

The Visian Expedition

Introduction

The Visian Expedition is an experiment with starting an adventure at level 0. It began as a one-shot set in the history of a different world-building project and is now a word document with a title, three different header styles, and an introduction.

The Warship Comes to a Halt...

The thunder of the anchor chain wakes you to the hustle of the other soldiers below deck. You strap your bedroll onto your pack, tighten the buckles on your armor, and load your other packs onto the donkey with the rest of your unit, each taking intermittent turns to pat him on the nose with a sleepy “Good boy, Miles.”

You emerge above deck into the soft morning light of sunrise and organize distractedly into rank and file. The silhouette of the ruined city of Vis rests between you and the sunrise, crowned not by the terracotta of roof tiles, but by a great spiral of cloud resting low on its brow, flashing with vibrant magical lightning, its edges tinged by the rose-gold pink of the morning sun. It pinwheels inward to a central point, a dome of denser, swirling magic and mist, its tip just visible behind the coastal rise of the city.

The centurion and the other officers begin their briefing: the main force will establish a camp today in the ruins on the east side of the river. Tomorrow, they will push south and secure the fortress on the hill. The third day, they will move west to the forward camp and then south to the magical storm.

The centurion addresses your unit directly, and you snap your gaze off of the skyline and forward to attention. The auxiliary scouts are to work separately from the main force on two jobs: to establish a safe spot for that forward base, and to scout the magical storm for any source or insight on its nature.

The ranks disperse into milling activity and your rowboat soon lowers into the black lapping of the bay. A forgotten bag of red canvas flagging joins your unit and you grasp the oars, knuckles white in the cold.

What Happened?

The city of Vis was a thriving colony of the empire for nearly 150 years, until it was torn apart by a great magical explosion. An imperial expedition deemed the site unsalvageable, and the few survivors were resettled elsewhere on the Isle of Vis. It has remained unsettled and unobserved for nearly 200 years. The Height of the Sun, the victors of an imperial civil war that ended two years ago, have promised land to their veterans that they are unable to provide on the mainland, and have begun to look elsewhere, sending a military expedition to the island (officially renamed “Sunset Isle”) to make it habitable again.

How did it happen?

200 years ago, the magistrate Ambriaso Korvulo began to research an ancient dynasty that once ruled the island in search of secret knowledge of the arcane to gain an edge over his political rival, Governor Miryamo Augusto. In his search, he encountered the liturgical writings of the Cult of the Risen King, the ancient apothotic mage-king of the isle. Craving power, he began to conduct more and more esoteric and costly rituals night after night- finally arriving at an audience with the forgotten deity.

He had long forgotten his ambitions of political prestige, and began execution of a plan to establish a well of magical power to fuel his ascension to the Risen King's court. Most of the city's council members were also powerful magic users- at the next council meeting, Ambriaso cast them into the astral plane and, with the help of a spell designed by the Risen King, bound them there. By destroying their original tethers and anchoring their projections to himself instead, Ambriaso began to funnel their energies into the material plane for his own consumption.

The resulting torrent of imbalanced energy flowing into the magical plane caused a massive explosion, destroying the city in the magical storm and transforming Ambriaso's physical form to better suit the Risen King's court, his own astral form sacrificed to power the binding spell. The five other council members are:

Ŝteo Vinkasto, a famous and wealthy vintner, jovial but introverted

Afŝano Njato, a historian and bard, eccentric and intensely academic

Miryamo Augusto, the governor and a capable sorcerer, calculating and methodical

Klea, the oracle of the moon, quiet and unfathomable

Eorgia Valerii, a career politician and powerful warlock, ambitious and impetuous

Note: these characters speak Old Common, for which I have substituted Esperanto- hence the diacritic ŝ above. Change the names to match whatever other language you can speak (or fake) that the rest of your table doesn't understand. Or don't! Realistically language would not have drifted enough for them to speak a true ancestor dialect of Common.

Over time, the flow of magic into the material plane has inched back toward equilibrium. Threads of the five's anchors have begun to manifest in the material plane- their original anchors destroyed, the bonds have emerged with objects of significance that remain in their psyches.

Ambriaso Korvulo no longer exists as such. Ambriaso now exists only as the locus of the Risen Hand hive mind - the zero-point on a spiraling counting line toward infinity. Their consciousness also consists of the locusts- the Risen Fingers, if they were to refer to themselves in speech- as well as the essences of everything they have infected with their wild magic. Their ambition is to feed and infect and in doing so, spread the Risen King's influence.

Mechanics

The Players

The party plays as a unit of level 0 auxiliary soldiers on an expedition to reclaim the colony of Vis.

Before the first session, the players choose a name, ancestry, and a related piece of heirloom starting gear, be it bauble or battleaxe. They can distribute the stats 12, 12, 11, 10, 9, 9 however they like. They have 10 HP and no hit dice to recover from their wounds on a rest. Placed through the setting are encounters for the characters to find things that act as hit dice to heal with when they rest.

Starting Gear

Player characters begin the game with:

Shortsword	<i>Backpack containing:</i>
Shield	Tent
Leather Armor	Bedroll
Dagger	Shovel
Heirloom	1 week of rations

Miles the Donkey works as shared inventory for the rest of the unit. He has:

Cooking gear	Torches
Eating utensils	Sledge
Rope	Stakes
Fire starting kit	... and anything else that is reasonable for a
Hatchet	unit of soldiers to have access to.

Leveling Up

There are two ways for the characters to advance to level 1 of a class.

The first is via roleplay: if a character is acting sufficiently enough like a hero (fighting bad guys, saving good guys, kicking bubblegum, chewing ass, etc.) and they gain an arbitrary amount of experience, they advance to level 1 of whatever class best suits their actions.

Example: a character has a negative dex mod so decides to go shirtless because their AC is the same with or without the armor. Later on, they counter-charge a wild boar and smack it on the nose with their shield. Sounds like a barbarian!

The second way is for the character to encounter a plot trigger. Further detail is in the description of the node in which the macguffin is located: barbarian (6, 8), bard (19), cleric (6, 7), druid (6, 7), fighter (8), ranger (6), rogue (8), sorcerer (16, 19), warlock (6, 20), and wizard (19).

The third way is to roll the 100 or the 20 slot on the magic tables.

