auras are almost the same, but most spells are suffused with subtly unfamiliar magic.

Any spellcaster feels that with enough time they could figure out how to use this new mana safely, but it would take days. Likewise, old magic items could be used safely with a bit of training, but unsuspecting people will suffer a lot of accidents in the coming days.

Gyre-Rise

The night sky is black, or rather closer to slate gray. Close observation (Perception DC 24) reveals a darker disk of pitch black where the moon used to be, and only four stars are visible. Skyseers immediately sense that this isn't the same moon, and recognize that three stars are in the location previously held by the planet Apet (and its ring Reida), while the other is where Mavisha used to be. But they aren't the same planets.

A Knowledge (the planes) (DC 34) check recognizes that the energy of the moon matches an obscure star known as Mojang. This was actually the same purple star that the Danoran telescope was pointed at on Axis Island two years ago (see Adventure One, *The Island at the Axis of the World*), though that star was only ever a dot, not the size of the moon's disk. The other planets match stars known as Fourmyle, Baden, Illocus, and Ostea.

After a few hours, when the sun should rise, instead the Gyre ascends into view. The churning Gyre provides as much illumination as a full moon used to, so the new 'day' is bright enough for people to see dimly. Nevertheless, people around Flint panic at the missing sun and start fires. If the party organizes firefighting efforts they can contain most of the blazes, but left alone 10% of the city burns over the next three 'days.'

Stormclouds begin to form over Cauldron Hill, but when the Gyre is directly over the city, no rain falls. Instead, with cracks audible even from the Governor's Island, trees are torn from the stone and carried into the sky. Any Spirit Medium in the party gets a lurching sense of a lot of spirit energy leaving the long-cursed mountain. A Skyseer looking at those clouds recognizes that they are somehow tied to the planet Av, once plane of Life. Indeed, someone with a telescope might spot a tiny dark speck nearly motionless in front of the Gyre. This is the plane of Av, ripped from its old orbit and planted where Nem, the old plane of death, used to be.

Throughout the rest of the day another three planets wheel across the sky in the positions normally held by Jiese, Avilona, and Urim. Jiese is actually still the same; the others are again obscure stars: Perlocus and Ratios.

If the party doesn't figure out what these stars are, a royal astronomer will eventually contact them in about a week with the information.

Fey Affairs

Asrabey Varal and Gale find the party and inform them that it's still not possible to reach The Dreaming, and that their natural eladrin teleportation ability doesn't work anymore. They are accompanied by a Halfling spirit medium named **Fippery Leafbrowner**, who has a small reputation in Flint for being willing to contact the recently departed for a small fee. Gale introduces Fippery, and then guides the PCs to the body of someone who died in the recent fighting. She hands Fippery a handful of coins, and while he calls out elaborately for the spirit of the departed, she produces a mirror.

In the reflection, the spirits of the dead are reflected. Also, she and Asrabey (and any other eladrin) can slightly affect the spirit's reflection by moving their arms through the air where it would be if it were visible. Asrabey says he feels cut off from the Dreaming, but connected to somewhere *else*.

Gale offers to help the city however the party thinks she can. Asrabey excuses himself, saying he is only useful in battle, and that he will return when his sword is needed again.

The medium Fippery excuses himself and starts to follow Asrabey, but the eladrin glowers and the Halfling runs off. (Fippery will return briefly in Adventure Twelve, and his presence now allows him to later contact the party via *sending*.)

Beshela, Archfey of the Sea who brought She Who Writhes to attack the Danoran fleet, vanished into the sea at the end of that battle.

No News is Bad News

Without teleportation or sending magic, at least for now all news must be delivered on foot. Couriers dispatched now by train could get word back from Bole in two days. News from Slate will require horseback travel, and take two weeks or more. News from distant Shale would take over a month to arrive, though by then Risuri mages will have figured out how to cast *sending* and *teleport* again.

The party likely dispatches a ship, perhaps the swift *Impossible*, to get news. Less than half an hour after the messenger ship leaves port, a fire is visible far out to sea. Gale, likely the only person capable of flight, heads out, and returns a couple hours later carrying a single survivor—the ship's young cabin boy, the only person she could physically carry. The boy says they were set upon by She Who Writhes.

Any further attempts to sail through the seas of Risur meet with similar fates if the vessels go into water deeper than thirty feet. The fey titan is able to sense intruders into her domain for hundreds of miles, and the new nature of teleportation magic allows her to catch even the fastest ships.

Who's in Charge Here?

Roland Stanfield is dead. Depending on the events of the previous adventure, Flint could be left without a governing body. **Principal Minister Harkover Lee**, advisor to the monarch, notices that people are confused who to report to, and suggests that whichever PC is now king or queen name at least an interim governor of Flint.

Possible options for a new governor include:

- ♦ **Captain Dale, Guardian of Cauldron Hill:** A likely staunch ally of the PCs, Dale makes for a good military head during the crisis. He focuses on preparing for supernatural threats, and he pursues a personal project of forcibly evacuating squatters from Cauldron Hill, which keep the various monsters in the woods and atop the mountain from causing trouble. However, he neglects more mundane concerns like maintaining infrastructure and paying people.

The city is safe but the people are discontent, and the imminent refugee flood from the south angers the wealthy since Dale won't let them shove the newcomers into slums on Cauldron Hill.

CHIEF INSPECTOR
STOVER DELFT



The party's former boss now obeys their commands. Delft handles the logistical and political drudgery of the Royal Homeland Constabulary, and will deploy his constables throughout the nation and world to get the party whatever information they need (though the new world's changes in magic will make some intelligence slow in coming). He's damned proud of the party, and is fully confident their heroics will save the nation.

Though normally rather easy-going, he gets squinty and condescending when people obstruct important affairs because of politics. Delft chews tobacco, and thinks he looks charming if he grins while sucking on tobacco juices. After several unpleasant run-ins with

mimics (including losing a chunk of his leg seventeen years ago), he walks with a cane, which he'll bang against inanimate objects before he gets too near to them, in case they're waiting to get him.

PRINCIPAL MINISTER
HARKOVER LEE



Perhaps the most powerful mage in Risur (aside from any PC spellcasters), Lee acts as bodyguard and chief of staff to the king. Straight-backed and virile despite being in his 60s, Lee speaks crisply and passionately in a slight Ber-tinged accent, and was said to be quite the ladykiller in his youth. He always dresses in reds and golds and carries a solid gold orb tucked into his robes. He never eats or drinks in public. He was once known as the dragon tyrant Inacht the Hex-Eater, but he has abandoned that identity and is now loyal to Risur.

THAMES GRIMSLEY



A grizzled sailor, still with a full head of hair in his early 50s, Grimsley heads the dock workers guild in Flint and advocates for worker interests in general. He took a gash from a policeman's knife on the side of his face in a docker riot a few years ago. A couple of months working at a theater as a child gave him a very stylized public speaking voice, one full of unnecessary, melodramatic pauses.





♦ **Stover Delft, Head of Flint Royal Homeland Constabulary:**

The PCs have likely grown beyond needing Delft's guidance, and far outclass him in terms of power. Delft will keep Flint stable and is a good moderate contender for the governor position.

He has a great head for logistics, has been in the streets enough to sympathize with the working class, but has done enough politicking to keep those in power happy. But Delft is just a safe choice, and he has no vision for the city. Nothing gets worse, which might be good enough for now.