The Setting

The magical storm has suffused the area with wild magic stemming from the Risen King. Whenever a character— player character or otherwise— does something significant (at the GM's discretion), they roll on one of the modified tables:

D100 Wild Magic Table

- 01-02 Roll on this table at the start of each of your turns for the next minute, ignoring this result on subsequent rolls.
- 03-04 For the next minute, you can see any invisible creature if you have line of sight to it.
- 05-06 A cloud of locusts controlled by the DM appears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of you, then disappears 1 minute later.
- 07-08 Wild energy surges from you, dealing 1d6 damage in a 5-foot radius.
- 09-10 You cast Magic Missile as a 5th-level spell.
- 11-12 Roll a d10. Your height changes by a number of inches equal to the roll. If the roll is odd, you shrink. If the roll is even, you grow.
- 13-14 You cast Confusion centered on yourself.
- 15-16 For the next minute, you regain 5 hit points at the start of each of your turns.
- 17-18 You grow a beard made of locusts that will disappear if you sneeze.
- 19-20 You cast Grease centered on yourself.
- 21-22 Your skin seems a different color every time somebody observes it. You shimmer a little. A Remove Curse spell can end this effect.
- 23-24 An compound eye appears on your forehead for the next minute. During that time, you have advantage on Perception checks that rely on sight.
- 25-26 For the next minute, all of your attacks with a movement time of 1 action have a movement time of 1 bonus action.
- 27-28 You teleport up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space of your choice that you can see.
- 29-30 You are transported to the Astral Plane until the end of your next turn, then you return to the space you previously occupied.
- 31-32 Maximize the damage of the next damaging attack you make within the next minute.
- 33-34 Wild magic worms its way into your mind. You feel drunk for the next 1d4 hours.
- 35-36 A dog-sized locust controlled by the DM appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of you and is frightened of you. It vanishes after 1 minute.
- 37-38 You regain 1d10 hit points.
- 39-40 You turn into a locust until the start of your next turn. If you drop to 0 hit points, your form reverts.
- 41-42 For the next minute, you can teleport up to 20 feet as a bonus action on each of your turns.
- 43-44 You cast Levitate on yourself.
- 45-46 You can't speak for the next minute. Whenever you try, locusts fly out of your mouth.
- 47-48 A spectral shield hovers near you for the next minute, granting you a +2 bonus to AC and immunity to Magic Missile.
- 49-50 You are immune to being intoxicated by alcohol for the next 5d6 days.
- 51-52 Your hair turns into locusts and flies away but grows back within 24 hours.
- 53-54 For the next minute, any flammable object you touch that isn't being worn or carried by another creature bursts into flame.
- 55-56 For the next minute, an ethereal host of locusts phases into existence passing by your mouth. They eat the noises you make.
- 57-58 You cast Fog Cloud centered on yourself.
- 59-60 Up to three creatures you choose within 30 feet of you take 4d10 lightning damage.
- 61-62 You are frightened by the nearest creature until the end of your next turn.
- 63-64 Each creature within 30 feet of you becomes invisible for the next minute. The invisibility ends on a creature when it attacks or casts a spell.
- 65-66 You gain resistance to all damage for the next minute.
- 67-68 A random creature within 60 feet of you becomes poisoned for 1d4 hours.
- 69-70 You emit light in a 30-foot radius for the next minute. Any creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of you is blinded until the end of its next turn.
- 71-72 You cast Polymorph on yourself. If you fail the saving throw, you turn into a locust for the spell's duration.
- 73-74 Illusory locusts and tiny magical lightning flits through the air within 10 feet of you for the next minute.

- 75-76 You can take one additional action immediately.
- 77-78 Each creature within 30 feet of you takes 1d10 necrotic damage. You regain hit points equal to the sum of the necrotic damage dealt.
- 79-80 You cast Mirror Image.
- 81-82 You cast Fly on a random creature within 60 feet of you.
- 83-84 You become invisible for the next minute. During that time, other creatures can't hear you. The invisibility ends if you attack or cast a spell.
- 85-86 If you die within the next minute, you immediately come back to life as if by the Reincarnate spell.
- 87-88 Your size increases by one size category for the next minute.
- 89-90 You and all creatures within 30 feet of you gain vulnerability to piercing damage for the next minute.
- 91-92 You are surrounded by faint, ethereal music for the next minute.
- 93-94 Increase one of your stats by one point, determined by a d6. 1 through 6 are: strength, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, wisdom, and charisma.
- 95-96 Decrease one of your stats by one point, determined by a d6. 1 through 6 are: strength, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, wisdom, and charisma.
- 97-98 Roll on the d20 table at the start of each of your turns for the next minute, ignoring the aggression side-affects.
- 99-00 You act in perfect harmony with the magic coursing through you. You realize how to mantle the energy. Re-roll your character as a level 1 sorcerer.

D20 Wild Magic Table

- 1 Roll on this table at the start of each of your turns for the next minute, ignoring this result on subsequent rolls.
- 2 For the next minute, everybody seems as though they have locust heads.
- 3 Any food you have on your person turns into a mass of locusts.
- 4 You feel hungry. For some reason, you imagine crunching through a carapace instead of crusty bread.
- 5 Your weapon bursts into a cloud of locusts and flies away. If you do not have a weapon, something in your pack does instead.
- 6 Your offhand bursts into a cloud of locusts and flies away. If you do not have an off-hand, something in your pack does instead.
- 7 The next thing you try to say comes out as cricket-song.
- 8 Your tongue is replaced by a shimmering magical locust. You can still speak normally.
- 9 Your hair is replaced by a host of shimmering locusts. They flit and fly about your head as hair would underwater. Their eyes follow yours.
- 10 Your eyes are replaced with compound eyes. Your passive perception is 18.
- 11 Any food you have on your person turns into a mass of locusts and flies away.
- 12 You feel hungry. For some reason, you imagine crunching through a carapace instead of crusty bread.
- 13 You grow a pair of locust's wings. Your movement range is increased by 10. You can achieve tiny bursts of flight.
- 14 Your right leg is replaced with a locust's. As a bonus action, you may leap 10 feet. If both your legs are transformed, you may leap 20 feet as a bonus action. You grow more aggressive.
- 15 Your left leg is replaced with a locust's. As a bonus action, you may leap 10 feet. If both your legs are transformed, you may leap 20 feet as a bonus action. You grow more aggressive.
- 16 Your right arm is replaced with a locust's with a mantis-like raptorial foreleg. It does 1d8 damage - piercing if rolled with dexterity, and bludgeoning damage if rolled with strength, to your discretion. If both your arms are transformed, you may strike with both, dealing 1d12 damage. You grow more aggressive.
- 17 Your left arm is replaced with a locust's with a mantis-like raptorial foreleg. It does 1d8 damage - piercing if rolled with dexterity, and bludgeoning damage if rolled with strength, to your discretion. If both your arms are transformed, you may strike with both, dealing 1d12 damage. You grow more aggressive.
- 18 Your skin is replaced with chitin. Your movement speed is reduced by 10.
- 19 Your head is replaced with that of a locust's. You grow hungry more frequently. You can still speak normally.