♦ **Thames Grimsley, Head of the Dockers Union:** Thames takes an active role in reorganizing the city and putting more power in the hands of the people. His governing style rubs major business owners the wrong way, but it does keep the citizens content during the crisis. He and a bunch of his friends will become very rich, but eventually he'll become beholden to the existing power groups, both legal and criminal. During the campaign's final adventure, Obscurati agents might blackmail him into betraying the party.

♦ **Hana "Gale" Soliogn, Alleged Fey Terrorist:** Nearly everyone would hate the idea of Gale becoming governor, but that pervasive distrust and fear would motivate her to never waver in pursuing what is best for Flint. She's sympathetic to working people, but was raised in Danor to handle high society. She has fought for her life a few times and has no fear of organized crime, and her own unexplained magical flight drives her to understand how the magic of the new world could benefit the city.

A Gale governorship would be marred by early protests and conflict, but if the party steps in and offers regular shows of support, she overcomes these obstacles, earns the trust of disparate groups in the city, and pushes for transformative leadership. The city will begin training youths in simple magic (while including more broad education to improve their value to the economy and their understanding of how the world works), and if given enough time the city of Flint will become a progressive beacon.

♦ **Catherine Romana, Obscurati Traitor:** Catherine Romana might have survived and escaped after attempting to assassinate the king in Adventure Nine. If so she disguises herself with illusions and adopts the identity of **Dextra Adienne**, an orphan noble (who Romana murders as part of her cover story). 'Dextra' is firmly on the side of existing power groups, but she promises to keep industrialists and financiers happy so that Flint will cheaply provide supplies for what she expects is an imminent war with Danor. Romana is a consummate opportunist, and only ever joined the Obscurati because she thought it would bring her more power.

♦ **Other Choices:** The party could come up with a myriad of alternate solutions to the leadership conundrum. Most other NPCs who might be qualified aren't Flint locals. (Morgan Cippiano is, but would decline if offered.) Appointing an outsider, organizing a council of representatives, or waiting to hold elections don't give the city solid leadership quickly enough, so for a time chaos will grip the city.

If none of the PCs wear the crown, whoever is the monarch chooses Captain Dale.

And Risur is my Nation

Late in the day, a courier named **Gully Foyle** finds the PCs and frantically asks for help. He's been teleporting. A few times when he was in a rush and hurried to weave through a crowd, he found himself simply stepping straight to a spot he could see. He doesn't know if this is safe, but he can't stop doing it.

By doing a bit of testing, the party can find out he can teleport anywhere he could walk or climb to, even across small bodies of water like Parity Lake or the Stanfield Canal (Delft recommends they should probably rename that). He can't teleport through a fence, through bars of a cell, or onto the roof of a stranger's house, but he can teleport anywhere public or that he has permission from the owner. He also can't cross Flint Harbor or jaunt to the Ayres Islands. (This is because he cannot teleport into claimed territory, and She Who Writhes claims the seas as her own.)

Most creatures can only use this ability once per day as a standard action, and they need 8 hours practicing, after which they must succeed a Dexterity or Wisdom check (DC 20) to learn how to use this ability. Any character with the Run or Mobility feats (or otherwise with a focus on rapid movement) doesn't need to practice to pick up the skill, and can use it once every five minutes.

Most common people hear rumors of this new power but its use takes months to become widespread.

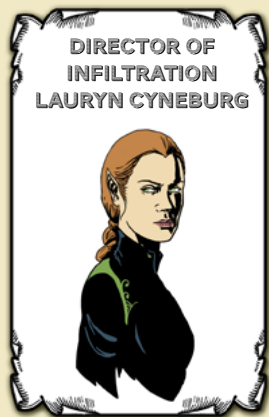
For her part, **Lauryn Cyneburg**, the RHC's minister of infiltration, jokingly offers to give Gully her job, then less-jokingly suggests they lock the man up in a lightless cell so he can't share the secret. She proposes building thin towers across the nation, separated by miles but tall enough to be seen from the next nearest tower, to allow rapid teleportation by approved forces.

Bakers Gone Wild

That night Delft reports of the first outbreak of violence, which was an odd one. A baker's guild meeting somehow led to two dozen bakers roaming the streets, marching in odd lockstep, breaking into businesses and taking various baking ingredients—flour, butter, sugar, and the like. When police tried to arrest them, the bakers fended them off with exceptional teamwork. The police were forced to withdraw, and they say the perpetrators returned to their guildhouse and have been baking all day.

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

Lauryn carries herself with an odd mix of stiffness and informality. She'll never let her guard down or expose her own emotions, and she hates jokes because she hates laughing. Though she shows little respect for anyone, not even her superiors, she long ago decided that she had to pick something to care about, or else she'd just end up teleporting around to no purpose. So she chose Risur, because its people don't take themselves too seriously.





MECHANICS OF A BROKEN AGE

The following is a breakdown of mechanics that have changed since the completion of the Obscurati's ritual. Trial and error are the best manner for a PC to discover these mechanical changes, while some high level divination magic may assist in ascertaining the exact changes to the world.

We suggest you let the players discover this information through trial and error, then give them the handout Reality Shift from Appendix C as a reminder. Alternately, a few weeks after the Great Eclipse the PCs get a report from **Asher Henton**, Distinguished Professor of Otherworldly Physics at Kitham University in Shale. In any event, Professor Henton will seek out the new monarch and offer his expertise in understanding the new cosmos.

Applied Astronomy: Characters with the Applied Astronomist prestige class get new powers, detailed in Reality Shift in Appendix C.

Black Hole Sun: Any spell with the light descriptor is 1 level higher, and no spell can produce light for more than 5 minutes. (Magic can produce fire, which emits light; only magical light is affected). All existing magical light effects such as *continual flame* end.

In the new sunless world, *light* is no longer a cantrip, and even high-level heroes might need to rely on torches or lanterns for illumination.

Blood of Ostea: All creatures immediately stabilize when rendered below 0 hit points. Creatures do not die when they reach a negative hit point score equal to their Constitution. To slay a creature, one *must* perform a *coup de grace* on it.

All creatures reduced to 0 or below immediate heal up to 1 hit point after 1 minute unless they are killed first. Creatures regain all hit points after eight hours of consecutive rest.

Death is Death: Slain deva no longer reincarnate.

Flight of the Fey: Eladrin lose access to their racial 'fey step' ability. Instead, all attacks made by eladrin gain the *ghost touch* weapon property due to their connection to the new plane of Death.

Magic Mishaps: As detailed above, whenever a character casts a spell more powerful than a cantrip (either personally or with a magic item), there's a 10% chance per spell level that the effect fails. If it doesn't fail, it causes a mishap of some sort. Supernatural and spell-like abilities function normally.

A character who can use magic of some sort can spend 8 hours researching and practicing, then make a Spellcraft check (DC 20). If he fails he can try again. If successful he becomes able to safely use magic of up to 1st level, with no special chance of failure or mishap. Each further day he can make additional checks to regain mastery of the next higher level of magic, up to whatever is the highest level he knows. A character can only attempt one of these checks per day.

Alternately, a character who has mastered a level of magic can spend 8 hours to aid another character with his or her mastery attempts, granting a +5 bonus to that character's check.

Existing magic items that cast spells are dangerous, but can be rendered safe with a moment's concentration by a spellcaster capable of casting spells of sufficient level.

Reign of the Rational: All creatures gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy check if they use rational appeals rather than emotional ones. All creatures take a -5 penalty to Intimidate and Sense Motive checks.

Impossibly Distant: Planar travel works to any of the new worlds in orbit, but all other planes are out of range. The Dreaming and the Bleak Gate are inaccessible. The Gyre can be reached from various areas in the world, but travel is perilous, and one-way. Summoning spells work normally, though.

Teleportation and Communication. Gold no longer blocks teleportation. However it is not possible to teleport to a location unless you can either see it or you have traveled to it before. Any travel before the Ob's ritual does not count, and scrying is insufficient, so it won't be possible to teleport around the world for a while, until the PCs travel the traditional way first.

Similarly, magical communication cannot contact any creature unless you can either see it or have interacted with it since the Ob's ritual.

You cannot teleport to a spot that is owned or otherwise controlled by someone who has chosen to bar teleporting intruders.

What constitutes ownership tends to follow social consensus. Streets and forests are public unless signs are prominently posted or fences (or even token lines of rope) are set up. The owner of an area can make exceptions for specific creatures or groups of creatures. This restriction only bars teleporting into an area, not out of an area or within an area.

Fourmyle Jaunting. Every creature is able to *jaunt*—to teleport within line of sight as an innate spell-like ability. As a standard action once per day, a character can teleport anywhere he has line of sight to. He cannot teleport to a spot he could not reach normally (e.g., you have to be able to walk or climb there, so no teleporting through a barred cage). He also cannot teleport if he's being held.

A character with the feat Mobility or Run (or who otherwise focuses on fast movement) can instead use this ability once every five minutes.

(There will be a rash of robberies in the coming weeks until word spreads that all you have to do is *think* and you can bar teleporters from your property.)

Three Miles is so Last Age: Spells that restore life to the dead are no longer limited by the body having to travel less than three miles from where it died. However, spirits of the dead are visible in mirrors, standing near their bodies. After a few days, these spirits wander off and might be glimpsed occasionally in reflections.

Wings of Liberty: Magical flight is now possible. Spells such as *fly*, *levitation*, and *overland flight* now have their normal duration, and their spell level is reduced by 1.



If the party goes to them, the bakers mostly ignore them unless attacked. The two dozen men and women move with eerie unity, and if asked questions about baking they respond in unison.

The next day, the party will get word of a larger protest forming in Parity Lake, where newly-emboldened factory workers have invited the entire district to come find the factory owners and force them to provide better pay and safety conditions. Delft worries there might be a riot, and thinks the party has the best chance to stop bloodshed.

Formation of a Hivemind

Social/Action. Tactical. Level 18.

A protest turns riotous, then far more dangerous when a monster appears.

Not one to let a little world-altering-event threaten her profits, factory owner **Jaya Isfeld** has instituted a lock-in. Similar to the events in Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*, factory workers have been forcibly incarcerated within their workplaces, and only allowed to leave when a replacement staff member comes to take their shifts.

Unforeseen Consequence

The Obscurati spent years scanning the heavens for stars that carried the right mix of magical energies. Then they wove magic to pull planets from around that star into orbit with this world, so it could share its energies. The plane of Ratios was selected because it would lead to calmer and more logical discussion. Tests using artificial demiplanes found the world was a barren, lifeless husk, which meant it would be safe to link to our world, though a few researchers mentioned hearing whispers in their mind.

What was left undiscovered by the Ob was a lingering taint of the Gidim, an extraplanar alien race composed of thoughts, which must feed on a diverse diet of sentience to survive. The Gidim had long since and Ratios and stripped the world bare. Removing its original inhabitants, and siphoning their thoughts away, the Gidim left the world, but also implanted a latent strand of their hive psyche on the world. It lay dormant until the thoughts of large groups began to feed it.

With the new cosmology established, the Gidim have become aware of the presence of a whole civilization of thinking minds, ripe for consumption. It will be a few weeks before the Gidim begin actually arriving on this world, but for now the latent Gidim consciousness on Ratios has crept into the material world. When large groups of like-minded individuals group together, they start to think in unison. The more focused the thoughts of the group are, the stronger the bond. This is called a **gestalt**, and is mostly harmless.

When emotionally charged, though, gestalts can generate **hive-minds**—thoughtform physical entities whose powers and strength are commensurate with the number of thinking minds. As the PCs arrive at Parity Lake to deal with the mob, one of these hiveminds manifests.

Rabble Rabble Rabble

By the time the PCs arrive, the mob has grown to encompass almost five-hundred angered workers; including family, friends, and people who just want to shout against the injustices of the new world. The mob is led by Thames Grimsley who is fed up with the governing system and is finally ready to let his mob loose and forcibly enter the factories to free imprisoned workers. He's busy shouting threats of how if the crowd finds the owners, he can't be held responsible for any bloodshed.

A group of several dozen police officers form a loose blockade between the Isfeld Drilling Cortège and the growing mob. As the PCs arrive, the mob is pushing against the police line, and the officers are shaken and firing off repeated warning shots into the sky. Thames Grimsley shouts at the officers to abandon their posts so no one will get hurt.

Unless the PCs take drastic action against the mob, the situation quickly escalates. A stray rock strikes a police officer and as another officer moves to help him up, a second rock strikes. The downed officer responds with a shot into the crowd, which strikes one of the worker's wives in the gut. From here the mob makes a full push against the police officers, only to be repelled by a volley of gunfire.

Immediately, the mob begins to stamp their feet in unison and chant, "Let our people out! Let us out! Let us out!" The air feels thick with intention. The people in the mob don't notice anything amiss, but the party can spot something huge moving inside the windows of the drilling factory, which flicker with turquoise light. The mob grabs the officers and start dragging them into the center of their mass, yanking at their limbs and breaking bones as the cops scream in panic.

Three rounds after this, the Labor Hivemind bursts out from the inside of the drilling factory, collapsing the entire facing wall onto the police and mob.

Calming and Dispersing

Before the hivemind attacks, the party can attempt Diplomacy or Intimidate checks (DC 35) to either calm the escalating violence or panic some protesters into fleeing. Specifically focusing on Thames Grimsley and succeeding a check snaps the man out of the psychic gestalt, and thereafter the party gets a +5 bonus to the other checks to stop the crowd.

While it's impossible to fully disperse the crowd by talking or intimidation, use of these skills lowers the conviction of the mob. For every success the party has against the mob, the Labor Hivemind gain a negative level, to a maximum of three.

Using magic to calm them is likely ineffective (both because the party probably has no more than 1st level spells available right now, and because the crowd uses the hivemind's Will save, below). Attacking the crowd just improve their conviction and causes the hivemind to attack early.

Mind Strike

The Labor Hivemind manifests inside the factory. A shell of thought-form flesh forms around the workers trapped inside, and massive tentacles smash through walls to help the people be free. Afterward the hivemind is driven to find the owners of the factory and kill them, but it will kill anyone who gets in its way.

The mob remains oblivious to their psychic construct, and attempts to convince them of its presence only irritate the mob and its leader, who see the PCs as trying to make them look simple.

Three rounds after the gunshot triggers the hivemind's creation, it smashes through the factory wall in a flash of blue light. Characters standing with the police can attempt to get out of the way (Reflex DC 24), or be crushed by the falling wall for 5d10 points of damage.

The clearing dust reveals the labor hivemind, a translucent blue mass of brain matter with eight tentacles that end in crude, fleshy hammers and sickles. Eyes twitch along the surface of the orb, and where they look, people's flesh dissolves into ash.