20 Wild magical energy surges through you simultaneously tearing you apart in an explosion of 1d6 damage in a 10 foot radius and remaking you in your original state in the same instant. Re-roll your stats as a level 1 character, using the three highest results of 4d6 for each your stats in the order strength, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, wisdom, and charisma. In the state between existence and non-existence, the totality of each comes into clear focus for you. As you exist, the picture rapidly fades. With your last moment of omniscience, choose a level 1 class.

If you roll a transformation for a part that is already transformed, that part and any hp reasonable missing due to it is restored. Ignore the aggression change

The wild magic and the locusts are the mechanics by which the Risen Hand feeds, not by physically consuming, but by aggregating consciousness into its being. To do so requires a slow conversion of the consciousness to the right form. The process can happen quickly, but it ruins the flavor— think of meat from an animal slaughtered under great duress versus the use of a ‘humane’ method. The locusts do eat physical material, but only after the fact. Because of this, the wild magic will sustain characters beyond their natural limits, be it death from old age or injury, until they can be consumed.

When the characters are wounded, their wounds shimmer with wild magic. They roll more frequently on the d100 table.

When they die, they are resurrected by wild magic. Any wounds are sealed or repaired by a conglomeration of ethereal locusts. They roll on the d20 wild magic table instead of the d100 table.

When they die again, they explode into a host of magical locusts under the player’s control. They roll on the d20 magic table. When they roll a result related to a body part, part of their swarm forms into that body part. +1 is added to their future rolls on the table, and any results above a 20 truncate to 20. If they roll the same body part again, choose a different body part.

Swarm of Locusts

10 HP | 10 AC | 20 movement

-4 str | +2 dex | -2 con | -4 int | +2 wis | -4 cha

Weak to fire damage.

Any fire damage over 5 kills the whole swarm. Any fire damage requires the swarm to pass a wisdom saving throw of 10. On a 10, they lose cohesiveness.

The locusts can share space with any other creature. Any creature sharing space with the locusts cannot easily see beyond the swarm.

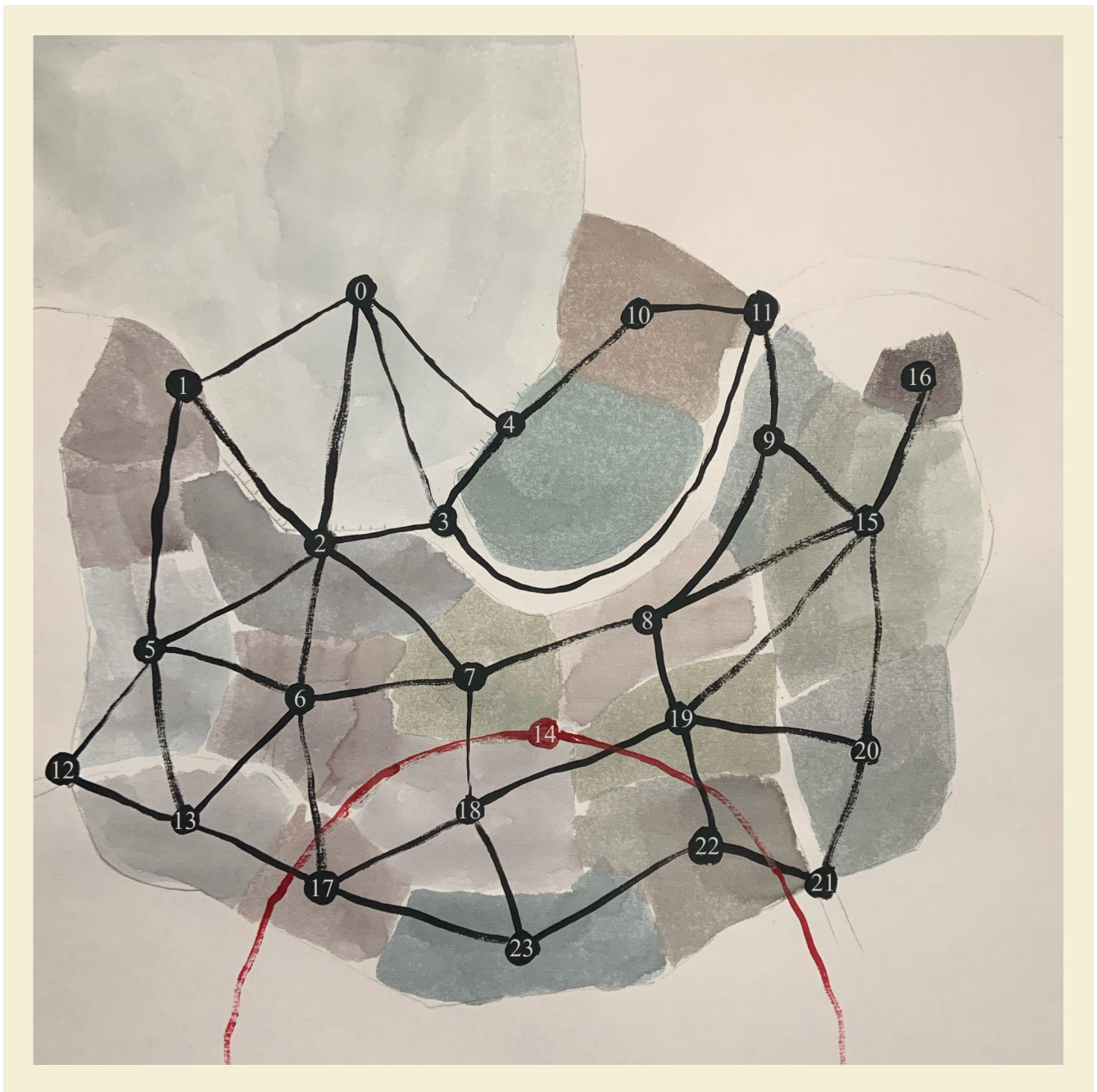
Smoke will incapacitate them.

If they are magically dispelled, the whole swarm drops from the air, dead.

Hundred-Mouthed Bite:

+0 to hit, 1d4 damage.

The City of Vis



0 - Rowboat

The warship slowly inches away behind you as the oars pull white crests from the surf. Ahead lies the shoreline of the city. Two runs of ruined pier pilings stand in untidy lines, reduced now to white-capped seafoam perches on either side of the mouth of the river. Further to the western side of the city, a natural beach rises out of the water.

1 - Western Beach

A stone-studded beach leads up to a cascading tumble of boulders and mixed architectural rubble. Atop perch tightly-packed buildings, most in ruins, with narrow paths winding warren-like between. The brick-built structures are the most intact. A few of the adobes have turned into living walls of vine and shrub, the dirt long since laced through with roots, hosting growth in mats of detritus. Vines and shrubs sprout wherever possible in the shady alleys. Further into the district, the spire of a taller building stretches perilously up above the other ruins. Only part of two walls remain at the tip, a lone sapling leaning out of the opposite side.

Beach Landing

The magical storm creates a swirl of localized winds and stirs up the surf. Landing the boat on the beach is a skill challenge: the DC is 12, and requires half as many successes as there are people in the party, before they reach tries equal to the party size. On a total failure, the boat strikes something and begins to leak.

Infused Deer

The party encounters a sickly-seeming deer at some distance. Its antlers are covered in shimmering locusts that swarm up into a cloud if the deer makes a sharp movement, then zip back to their spots. The deer is weak and not aggressive. It has 6 HP.

Ruined Steeple

Embedded in the overgrown ruins of the building squatting below the besaplinged steeple is a bell, bent half closed from its fall. Some of the wooden second floor still exists in the corners. Characters can climb the tower in two phases, requiring a check of 13 to reach the top of the steeple and 11 to reach the roof. On a failure, they fall, taking 1d6 damage. On a critical failure, they fall and destabilize the remaining bricks, increasing subsequent climbing checks to a 15. If they fail again, they cause the whole steeple to fall as well.

From the roof they can see the areas immediately surrounding them (nodes 2 & 5). From the steeple, they can see the whole city. They gain +1 to survival checks in the areas they observed.

2 - Western Docks

The ruins of the docks, now all but rows of pilings, stand in rank and file in front of a mostly intact retaining wall of large stone blocks, occasionally breached by a cascade of dirt and greenery. The low tide reveals a sliver of sandy beach a few feet wide at the base of the wall. One particularly intact stretch of wall features a built-in set of stone stairs leading up from the small beach.

The large warehouses crouched behind the frontage road have not fared well. Only their stone foundations and portions of their brick walls remain. Sun-bleached planks and beams lay scattered inside and outside of the lines of crouching stone and brick. One block back from the frontage road, a section of roof juts up above the buildings' carapaces, held up mostly by thick, woody vines. The streets are wide and even the most rubble-filled have navigable centers as long as you don't mind some shrubs growing where the pavestones have receded.

Beach Landing

Landing the rowboat at low tide on the small beach proves no trouble.

Infused Deer

The party encounters a sickly-seeming deer at some distance. Its antlers are covered in shimmering locusts that swarm up into a cloud if the deer makes a sharp movement, then zip back to their spots. The deer is weak and not aggressive. It has 6 HP.

Ruined Warehouse

The most intact warehouse features a corner of intact roof, cradled aloft by a great wisteria vine. The vine weaves through the mortar in that corner, puppeteering a marionette of the brick walls up to join the corner of roof.

If the group spends some time searching through the ruined interior, they will find a bundle of sixteen javelins wrapped in a strip of canvas (10 x 2 feet), their spearheads dipped in wax to preserve them.

Javelin | 1d6 piercing damage, *thrown*, *versatile*

3 - Mouth of the River

The mouth of the river is visible from the boat, a low point in the profile of the city beyond the choppy waves of the bay.

The silt outflow hasn't been dredged in a very long time and the water shallows as the party approaches. A silty mat of reeds and aquatic plants has developed in all but the very center of the river's mouth during the period of abandonment, and climb up the beach until they join the shrubs and small trees on its steeper banks. There is a collapsed bridge visible just a short ways upriver.

Bridge Ruins

A few of the fallen bridge's pilings stand above the river's surface at low tide. The aquatic grasses make the pilings that remain below the surface difficult to see.

Navigating the boat across is a skill challenge: the DC is 12, and requires half as many successes as there are people in the party, before they reach tries equal to the party size. A failure results in the boat striking something and beginning to leak. On a critical failure, a character is tossed into the river. On a total failure, the boat begins to rapidly sink.

The Realm Below

If any character enters the water, the world appears as if through compound eyes. They must make an intelligence saving throw of 10. On a success, they gain passive perception of 18 until they surface, which is enough to notice the small tarnished silver votive offerings on the riverbed (The DC is 15 while below water, 18 above water). On a fail, grow disoriented and flip a coin to determine whether they can successfully surface. At some point (GM's discretion) they begin to take drowning damage. Any onlookers could swear that through the refraction and murk of the brackish water, the swimming characters look like they have locust legs.

4 - North Docks

Pilings stick out of the water in rows, leading to the tumbling remains of a gull-spattered retaining wall that slopes upward to adjoin with the cliffs to the north. The southern part of the seaside's retaining wall is in worse shape, and some of the shoreline properties feature tide pools, growing as the landmass erodes into the river bit by bit, year by year. The ruined buildings beyond are more evenly spaced, many standing alone next to roads rather than other buildings.

Infused Deer

The party encounters a sickly-seeming deer at some distance. Its antlers are covered in shimmering locusts that swarm up into a cloud if the deer makes a sharp movement, then zip back to their spots. The deer is weak and not aggressive. It has 6 HP.

Beachfront Ruins

If the party spends some time looking through the ruins, they find one with more intact walls on the southernmost side of the district. The foundations next door feature a tide pool in the basement which has eroded into the ocean. The intact building has a group of amphorae shattered by the roots of the sprouted grain within. If the party identifies the grain (nature check of 11) they notice the whole area is overgrown with quinoa. They can gather some and replenish a little health when they cook and eat the quinoa. If they search the tidepool, they notice that all the fauna are locusts sitting underwater that scatter if they disturb the surface. They also notice an eroded silver locket with a tiny statuette of the sun affixed inside laying on the bottom of the tidepool.

5 - Downtown

A wide, central thoroughfare reclaimed by trees and bushes angles its way southwest toward the crumbling walls in the distance. Behind, buildings grow close and the streets more narrow and clogged with rubble, the buildings more ruinous. The brick and stone structures dwindle in frequency further from the road.

Mother Boar

As the party travels down the central thoroughfare, they hear a high squeal as two piglets burst out of the building to the left of them, chased by several buzzing ethereal locusts. With a perception check of 12, a character can notice crashing sounds coming from the party's right. A boar appears with a cloud of the same shimmering locusts flitting about its head. The party is between this boar and the piglets. The boar charges whichever character is closest.

Mother Boar:

AC 10, 10 HP, 40 movement

+3 str | 0 dex | 0 con | -4 int | -1 wis | -3 cha

Charge: the boar charges 20 feet. +3 to hit, 1d6 damage. Characters struck must save on strength 10 or be knocked prone

Tusks: +3 to hit, 1d6 damage

Magician's Shop

If the party searches through the area, they can encounter a strange sight: a single glass display case from what used to be the front window of a storefront features a beautiful lute on a stand in pristine condition. The rest of the building is a pile of sun-bleached & time-eaten planks. If they try to smash the glass, their weapon breaks. On the back of the case is a lock, so rusted and eroded that they can turn it with their fingers and open the case normally. The lute is enchanted to be easy to play with only a modicum of skill.