**Labor Hivemind**

CR 17

XP 104,400

N Gargantuan aberration (extraplanar)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., lifestense, true seeing; Perception +35**Defense****AC** 31, touch 12, flat-footed 25 (+6 Dex, +19 natural, -4 size)**hp** 325 (26d8+208)**Fort** +16, **Ref** +14, **Will** +21**Defensive Abilities** all-around vision; **SR** 28**Offense****Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect, elevation limit 20 ft.)**Melee** 8 tentacles +23 (3d6+8/19-20/x3 plus grab)**Ranged** 4 psychic bolts +20 ranged touch (6d6 plus conduit)**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.**Statistics****Str** 27, **Dex** 22, **Con** 27, **Int** 28, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 26**Base Atk** +19; **CMB** +29 (+33 trip); **CMD** 45 (cannot be tripped)**Feats** Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Exhausting Critical, Flyby Attack, Greater Trip, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Snatch Arrows, Staggering Critical, Tiring Critical, Weapon Focus (tentacle)**Skills** Acrobatics +35, Bluff +34, Diplomacy +34, Fly +39, Knowledge (arcana) +35, Knowledge (engineering) +35, Knowledge (local) +35, Knowledge (nature) +35, Knowledge (nobility) +35, Knowledge (religion) +35, Perception +35, Sense Motive +32, Spellcraft +38**Languages** telepathy 200 ft.**SQ** thoughtform**Special Abilities****Mental Overdrive (Su)** Whenever the hivemind sustains a grapple, it begins rewriting the target's brain. The target must make a Will save (DC 31) or take 2d4 points of Charisma, Intelligence, and Wisdom damage. If a creature with 10 or more hit points has any of these stats reduced below 0 by the drain, the labor hivemind grows an additional tentacle, heals 26 hit points, and may make an additional attack as a full attack action.**Psychic Bolts (Su)** The hivemind can produce up to 4 psychic bolts of force each round with a range of 100 feet. A creature struck by one of the labor hivemind's psychic bolts must make a Will save (DC 31) or become a conduit for the hivemind. A conduit acts normally, but is outlined in a halo of turquoise light. At the end of a conduit's round, it can make a Will save (DC 31) to shake off the effect.

During its turn (including the turn it created new conduits), the hivemind can do one of the following through all creatures currently acting as its psychic conduit:

- Make an attack using one of its tentacles (reducing its normal number of attacks by one), centering the attack on the conduit instead of itself. A tentacle attack from a conduit can still grapple an enemy and acts as though it were from the hivemind, though it falls off if the conduit moves out of range or breaks free of this effect.
- Cast any spell or spell-like ability currently available to the conduit. Using this spell does not prevent the conduit from using it during their action.

Slavery of Thought (Su) Half of the labor hivemind's tentacle attacks are physical, while the other half are a psychic attempt to ensnare the target. Because of this, creatures targeted by a CMB check from the labor hivemind do not fully benefit from *freedom of movement*. Creatures gain a +10 bonus on their CMD and a +10 bonus on CMB checks to gain control of a grapple instead of the normal effects of *freedom of movement*.**Thoughtform (Su)** A creature within 30 feet of the hivemind can spend a move action to try to influence the hivemind with its thoughts. The creature makes an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check and adds its level, which sets the DC of a saving throw the target must make. The attacking creature chooses whether the target makes a Fortitude, Reflex, or Will save.• **Fortitude:** If the save is failed, the hivemind loses incorporeal until the start of the PC's next turn. If it's flying, it must land or fall.• **Reflex:** If the save is failed, the creature can force the hivemind drop all of its grapples (including those from conduits), and move the hivemind 10 feet in any direction.• **Will:** If the save is failed, the creature can cause any number of creatures affecting by the hivemind's conduit ability to cease being conduits. Additionally, the creature cannot be perceived by the hivemind for one round.**Tactics**

The hivemind has all the knowledge of its creators, so it understands the PCs are the immediate threat. It begins combat by unleashing a series of psychic bolts at any PC it can see, preferring to target those in the middle of the group first. From then on, the hivemind tries to use conduits and its own tentacles to grapple every single PC, then use of its Mental Overdrive ability to consume them.

What the hivemind does not expect is that the PCs might be familiar with its Gidim nature. As the PCs have likely had experience with thoughtform creatures in previous adventures, they may think to use thought against the creature.

Any PCs reduced to 0 hit points are dropped and left to die (though the new world traits for healing prevents that), while PCs who are reduced to 0 in a mental ability score are absorbed. Since the party is likely operating without most of their spells, this fight might be overwhelming, forcing them to fall back and find new ways to deal with the monster—cannons, rifle fusillades, or explosives.

Finally, the party can substantially weaken the hivemind if they're willing to attack the crowd of protesters. In this grim scenario, the protesters are effectively noncombatants with 4 HP. Every twenty who are killed impose a negative level on the hivemind.

Aftermath

Slaying the hivemind unleashing psionic boom. Everyone in the crowd that created the thoughtform creature suffers temporary backlash (1d6 points of damage to Charisma, Intelligence, and Wisdom), leaving them dazed and confused for the next several days. After 3 days of rest, Thames Grimsley (if he survived) approaches the PCs and apologizes to them for the display, though he reinforces that something needs to be done as the people are scared of this new world.

If the party is defeated, eventually the rest of the city manages to kill the creature, and any PCs who were absorbed can be rescued, though without magical healing they'll need many days to fully recover.

In either case, people notice a few other incidents of telepathic gestalts linking together groups of people. Without guidance from the PCs, the city suffers a few other attacks by hivemind monsters, and people become paranoid of going out in public or gathering in groups larger than 3 or 4. If the party offers reassurance and explanation, they can convince people not to panic, and can train the public to recognize the early signs of a gestalt and how to break free of it. Nevertheless, police break up groups larger than a dozen (though they realize the problem this causes when prisoners start forming gestalts).



Small Things

Social. Montage.

Various things that happen in the coming days and weeks.

Some time after the hivemind rampage, Morgan Cippiano politely requests an audience. In the past he's been used to inviting the PCs to meet him, but he respects their authority. Regardless of whether the party has been friendly or antagonistic with his branch of The Family, he has the same proposal. He suggests that some persistent opposition from the city's criminal element will help keep things unsteady; whoever Governor Stanfield worked for wanted everyone to get along, so perhaps some discord will be good for the soul.

Each of the four fey titans detailed in the next act prevents some part of Risur's economy from functioning right.

Morgan Cippiano heads the local branch of the Family crime syndicate, based out of Crisillyir. Indeed, he's a devout Clericist, but has to act without guidance from the hierarchs now that communication is cut off. Though gruff-voiced and cocky, Morgan has an unusual fascination with fashion. He rejects trends, but has a good eye for classical styles that people of any culture can appreciate. He hopes someday to be seen as a father figure to his community, but isn't above ordering some throats slit to keep the right people safe.



The fires in the Ash Wolf's forest starves Risur of lumber, now in high demand as people hope to drive back the perpetual gloom. Wood is also needed for ship-building, paper, and even cooking. The first effects get noticed after two weeks. If the party doesn't deal with the titan within a month, there will be major shortages, and after two months people start chopping down Flint's own forests en masse.

The Father of Thunder's stampede disrupts Risur's crops and harvests. After two weeks there's still plenty of grain and vegetables, but meat basically disappears from shops. After a month people start to hoard food, and after two months famine grips the nation.

Granny Allswell's gremlins wreak havoc with mines in the Anthras Mountains. After two weeks every industry reliant on steel or stone slows to a crawl. After a month people start having to cannibalize existing items to perform basic repairs, and after two months mass riots occur in Flint as factories close and leave families unpaid and unable to support themselves.