6 - Industrial District

The buildings' ruined footprints thin in frequency and the lots grow larger. What were once packed dirt yards oft yield to stands of trees and scrub.

Stag King

As the party traverses the district they hear a loud grunting and scuffling ruckus. They find three stags with their horns interlocked in a triangle struggling with each other in the empty ruins of a larger building, a host of ethereal locusts swarming about them. They bellow as the locusts react to the group's presence, mouths afroth and flanks asteam. They charge.

Stag King:

3 stags with 6 HP each | 40 movement

10 AC interlocked | 12 AC separated

+3 str | -2 dex | 0 con | -4 int | 0 wis

Attacks against the stag king receive no bonus from flanking. It can make three separate Kick attacks per turn, but at different targets.

Charge: the Stag King charges 20 feet, +0 to hit, 1d4 damage. Must save 12 str or be knocked prone. +2 to hit and +1 damage for each stag that has died.

Kick: +2 to hit, 1d4 damage

As each stag dies, the others shake their form off of their interlocked antlers and a third of the locust host swarms the dead body and begins devouring it. When the last stag dies, the antlers snap off and tumble into the dust, remaining tightly interlocked, their branches grown through each other's in a tight weave. The base forms a crown-like ring. If a character helms the crown, fervent, magical-laced madness thrums through them. They froth at the mouth and reroll their character as a level one character, choosing between:

Barbarian, cleric (nature domain), ranger, druid, or warlock (Archfey patron).

The Stag King's Crown

+2 to a stat of the wearer's choice; once selected, the affected stat cannot be switched to another.

The wearer can speak to any other ungulate.

Touching iron scalds the wearer.

If the crown is worn for a full cycle of the moon, it fuses to their skull and becomes part of them.

The wearer can no longer digest meat.

Communal Ovens

If the party searches through the ruins, they find a grand brick oven with a central firebox and a floret of individual oven chambers arranged in a ring, situated in the western side of the district with a single glowing coal amid its ashes, enchanted to never quite extinguish. +1 hit die when they rest if they keep it.

7 - Temple Complex

A large, circular temple orbited by a colonnade is visible atop a hill from most places inside the city's walls.

A wide courtyard surrounds the temple, only partially overgrown. A series of ruined outbuildings line the courtyard's edge. The downhill slopes beyond are overgrown, mostly empty of ruins and foundation for a good distance, the wild punctuated only by the wide roads leading to the courtyard from elsewhere in the city. The temple itself is in good shape - the dark interior is punctuated by stars of light from many small holes in the domed roof's south end and the floor is strewn with shards of fallen ceiling tile, but the structure seems sound.

Luno the Statue

The interior of the front door is flanked on the left by the bottom third of a stone statue, the rest in pieces on the floor. On the right, an identical-seeming statue is intact except for its right arm, which lies at its feet. The figure is nearly ten feet tall, crouched on one knee, their bowed face obscured by a featureless circular mask. Their left arm is outstretched, with the palm facing upwards at chest height for an average humanoid. If the party gives them something significant (one of the little trinkets, a personal keepsake, or a food offering) it awakens partially, their head creaking upward, a telepathic “bonvenon” creaking out of them. Verbal response will cause them to slowly awaken. They speak Old Common but can understand any language. They will carry their right arm around and use it as a weapon if they get into combat.

Luno is one of the eight avatars of the temple, and the only one who still has their head connected. Each cult had two avatars, arranged on opposite sides of the circular temple. The other cults are of the sun, the verdant and the wild. Luno has been in a state of pseudo consciousness, and is activated by worship or belief. They are not hostile, and sense that the magical storm and the godhead powering it are causing a state of great inequilibrium.

Luno

20 HP | 12 AC | 30 movement

+2 str | 0 dex | +2 con | 0 int | 0 wis | -2 cha

Luno's Right Hand:

2d6 bludgeoning, 60 lbs | Heavy, Two-Handed

Resists all damage types except bludgeoning, force, and lightning. Immune to poison damage.

When Luno's health is reduced to 0, they fall dormant until divine connection to the moon is restored. If Luno's mask is destroyed, so too are they.

Spells:

Luno has three level three spell slots that refresh with exposure to the moon.

Mending
Create Food and Water
Dispel Magic

The Ghastly Gardener

At night or in deep shadow, an ethereal figure appears tending to a likewise ethereal herb garden of lavender and rosemary on the eastern side of the hill, just outside the ring of outbuildings. The figure and the rows of plants bleed toward the locus of the storm, flickering in correspondence to the arrhythmic flashes of magic that lance across the face of the storm. The figure occasionally glances up at the host of ethereal locusts milling about overhead at some distance - they fade in and out of existence at a certain radius around the figure and garden, which remain in a locust-free sanctuary within the invisible radius. In the center of the garden, a silvery thread emerges from the earth, turning toward the locus of the storm. The figure is the ghost of Klea, oracle of the moon, bound to remain in this life searching death - their spirit remains bound in the astral plane, powering the Risen Hand. Their ghost remains in this plane seeking death. Their astral projection is tied to a flat silver disc of a mask that served as sign of their station in life. It is buried at the center of the garden. If a character puts their mask on, they see a landscape of astral bodies with the moon centered firmly in the center of their vision wherever they look. They re-roll their character as a level 1

druid or cleric lingeringly inhabited by Klea, thereby severing her connection to the magical well and exorcising Klea.

Klea's aptitude with spirit manifested the garden and their ghostly form after their physical body deteriorated, enabled by the saturation of wild magic. The emanations of rosemary and lavender keep away the influence of the locusts, and thus let them think clearly. They speak Old Common.

For Klea to finally die they must free themselves from the astral plane— they do not know where their spirit is but can tell that it must be on another plane.

8 - Uptown

Ruins of grand buildings on large, walled lots stand along wide streets, their exotic gardens subsuming the structures and sprawling out into the road.

Infused Deer Family

The party encounters a small group of sickly deer covered in locusts in the ruins- the same number of deer as there are party members, plus a few fawns to spur the adults toward aggression. If the party makes an effort to scare them away, they will flee. Otherwise they will advance slowly and attack once in charging range.

Infused Deer

4 HP | 10 AC | 50 movement

0 str | +3 dex | 0 con | -3 int | +2 wis | -3 cha

Charge: the deer charges 20 feet or more. 1d4 damage, +0 to hit. Character must save on an athletics or acrobatics check with a DC of 12, or be knocked prone.

Clobber: the deer rears and strikes with a flurry of hooves. 1d4 damage, +2 to hit.

The Mansion and the Raven

The party passes a somewhat intact wall enclosing the ruins of a grandiose roadside property. A raven sits perched on a column that once held a gate, its brass moorings long since crumbled out of the mortar. With a perception check of 12, they can notice the shimmering locust perched on its shoulder. Inside the ruined walls are clumps of dense barberry, once managed into hedges, punctuated by patches of herbs and vegetables. Behind the house, the ruins of a gazebo are held up almost entirely by a large wisteria.

The raven follows the party and watches them. If attacked, it'll fight back in an attempt to escape. The backside of the manor house has a large veranda opposite the gazebo. The veranda is laden with a massive grapevine offering a few fresh grapes ready to harvest, and lots withered to raisins on the vine. They are not table grapes, and taste tannic.

The mansion is in good shape, only the roof and parts of the top floor have fallen in. The bottom floor's walls are made of sandstone blocks, and the second floor is made of brick. The veranda has a cellar door underneath. The cellar has a few rows of large amphorae of varying sizes along the back wall. The largest is almost as tall as a human. Some amphorae still have wine in them, but the contents of most have completely evaporated. The largest one

is warm like a body and has a silvery thread sprouting from its lid, pointing toward the maelstrom.

That's \hat{S} teo's anchor- inside is wine, a rich amber-brown with an aroma of leathery raisins and pepper. This is a batch of wine \hat{S} teo grew and produced, one they put a lot of time and effort into and thus, their astral anchor found its way here. If a character drinks it, for the instant after they swallow, they are projected into \hat{S} teo's mind in the astral plane. Their presence is a welcome reprieve to \hat{S} teo, who has been mind-palacing different cuvées of their favorite wines for a very long time and is running out of content. To witness their own wine aged a hundred years brings them great joy, and if they either taste or otherwise learn the taste of their final work, they give up holding their mind together, evaporating their consciousness and severing their connection to the magical well.

\hat{S} teo has been occupying their mind with games (read: dungeons and dragons) in which they have great adventures in far-off lands, occupying the role of different characters. To keep them interesting, they rely on the matrix of cuvées to generate outcomes for actions. At the moment there are three games occurring simultaneously:

1. executing a perfect cross-guard parry and riposte versus the pirate king (fighter)
2. leaning heavily on the haft of a battleaxe in a howling gale. The mushroom tea is wearing off and it's becoming harder and harder to hear what the severed bear's head is telling you (barbarian)
3. Re-belted your tunic as you run, the sound of your own name, howled from your lover's throat, splits the night. You clutch the heavy gemstone against your chest and laugh (rogue)

The characters shakily gain the ability to 'navigate' \hat{S} teo's headspace as one would in three dimensions. If a character interacts with \hat{S} teo, they find them sipping one of the cuvées they have dreamed up on a beach at perpetual sunset. They can understand each other because they are not communicating via language. If a character joins \hat{S} teo in repose on the beach, the sun will slowly begin to set. Once darkness envelops the beach, they realize their nostrils are full of cellar and their eyes are squeezed shut. There is no more wine in the amphora, the thread is gone, and they have successfully mantled \hat{S} teo, who remains cuvéeing in a corner of their mind.

If a character interacts with one of the games, they suddenly find themselves occupying the role of that character in a nesting doll game of D&D. Keep the pacing fast, improv loosely, and really ham it up, with \hat{S} teo as the narrator: "[scenario]... What do you do?"

Once their little encounter is finished, they realize the same as above: their nostrils are full of cellar and their eyes are squeezed shut. There is no more wine in the amphora, the thread is gone, and they have successfully mantled whichever character they played as, who remains possessing them, the last surviving fragment of \hat{S} teo's psyche.

As a bonus for turning up the thrill and excitement, if the characters end their \hat{S} teo encounter without mantling \hat{S} teo, his consciousness evaporates and all his magical energy is flushed into the magical well, supercharging the storm. While in the supercharged storm, any liquid characters drink turns into a different cuvee of wine from the table and any food becomes its

ideal pairing. Copies of Steo's D&D characters can be found in the storm, perhaps even little pockets of his games.

9 - Old Town

The buildings stack tightly together on the hillside and the cobbled streets wind into knots. What remains standing is quaint and charming: wrought-iron balconies laden with foliage, arched roof tiles, and scraps of white plaster.

Jesters of the Avian Court

Four ravens stalk the party, each accompanied by a magical locust. They mimic the noises the party makes, another raven then mimicking that sound, then another, and another. They are not aggressive, but if attacked, they will summon a swarm of locusts.

Raven

1 HP | 10 AC | 2 wis

Beak and Claw: the raven aims a salvo of staccato, swooping strikes, dealing 1 damage with +4 bonus to hit.

Swarm of Locusts

10 HP | 10 AC | 20 movement

-4 str | +2 dex | -2 con | -4 int | +2 wis | -4 cha

Weak to fire damage.

Any fire damage over 5 kills the whole swarm. Any fire damage requires the swarm to pass a wisdom saving throw of 10. On a 10, they lose cohesiveness.

The locusts can share space with any other creature. Any creature sharing space with the locusts cannot easily see beyond the swarm.

Smoke will incapacitate them.

If they are magically dispelled, the whole swarm drops from the air, dead.

Hundred-Mouthed Bite:

+0 to hit, 1d4 damage.

One of the buildings at the bottom of the hill has its foundations built into the still-intact section of retaining wall and its overgrown entrance recedes back into the hillside. A cascade of shrubbery obscures the top half of the entrance, but a wide gap above a storefront countertop. If they go inside the building, there is an old enchanted lucky fishing pole leaning in a corner next to an old shelf that holds only fallen ceiling tiles now. The fishing pole has a luck enchantment placed upon it.

10 - Staging Camp

Even overgrown as it is, the old downtown district retains some idyllic flair. Cobbled streets remain periodically lined with trees whose roots have grown far too big for their planters, churning cobblestones to make room for their rootsprout progeny.

"What are ya waitin' for soldier(s)? get a move on!"

"Into the rowboats soldier, we're leaving!"

If the party sticks with the rest of the centuria as they row for shore, they'll be sent to scout out a good spot to set up camp in the old downtown district before their orders to head to the other side of the city.

The Plaza and the Burdening Beast

The party searches for a while and finds a mostly paved plaza of brick with a dry fountain in the middle. On a successful Engineering (intelligence) check of 14, a character can unclog the pipes and get the water running again. If they get it running, any character who touches the water heals 1d6 hit points when they next sleep.

While the party is in the area, if they fail a perception check of 10, they do not notice the long-feral draft horse driven mad by the locusts charging through the dusty streets. Have the party encounter it in a smaller street/alley for a steep challenge or in the plaza for a little bit less of a challenge. It struggles to take corners at high speed, and particularly overgrown sections give it trouble, sometimes forcing it to find a different way around.