All sea trade is blocked by She Who Writhes, so after two weeks prices spike for foreign luxuries like Elfaivaran fruit, high-quality Drakran firedust, or leaf of Nicodemus from the Yerasol Isles. After a month, Risur depletes its own reserves of spell and ritual components, since it imports heavily from Crisillyir; magic items that normally cost under 2,000 gp have their costs doubled. After two months, every spell with a material component costs at least 5 gp to cast.

If the party completely dallies, in three months the Obscurati organize fleet action to kill She Who Writhes, and then they invade Risur.



ACT ONE: Against the Titans

Legendary forces from ages past stir across the nation. Awoken by a shared sense of unease at the changes to the world, the Fey Titans of old have each risen from their long torpor and have begun to wreak havoc. All but the Voice of Rot—who is oddly absent—damage the stability of the country, complicating the party's ability to stand against the Ob.

In this act, the city of Bole is a hub of fey titan activity, with the Ash Wolf threatening the Antwalk Thicket to the east, the Father of Thunder tromping through croplands to the west, and Granny Allswell's gremlins disrupting mining and dams to the south. The party must also deal with She Who Writhes in the seas around Risur, but advisors suggest they wait to subdue that titan last, because at least she's keeping the Danorans at bay.

Rather than follow a pre-set order, you should read each of the Fey Titan encounters listed below. Each encounter begins with a description of the effect the titan has on Risur. PCs should judge which of the threats they deem to be highest priority, and deal with those encounters in order. Cautious PCs might wait a week or two until their spellcasting allies regain use of their magic, but doing so risks letting the titans run amok.

Refugee Crisis

Exploration. Montage.

News travels slowly once again, and most is delivered by refugees fleeing devastation around Bole.

The first word of trouble in Bole arrives as the Gyre sets, less than 24 hours after the Obscurati's ritual. **Tad Hilly**, owner of the Thinking Man's Tavern in Flint's Bosum Strand district, has old family ties to Bole, and so in the weeks after the Great Eclipse, many refugees congregate there. The party only hears vague rumors unless they assign someone to check out the tavern, or if they personally go.

The first night, porters who came in on the railroad spread rumors that Bole's druids sensed something amiss, that storms of unheard-of power are brewing to the west, forest fires were spotted over the horizon to the east, and that a dozen men dressed like miners were found floating dead in the Slywater River, a tributary of the Great Delve River. A Knowledge (local) check (DC 20) recalls that the Slywater was dammed upstream in the Anthras Mountains a few decades ago as part of new mining operations.

On the second day, hundreds of refugees arrive. They'd heard rumors first, somehow, Flint still had a sun. In any case, they're happy to be in a bigger city, away from the eerie woods that surround Bole. Ominously, people actually haven't seen *any* fey in the forest, as if they knew something bad was coming and fled.

On the third day, the trains from Bole are overloaded with a thousand refugees. The people have no doubt that a great disaster will soon befall their city, though there are only a few eyewitnesses with useful information. By chance—or perhaps by a sympathetic, psionic link—they've congregated in Tad Hilly's tavern.

First-Hand Accounts

With a bit of digging into the arrivals, the PCs find a few outspoken refugees telling their stories in the Thinking Man's Tavern.

Ash Wolf in the Antwalk Thicket

Barnaby Krist is something of a folk legend in Bole, a hunter of repute with a strong stomach for drinking and a stronger mouth for telling stories. Almost seven-feet tall and seemingly made up of scars and body hair, Barnaby speaks with a heavy accent that he says is the by-product of 'true forest folk'.

He explains that he saw distant fires and climbed to an overlook to see the extent of the blaze. From miles away he noticed that the fire was spreading outward in a ring, which isn't how forest fires travel. They follow the wind. Something was lighting the fires. He then asks for a drink to loosen his tongue before he shares his big reveal.

"On m'a way oout of de forest, I saw a black pup runnin' at me. Naw, pup is a bad word, cause it was the size of that stuffed bear I used ta have in me home. I thought it was getting' away from dat big fire, cause der was smoke coming off da beast's back. No flame, just smoke. It was like they may'a been on fire afore, and dem eyes still glowed, ya see? Still burned from within. I hollered at it and it turnt off, but I seen it prancin' in front o' dat fire."



The legends about the Ash Wolf (Knowledge (history or nature) DC 25) tell of the Smoldering Wolves, akin to dire wolves with an aura of perpetual smoke that follows them. When wounded or enraged, they burst into flame and viciously fight to the death. Some stories say they can speak, but they only ever seem concerned with hunting, or with driving off those who threaten their father. They dance when near flames because their mother was caught in a forest fire and let herself become the flames. Their father only ever stirs when there are mighty blazes, in hopes of seeing his lost mate again.

As a hunter, Barnaby is quite familiar with the local terrain, and can point out the exact area the encounter occurred at on a map—start at Bole, follow the rail line to the east, and when the tracks turn north go another twenty-three miles east-northeast, in the craggy woods near ‘dat ol’ layer-cake ruin.’ (He’s referring to the Ancient ziggurat of Av.)

Father of Thunder in the Weftlands

Slim Chance, a rancher living fifty miles west of Bole, plays harmonica with the tavern’s band (headed by **Jered Lawman**, whom the PCs might recall from Adventure Two, *The Dying Skyseer*). Slim’s dog **Hank** sits with him, howling along occasionally to the music.

Slim was out on a drunken bender in the cattle pasture (Hank had been chewing silage and was a little drunk too) when all the stars fell away a few days ago. He spotted a massive bolt of lightning strike a few miles away, but the bolt didn’t fade. It just kept flashing and rumbling for minutes. The cattle around him all turned and stared at the spectacle, and Slim just enjoyed the light show, too out of it to really worry. An hour later the lightning stopped, and he heard the loudest roar in the world from where the bolts had been striking, and then every single cow around him started making a ruckus and walking in that direction.

Figuring it was his boss’s problem, Slim kept drinking until morning (such as it was, with only the Gyre and no sun). He woke with a blistering hangover, made worse by Hank barking and snarling constantly. He realized the dog was keeping him from getting trampled by hundreds of cows, some with brands from other ranches miles away—as well as the occasional deer or goat—were all heading in the same direction.

So Slim went the other way as fast as he could. On his way back to the ranch he thought he heard a whole mounted procession of knights in plate armor riding out in the middle pasture, blaring on trumpets, but that *definitely* was his boss’s problem. He got his horse, his leaf of Nicodemus, and enough food for him and Hank and rode like hell toward Bole. He basically kept running until he got to the edge of the sea, and now he’s still drinking.

Legends of the Father of Thunder (Knowledge (history or nature) DC 25) tell that his presence is heralded by great storms and great drinking, for the king of herd beasts is an uncontestable lush. He calls a mighty herd to surround him, impregnates many mares and sows and does, and imbues the offspring with his boon, transforming them into wondrous steeds for any who can capture them. The Great Hunt—who is stranded in the real world after they annoyed the Voice of Rot and were banished from the Dreaming—traditionally take all their horses from among these blessed steeds.

NEWBORN FOR A NEW WORLD

Long-time customer and occasional musician **Jered Lawman** is at the Thinking Man’s Tavern with his girlfriend, celebrating the birth of their daughter Alice. Since the world has so suddenly changed, he’s nervous about things that might endanger her, so he gets his band-mates to practice modern versions of classic lullabies that are supposed to keep away fey. While the party is present he performs a jaunty remake of *All’s Well*, a tune miners drink to after a day with no mishaps in the mines.