Draft Horse

AC 10 | HP 15 | 40 movement

4 str | 0 dex | 1 con | -4 int | 2 wis | -2 cha

Trample: +3 hit, 1d6 damage, must save on dex throw 12 or take 1d4 additional damage and be knocked prone

Hoof Clobber: +3 to hit 1d4 (opt.+1) damage

11- River Gate

Much of the city's wall has fallen into the river as it leaves, creating a stretch of shallow rapids. The metal portcullis once barring river entry has fallen at a leering angle into the river, its bottom half held up by the tumbled blocks of the wall.

Sections of fallen wall have created a steep bank on each side of the river. The fallen sandstone is not too treacherous, and the party can clamber up with a little exertion.

Dangerous Landing

Landing the boat is a skill challenge: the DC is 12, and requires half as many successes as there are people in the party, before they reach tries equal to the party size. On a total failure, the current seizes the boat and away they dance downriver.

The Realm Below

If any character enters the water, the world appears as if through compound eyes. They must make an intelligence saving throw of 10. On a success, they gain passive perception of 18 until they surface, which is enough to notice the small tarnished silver votive offerings on the riverbed (The DC is 15 while below water, 18 above water). On a fail, grow disoriented and flip a coin to determine whether they can successfully surface. At some point (GM's discretion) they begin to take drowning damage.

If the party found the other votive offering, improvise some other special thing.

12 - Western Gate

The road through downtown leads eventually to the gate. The gate's mostly intact portcullis slowly groans nearly two feet open then drops shut with a heavy *thud!* To the right of the gate is a small hut with a strange rhythmic noise coming from it: the ghost of the gatekeeper moves in slow motion trying to crank the wheel to raise the portcullis, but gets distracted by hovering ethereal locusts before he can reach its zenith. He speaks somnambulant about "...gotta open the gate," turning slowly panicking eyes toward where the explosion used to be, before he becomes distracted by the bugs again.

The portcullis can be busted through because the wood is very weak and the iron joinery very rusted. Doing so would take one person about an hour of labor. If the party helps the gatekeeper's ghost open the portcullis (one way or another) he is given peace.

13 - Apartment Blocks

Toward the west of the city, ruins of apartment buildings stand tall among the smaller workshop residences that perforate the pastiche of larger structures. The buildings themselves are of varying construction: stone, brick, concrete, wood- often in the same structure. The gully-like streets and alleys allow few large plants to thrive. Instead, a carpet of feral flowers and herb gardens sprawl into the less-shady sections of the streets, no longer contained to their ancestral window-sills.

The Warring Hosts

A great flurry of activity becomes apparent between two large apartment buildings as the party approaches. There are several pairs of swallows diving through a buzzing swarm of locusts like cormorants through a school of fish.

Parts of the swarm break off into appendages that swat at the birds. One strikes a bird out of the sky, knocking it toward the party along with a small shower of locusts from the tip of the tentacle. The bird is glowing with ethereal energy and rolls on the wild magic table when it hits the ground. If the party rescues the swallow it heals overnight with locust parts replacing the wounded swallow parts. If rescued, it will follow the party around, giving them +1 to all their rolls against the Risen Host.

The Jeweler's

Across the intersection from the apartment buildings, there is a smaller building standing alone on an overgrown lot, dwarfed by the surrounding apartment buildings. Wisteria struggles for the light from the partial roof of its second story.

Inside, the party finds that a chunk of concrete from the apartment building immediately adjacent has punched a hole through the roof and second story onto the first. Its entrance has created a sturdy lean-to in the corner- standing within is a stone-topped workbench with a little wooden chest on top. Inside is a roll of 30 feet of fine-gauge silver wire. Nestled neatly alongside is a folded parcel of old waxed canvas protecting a plain brass ring with "Alesia- al nia vespe..." engraved halfway around the inside, the final "e" not entirely finished. A leather pouch contains a hand lens in excellent condition except for its exterior lens, which has a small scratch on it and rattles a little.

14 - Edge of the Eye

As the party approaches the wall of swirling cloud, magic, and locust, they notice a swath of plantless ruins that shrink closer to the ground as they approach the edge of the storm. The edge of the storm has carved a gravelly channel along its course, extending nearly 20 yards wide in places. Its interior is not often visible from the exterior. Crossing the barrier is a skill challenge: the check is 13, and requires successes half the number of party members. On a success, they cross through the barrier unharmed. On a fail, they are struck by flying rubble and locusts, causing 1d4 damage. On a complete fail, they make it through the storm but are struck by a bolt of magic that leaps sequentially to any living creature within 20 feet, causing 1d6 damage.

Any critical success during the crossing lets the character notice a lucky gold coin on the ground. Subsequent critical successes result in that character finding the same lucky gold coin.

Once across, whatever zone they come out at depends on where they entered from. have them come out somewhere different if they failed the challenge. Inside the edge of the storm, the turmoiling air calms over the course of a quarter mile. Everything is suffused with latent magical energy. Plants grow strangely, rocks balance where they shouldn't, food tastes different, and water boils rapidly. Roll more frequently on the wild magic table.

15 - The Clay Flats

A wide stand of trees and shrubbery sits at the foot of the ruined castle. Should the party forage for food, have them make a survival check. With a 1 to 10, they find a patch of nightshade. With an 11 to 20, they find a patch of feral grapes choking open a clearing amid the sparse wood.

The party must save on a survival or stealth check to avoid a large male boar rooting loudly and obviously for tubers, seemingly unbothered by the swarm of locusts until he detects the party:

Big Bad Boar

15 HP | 10 AC | 40 movement

+2 str | 0 dex | +1 con | -4 int | 0 wis | -3 cha

For larger party sizes:

each round, a salvo of locusts launches out and bites anybody they strike. 20 feet range, +0 to hit, 1d4 damage

Charge: the massive boar charges at least 20 feet. +3 to hit, 1d6 damage. Any character struck must save on an athletics or acrobatics check of 12 or be knocked prone.

Gore: the boar strikes with its tusks. +3 to hit, 1d6 damage.

16 - The Castle

The castle stands atop a gentle hill leading to a rocky bluff framing the river. Its walls are made of the same large sandstone blocks as the city's wall. On the southern wall, an archway entrance is closed with an old portcullis.

Inside the walls are three buildings in a U-shape, a shrubby yard between them. Just inside and to the left of the portcullis stands a little gatehouse.

The walls are weathered smooth from wind and time and few things grow on them, just lichens and little clumps of greenery in the cracks. There is a little sewage hole in the side of the bluff on the north side of the fortress. The party can smash through the portcullis' rotten wood but will wake the guard dog: a big, sleepy, blind mastiff, not necessarily hostile but not okay with you smashing the front door in.