Later in this adventure if the party gets the miners of Favela to sing this song, they can weaken Granny Allswell and make it easier to fight her.

Granny Allswell in the Anthras Mountains

Grandma Goudada, a hang-lipped crone who isn’t shy about knowing a few hexes, came into town with a gang of Fortunad nomads—a long-derided ethnic minority, mostly half-elves of muddled ethnicity forced to wander because they don’t fit in anywhere except with other misfits. She’s happily terrorizing the various children in the tavern; refugees see an old lady, assume it’s safe to leave their kids with her while they drink, and wonder later why little Timmy is having nightmares.

Grandma Goudada and her gang were at a small mining town in the Anthras Mountains called **Favela**, and she was trying to read some government lady’s fortune (**Katlin Eisner**, see page 27) to know what fate awaited in this starless world. Goudada got as far as pulling three cards before doing the unthinkable—she gave the woman her money back, hobbled away, and told her family they had to get as far from the mountains as possible. Her grand-nephew **Emilian** got them on a train to Bole, then to Flint, which seemed like a good idea until Goudada saw Cauldron Hill.

If properly flattered (or paid), Goudada explains with great portentousness that the cards showed the King wanting to trap and kill a grandmother under a mountain. She glares at the PCs, warning them that if they’re with the king, they should know better than to come after *this* old granny.

Legends of Granny Allswell (Knowledge (history or nature) DC 25) tell that the grandmother of gremlins was last defeated by Queen Zidi Wheatling in the year 218 A.O.V. After brawling failed, Zidi took some of her royal treasure and buried it inside three elder earth elementals, which left bits of themselves like a trail of breadcrumbs into a deep mountain cave. While the fey titan tried to pull the ‘owies’ from the elementals, Zidi tricked the granny’s gremlin minions into breaking the wooden supports that kept the cave entrance from collapsing, sealing Granny Allswell away for nearly three centuries.





City of Bole

Exploration. Montage.

The RHC branch in Bole is dubious of Risur's new monarch.

Bole was capital of its own nation in ancient times, and it still maintains its grandeur today. Historically rich from lumber and from fertile forest gardens cultivated with the aid of fey, in recent years it has boomed as a hub of trade. The **Barret Damworks**, a network of mill dams and locks completed three decades ago, tamed several tributary rivers from the Anthras Mountains, allowing the Great Delve river to flow smoothly westward, all the way through Slate and on to Shale. The concurrent development of steamships fostered traffic of great barges traveling up and down the river, while the railroad linked it to Flint. Today raw materials pass through Bole to and from nearly every corner of Risur.

For the purposes of this adventure, the main features of Bole the party needs to be aware of are the **forest gardens** which stretch out from it miles in every direction, the **logjam** along the Great Delve river where lumber is collected and processed after it flows in from logging sites upstream, and the **theater district** which is home both to the local RHC headquarters and to several famous distilleries and breweries.

The RHC in Bole

The Chief Inspectress in Bole, a viperous half-elf named **Shaiaila Lundquist**, is uncomfortable with the party's ascent to power, and just a little bitter that no one under her watch had as meteoric a rise in prestige. She can't help but think of the PCs as just normal constables, and in particular she has a deep-seated respect for the fey and Unseen Court, and naturally assumes anyone from Flint would disagree with her.

She'll send a letter asking them to see her before they get personally involved in local affairs. She prefers to meet in her office across the street from a playhouse which has been closed, out of fear that audiences might manifest hiveminds. (This is a horrible violation of protocol; indeed, she should be arranging royal accommodations and ensuring the party's safety, meeting them wherever they need her.)

Shaiaila has several theatrical posters hanging on the walls of her office, and a primitive phonograph in the corner is loaded with recordings of several famous opera singers. Her one accommodation to the party's prestige is to offer them some whisky and beer, made just down the street.

Titanic Problems

Shaiaila explains that the refugee situation is straining the city, but having fey titans—which most people thought were just tall tales—wreak havoc is at least giving people something immediate to try to deal with, since no one has any idea what the sudden disappearance of the sun and stars means. Her local agents have collected a lot of eye-witness sightings of the Father of Thunder to the west, but only a few of the Ash Wolf in the east, and none of Granny Allswell, though miners to the south report an unprecedented uptick in gremlin sightings, equipment breaking, and items made of metal going missing.

She's looked into the old records, and it's been seventeen centuries since all the titans were active at once. And never before did multiple seem to be focused on destroying one city. Shaiaila pours herself a stiff whisky, throws herself into her chair, and asks what the hell the party intends to do now.

Personnel Management

If the party just tries to order Chief Inspectress Lundquist around or if they have a reputation for being hostile to fey interests, Shaiaila agrees to follow whatever orders they give, but then works against them behind their backs. She thinks Bole can solve the fey titan problems on its own, and that the party's plans will spell disaster in the long run. After all, they were the ones who failed to stop the colossus in Flint from being activated, or stop the Obscurati from changing the whole world in one fell swoop. She's suspicious of them, and thanks to the new world order, her subordinates readily follow her lead.

However, if the party is attentive to the Chief Inspectress's concerns, and if they respect the fey titans or at least don't immediately propose attacking them, she offers her agents to help scout and coordinate any odd plans they might come up with. She'll still second-guess them, but it will be to their face.

The White Tongue in Bole

Before the party leaves, the Chief Inspectress advises they speak with **Ochran Eisner**, the city's Minister of Fey Affairs. A classically-trained druid, Ochran's duties include appeasing the fey spirits in the forest gardens and along the railroads to deter attacks. Only a meager few fey are still in the real world—they were stranded when the Dreaming was cut off by the Ob's ritual—but Shaiaila thinks Eisner might have useful information about how to keep the fey titans from attacking Bole directly.

Ochran is not personable, is uncomfortable with eye contact, and only responds to people if directly addressed multiple times; he's usually too involved thinking to himself to pay attention to the outside world. These days he is busy directing a citizen volunteer unit, painting archaic sigils on trees and stones in the woods around Bole. He claims these wards will keep the titans at bay, though he cannot guarantee their minions won't enter the city. If the party examines the sigils, a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 25) recognizes them as obscure icons that are anathema to fey titans. However, if the same PC also succeeds a Knowledge (nature) check (DC 25), he realizes the sigils are being deployed in exactly the wrong way.

Ochran has placed sigils facing outward, explaining they will drive back the titans. In truth, these sigils will just anger the titans, drawing them toward the city. If the sigils faced the city, any titans who entered would be goaded away and back out into the wilderness.

In truth, Ochran is a servant of the Voice of Rot, who offered the druid eternal solitude on a world bereft of civilization. If confronted with his mistake, Ochran struggles to come up with an excuse (Sense Motive DC 15). When he realizes the jig is up, he hisses at the party, revealing a forked white tongue, then attempts to flee by *wildshaping* into an air elemental.

He's no physical threat to the party, but if not caught he sabotages efforts to protect Bole. He desires to guide the fey titans into the city to destroy it. If interrogated, he'll eventually confess to his allegiance to the Voice of Rot, but say that he hasn't heard from any of his lord's messengers since the sun disappeared. Intense interrogation can also get him to reveal that his sister, **Katlin**, is working at similar purposes in the mining village Favela (see page 27).



Threat One: The Ash Wolf

*Rise and flicker, red and white,
A howling fire burns this night.
Awaken hunter, warrior beast!
The flames have risen—time to feast!*
- Hunters' chant

Salamanders have lit fires and killed one of the Ash Wolf's pups, but the titan blames Risur. Either the fey titan or the interlopers from Jiese must go.

FLAMES FROM THE EAST

Exploration. Montage.

When the great forests burn, the Ash Wolf stirs and will reclaim his domain.

The fires in Antwalk Thicket actually don't burn out of control; Risuri foresters have done a good job of allowing small burns each year to limit the amount of brush for fuel. But day by day the flames advance, and by the third day after the great eclipse, over a thousand people from villages in the woods have fled to Bole.

The truth of the forest fire's origin does not begin with the Ash Wolf, but is actually the byproduct of the Obscurati's reorganization of the planes. Long ago the Ancient civilization built a ziggurat here linking to the plane Av, but the Ob's ritual caused the magic to go awry and link instead to Jiese, the plane of fire.

Jiese itself was once part of the true plane of fire, but was cut off by the Ancients into its own separate world. Only a few families of salamander miners who lived on the frontier of the great efreeti empire came along, and just a single efreeti was trapped on the plane. She was eventually enslaved, and the family who controlled the efreeti's power styled itself after the princes and generals of the great City of Brass. While lesser salamanders hunted the fierce elemental beasts that roamed Jiese's surface, or mined out precious gems of solid fire, the princes built palaces to celebrate their uncontested dominion.

A century ago the enslaved efreeti tricked the ruling sultan into making a wish that led to the salamander royal family splintering. The factions began constructing massive siege engines and fought horrific wars. Finally one salamander claimed control of the efreeti, and he proclaimed himself **Sultan Kuyler**, though he ruled over only a few thousand surviving salamanders.

In the grand scheme of things, the salamanders are basically inbred yokels—especially the royal family. Supernaturally-powerful, incredibly-skilled-at-battle, able-to-control-fire-with-a-thought yokels. They might have access to arcane siege weapons, but their manners are atrocious.

Salamander Invasion

Sultan Kuyler immediately sensed when the Axis Seal opened, and his scouts found a portal that led to the ruined Ancient ziggurat in Risur's Antwalk Thicket. Within a day Kuyler had marched through with his 'army' and started burning all the wonderful trees around him. This attracted the attention of the recently-awoken Ash Wolf, who sent forth one of his pups to investigate. The wolfling came into conflict with the salamanders, who slew it, then magically erased traces of their presence before retreating to the ziggurat.

When the Ash Wolf discovered the death of his son, he went into a seething rage, believing the humans of Risur had committed the act. He has begun hunting on the edges of the forest fires, feeding on villagers to regain his strength after a long sleep. In a few weeks the fires will reach Bole, at which point he intends to slay every child so that he can have his revenge.

Kuyler wants his people to colonize a new bountiful land where there are always things to burn, but he's content to watch the Ash Wolf spread terror through the woods. He sends his men to spread the fires and lure the massive wolf into human territory, using the magic of his bound efreeti to keep his warriors hidden from the fey titan.

Ancient Ziggurat

Barnaby and many other woodsmen of Antwalk Thicket know the general location of the old ruins that once were the ziggurat of Av. Due to a wish by Kuyler, the last mile of forest around the ziggurat is still burning, and the trees—though dead—don't crumble away. He likes the aesthetic, and it keeps interlopers away.

I Dream of Liesi

Salamanders are not the most intelligent of creatures, and neither Kuyler nor any of his warlords, viziers, or dervishes understand the meaning of the sun's disappearance. But one of his minions does.

Liesi, the bound efreeti whom Kuyler's family has controlled for millennia, senses that she could return home finally. She suspects something is amiss with the sky, and has implored her master to *wish* for an explanation. The petty Kuyler prefers to waste the daily wishes she grants on dalliances and frivolous comforts. Already he has wished for the boring ziggurat of Av to be transformed from stone into brass, as befits a sultan.

Liesi knows Kuyler will never release her, and hopes she can warn someone of at least moderate intelligence of the threat she sees in the stars. When she meets the party she'll try to persuade them into finding the *efreeti bottle* that controls her, then releasing her so he cannot use her *wishes* against them.

The Wolfpack

The Ash Wolf's long dead mate spawned countless pups as she perished, though normally only a few are active. They guard a great mossy cave where the Ash Wolf slumbered for centuries. Only when forest fires break out do the other smoldering wolves appear, and if the fires are great enough their father awakens so he can go hunt for his lost love in the ashes.

The Den of the Wolf

The Ash Wolf's lair lies some forty miles from Bole, in a mossy cave beside a river bank, seventeen miles from the ziggurat of Av. It's practically impossible to stumble upon, but tracking the smoldering wolves (a DC 30 Survival check for every five miles) or using divination magic can lead the party to the fey titan's cave. The forest fires have cut swaths through the area, though patches of woodland remain unburnt.

If the party intends to fight the Ash Wolf, their best chance is to corner him in this cave so he cannot use his speed to his advantage. But his pack might detect the party's approach.



Heralds of the Ash Wolf

The Ash Wolf's strongest children, known as Smoldering Wolves, can share their senses with their father. If the party is exploring the forest on foot, these scouts can sense the touch of greater magic on them. The party

might spot one several hundred feet away in the woods, but initially the wolves don't attack, and will flee if approached.

PACK TACTICS

Action. Tactical. Level 25.

The Ash Wolf intends to kill the party, but can be reasoned with.

This battle might occur anywhere in the forest fire, but we suggest you have the Ash Wolf make its first appearance while the party is near a Risuri town that's endangered by fire.

One such town is **Mulshoe**, population four thousand, located twenty miles east of Bole. It lies in a valley clearing, surrounded on all sides by forest. Many have fled the forest into Bole, but townsfolk plead for help to fight the fires and evacuate those too weak to make the long journey. Lumberjacks are desperately trying to clear the trees nearest the town, and the forest fire is almost upon them when the party arrives.

(Yes, whether the party comes here 3 days after the great eclipse or 30, Mulshoe is just lucky that way. If the party doesn't come, the following encounter can happen anywhere in the forest, but we thought the setting of a town surrounded by a forest fire would be interesting, given how the scale of the Ash Wolf would contrast with houses and streets.)

Whichever PC is the monarch feels a surge of power, which he or she will come to recognize as the sign that a foe of great strength is nearby and about to contest for control of the land. See the Rites of Rulership in Adventure Nine for details.

(Since the party is 17th level, the monarch should get a +8 bonus to AC, attack rolls, and saving throws; a +9 bonus to Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based checks; fast healing 8 in addition to the normal fast healing 10 the monarch always has; and can interact with the titan as if he or she were also colossal.)

Wolf Pack (see Appendix A: Combat Catalogue)

- ♦ 24 Smoldering Wolves
- ♦ The Ash Wolf

Terrain and Environment

Smoke from the forest fire wafts through the town, providing concealment to creatures beyond 60 feet, and total concealment beyond 120 feet, though the general shapes of trees can still be seen when backlit by the forest fire.

The town's buildings are only one or two stories tall, and the streets are narrow enough that the large wolves could only fit through one at a time. The Ash Wolf treats the town as difficult terrain, crushing buildings if he walks across them. However, he prefers to stay at the edge of town, charge in, and jump *over* the buildings, using Spring Attack to snap up a PC and carry him off into the smoke.



The forest fire stops about sixty feet outside the edge of town, where lumberjacks have cut a firebreak, but a PC might be tricked out into the woods or carried out there by the Ash Wolf. Breathing the air inside the forest fire causes a character to take 1d6 points of fire damage per round (no save). In addition, a character must make a Fortitude save every 5 rounds (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. A character who holds his breath can avoid the lethal damage, but not the nonlethal damage. Those wearing heavy clothing or any sort of armor take a -4 penalty on their saving throws. Those wearing metal armor or who come into contact with very hot metal are affected as if by a *heat metal* spell.

The smoke is not thick enough to be debilitating.

Tactics

The Ash Wolf approaches within a half mile of Muleshoe and sends his pack of two dozen smoldering wolves out to surround the town. They howl, but the smoke and soot conceals them until they're within 60 feet of the party (Perception DC 30). Any townsfolk would be well-served to flee indoors, but a few remain outside and will be attacked by the pack. These wolves attack at the edge of the PCs' vision, in an attempt to split them up.

Four of the wolves are empowered by the titan's *pack bond* power, and if the party splits up they engage someone at the edge of the group. Otherwise they circle the party through the town streets for about a minute, waiting for their father to give the signal. Before having the pack attack, the Ash Wolf says, "Risur has slain my child. Burnt my home. By the old rites, I demand blood and flesh." His voice seems to come from all directions, as the roaring forest fire itself speaks for him.

The pack then charges in. The Ash Wolf, able to see through their eyes, uses *fire storm* to burn the party and ignite the buildings around them, or perhaps *transmute metal to wood* if the party is at the edge of the town near the fire.

The four empowered smoldering wolves focus their attention on a single target, while the other twenty stay about a hundred feet away, watching. If any of the empowered wolves are reduced below 50 hit points, the Ash Wolf has that child withdraw from battle and shifts its power to another, which then charges in.

After two rounds of this, or if any of his pups is reduced to 0 hit points, the fey titan uses *hunting surge*, howling loud enough to shake

the ground and trees. With his speed briefly increased to 300 feet, he charges in and will try to snatch a spellcaster (and can jump high enough to easily clear rooftops, bite someone beneath him, then clear 110 feet horizontally) and carry him off. If possible he rips off a leg, dumps the victim a hundred and fifty feet away in the forest fire, and circles around the edge of the battle, staying far enough away to remain unseen.

Generally he'll attack every other round, and will punctuate his assaults by condemning the hunters who speared his son, recounting how his mate died thousands of years ago and he'll never have more children, and threatening to burn the whole nation until he has his revenge.

Aftermath

The Ash Wolf should be fairly terrifying, a predator that can kill any PC in a round or two, but he initially assumes the party is not a threat. He'll try to wound several and scatter the group, and will only focus on killing them one-by-one if he's reduced below 207 hit points, which triggers the arrival of his long-lost mate, a titanic wolf spirit composed of smoke and ash. If reduced below 0 hit points he will yield, offering to serve them if they at least spare his children.

The party might instead convince the fey titan to break off his attack if they offer to find out who slew his son. He'll be distrustful (i.e., you have an excuse to get in a few terrifying strafing runs before he relents), but then he'll agree to give them one day before he resumes his hunt.

Mourning a Lost Child

If the party reaches the Ash Wolf's cave—by sneaking in or by parlaying with him—they find the body of a Smoldering Wolf lying on its side, smoke pouring out of various wounds.

Examining the deceased wolf reveals odd wounds not common among Risuri weaponry (Heal DC 20). Further investigation reveals the weapons were made of obsidian and radiated an extreme amount of heat (Heal DC 30).

The Ash Wolf will offer to have one of his children accompany the PCs to the site where the body was first found. However, due to a *wish* by Liesi, the salamanders left not physical trail, and magic to pursue them yields no information unless the caster succeeds a DC 22 caster level check. Brute force searching takes several days (though it goes faster if the party splits up or brings help), and eventually they'll find a patch of forest still burning long after it should have died.

THE FLAMING ZIGGURAT OF AV

Action/Social. Real-Time. Level 18.

Meet your new neighbors, the Salamanders of Jiese!

A one-mile diameter swath of forest burns perpetually around the old Ancient ziggurat, which has been transformed into brass. Several dozen wormlike thoquua roam the woods near the building, and they screech if they detect any intruders (Perception +10). Two falcion-wielding salamanders guard the entrance of the ziggurat, and within Sultan Kuyler and some of his best buddies from Jiese spend most of the day doing nothing.

Kuyler is a foul-mouthed, illiterate alcoholic, who peaked long ago when he took control of Liesi the efreeti. He's been living the easy life on wishes ever since. But with a new world suddenly available—one a damn sight more fun to burn than his own 'sultanate'—the salamander

sultan sees an opportunity to give his no-good children something they can conquer, so they can be as great as their father.

For now he just has a small expeditionary force, and he's sending out scouts to find out who he'll have to fight to conquer this place. He's only recently seen humans for the first time, and had his men capture a few. He keeps them in a pit in the ziggurat, and is trying to figure out how to get them to fight for his amusement.

The Jiese-end of the portal is fairly far from his palace, so no reinforcements will be readily forthcoming. For now, Kuyler's forces are limited. Forty or so rank-and-file salamander soldiers scout the woods, while only a dozen guard the ziggurat itself. Since so far they've only encountered panicked, harmless townsfolk, the initial reactions of the invaders from Jiese when they see the party will be reminiscent of a



hunter spotting a deer. They're excited, not worried, and will coo at the party like they're talking to a dumb animal that doesn't realize they're about to kill it.

Salamander Invasion

- ♦ Kuyler, Salamander Sultan
- ♦ Liesi, Bound-Efreet
- ♦ 4 Salamander Viziers
- ♦ 8 Salamander Dervishes



Environmental Effects

The immediate area outside the Ziggurat is considered severe heat, while the inside of the ziggurat is considered to be an area of extreme

heat. This heat lasts as long as the ziggurat maintains a connection to the plane of Jiese.

Walls of Flame

Repurposed by the salamanders, the ziggurat's interior is fairly stark. With a few *wishes* Kuyler created a plethora of permanent *walls of fire* to break up the monotony of the ziggurat's interior. While harmless to the salamanders, these walls are extremely effective defense mechanisms.

Each wall (marked on the map) is treated as a *wall of fire* (caster level 11th) with the *permanency* spell added. These walls do not radiate heat in a specific direction, so creatures will only take damage from passing through the wall.



Ziggurat Interior

Interior walls of the ziggurat, once weathered stone with barely visible carvings, are now transmuted into polished brass. The only light sources are the walls of fire and the portal to Jiese itself. The constant fire actually mutes sound fairly well, and a battle probably wouldn't be heard more than 100 feet away.

1. **Entrance.** Two more dervishes and one vizier guard here, though for them guarding consists of boasting about the monsters they've slain back home.
2. **Prisoner Pit.** Kuyler keeps a dozen humans down here, and has placed walls of fire at the doors to keep them from leaving. A dervish stands guard outside either entrance.
3. **Map Room.** An ancient world map on the floor has attracted Kuyler's interest, and he's set up tiny firegem carvings of warriors on shelves here. He expects to plan an invasion, fight maybe a few thousand humans, and conquer the world. He has no idea of the scale of the map.
4. **Throne Room.** Kuyler and three viziers party here, drinking and dragging in various trophies from outside so they can burn them for fun.
5. **Bare Halls.** The walls and floor show signs of once having had traps installed in them, which were long ago destroyed or disabled, and then more recently transmuted into brass.
6. **Dervish Quarters.** The dervishes sleep here on huge stone beds.
7. **Boring Spot.** Kuyler makes Liesi stand here and do nothing when he's used up his wishes for the day but hasn't finished drinking out of her home.
8. **Portal to Jiese.** Two more dervishes stand guard here.