Mastiff (Pyreçjo)

8 HP | 10 AC | 20 movement

+2 str | +2 dex | +1 con | -2 int | 0 wis | +5 cha

Pyreçjo is very nearly blind, but has advantage on perception checks relying on smell.

Bite and shake: +3 to hit, 1d6 damage. Characters must save on str 12 or be thrown prone. If already prone, +1 damage.

Pyreçjo's Amulet:

Guards the wearer from wild magic effects. Side effect: extends life unnaturally long. Makes you sleepy. It was fashioned in secret by governor Miryamo Augusto in suspect of foul play, but she was unable to wear it before her assassination by Ambriaso Korvulo. In the resulting chaos, a dying servant put the amulet on the guard dog as the magical explosion ripped through the city.

Left: Governor's Manor

A small two-story brick house stands just a little bit away from the wall. An overgrown wisteria hedge blocks vision behind the house. A mirror image of Miryamo wanders through it, still tethered to the original. An ethereal silvery thread floats in the air from her collar. Miryamo's mirror is sustained by the magic suffusing the city and as the barrier between the material plane and the astral plane has thinned, Miryamo's mirror image has become her anchor. She is a capable sorcerer, but as an illusion, all her spells are illusory. She rolls on the real wild magic table when she acts. She cannot interact with the environment, and passes through physical objects. She has a separate consciousness from her astral body, but is very forgetful.

She understands her situation, just not the details or the mechanics of it. The long years have made her bewildered and bizarre, her dog Pyreçjo her only grounding force. She will start to fade from existence if she goes too far from the magical locus at the eye of the storm. She is surprised and confused and glad to see other people.

Miryamo Augusto	Spells	
0 HP: Miryamo cannot physically interact with the world.	<i>Cantrips:</i>	<i>1st Level:</i>
0 str +1 dex -1 con +3 int +1 wis +2 cha	Blade Ward	Charm Person
Skills: history, persuasion, religion	Dancing Lights	Comprehend Languages
Spell Slots: 1st: 4 2nd: 3 3rd: 2	Friends	Disguise Self
<i>Sorcery Points:</i> 5	Message	Shield
<i>Inventory:</i>	Minor Illusion	
A long, expensive tunic, decadently embroidered with yellow thread. It looks very old-fashioned (it is 200 years out of style).	<i>2nd Level:</i>	<i>3rd Level:</i>
A small pouch of spell supplies allowing one cast of each material related spell.	Mirror Image	Counterspell
A gilded hairpin.	See Invisibility	Magic Missile
A sheer pouch of potpourri.	Suggestion	
<i>Inventory resets at midnight.</i>		

Center: Garrison

A large, fortified, building of stone blocks looms over the courtyard. It has two lobes spreading out from a central tower.

The bottom floor is organized around a wide central hallway leading to the base of the central tower. On the left side are entrances to the kitchen, the mess hall, and the staff quarter behind the stairways at the base of the tower. On the right is a workshop with a farrier's, a forge, and a storeroom, separated by collapsed plank walls. Their fronts remain open to the hallway.

The kitchen's central counter has split along one of its seams and a shelf of edible fungus sprouts from its middle. The rest of the cooking implements are in good shape, but are large, designed for cooking for many people at once. The oven at the back of the kitchen shares a hearth with the mess hall.

The mess hall's benches are mostly fallen and broken, but the few intact show elegant but simple joinery.

The staff quarters are organized like a barrack. Plain bed frames crouch, kneel, and sprawl in a grid, their mattresses long-eaten. A few of the cots have rusted knives matching those in the kitchen tucked into their ribs.

The forge is the farthest back on the right. Its rear wall has a large stone furnace built into it that vents to the outside. There is a large anvil and smithing tools, all rusted. There are several coiled ingots each of bronze, tin, and rusted iron tumbling off a heavy table of rough wood.

The farrier's seems little more than a single stable, full of dust and mold, but lifting the fallen hutch at the back reveals a pair of iron shears in surprisingly good condition, along with a small chisel and a rotten wooden mallet.

The storeroom is closest to the front of the building and features a pair of wide barn doors that wagons used to be pulled through for ease of unloading. Inside are row upon row (heap upon heap in some sections) of shelves, their contents in various states of recognizability. The room is well-stocked but little has survived the time between. Of special note are:

- A bundle of twenty javelins wrapped in waxed canvas. Next to it are several other such bundles, but their canvas has lost its wax and begun to rot, spreading to the shafts inside.
- A stack of fine ceramic cooking pots and blue and white glazed plates in a corner.
- A large pile of cement powder, nearly 200 pounds worth, with a portion of its thick canvas holding-sack peeking out from below it, the rest withered and rotten.
- 20 feet of very heavy iron chain in a coil, a little but fused to itself by its patina of rust.

Javelin | 1d6 piercing damage, *thrown, versatile*

Small or singular quantities of anything reasonable to find in a fortress storeroom have survived. If the item is especially useful, consider making it a little bit broken or a little bit magical to add uncertainty to the mix.

The base of the central tower holds a large spiral staircase, leading up to the barracks and offices on the second and third floors and down to the larder and dungeons. The upper stories are smaller than the first.

The barracks on the second floor are somewhat nondescript: there is a grid of twenty or so beds with small trunks at their end, some collapsed, some still crouching. The trunks are full of personal belongings, things like locket, dice, journals, old-fashioned dress clothes, etc. The soldiers who lived here would have been a little wealthier than the average.

The offices on the top floor are small but richly adorned, the furniture all of disparate make. Some have tattered flags in them, some have armaments, more decorative than functional. Several have smaller amphorae of wine, boxes of rolled tobacco, even small jars of distilled liquor.

The stairs leading down to the basement crumble into a pile of slate and concrete after they pass the larder but before they reach the dungeon. From the end of the stairs, the characters can hear the chattering of many rats. They have established a nest in the wall of the dungeon.

Nest of Rats

10 HP | 10 AC | 30 movement

-1 str | 0 dex | -1 con | -4 int | 0 wis | -4 cha

Has advantage on perception checks relying on smell.

Can occupy the same space as another character

Bites: +2 to hit, 1d6 damage, 1d4 damage if the swarm is at half health or less.

The dungeon has a hallway lined with six cells in a row, three on each side. The castle-end of the hallway was once a secret emergency exit, now a steep tunnel half full of mud. Its exit is clogged with sediment and rocks- it used to come up in the gatehouse.

The wall-end of the hallway has a grate over a small brick tunnel, large enough to crawl through. The tunnel leads to the sewage drain set in the bluff-side wall.

The iron bars of the cells are nothing more than scrap, and the two lower cells at the end are flooded.

The larder has a rack of amphorae in the back that has tumbled in the long wait for a cook.

There are several large amphorae intact, two full of putrid vinegar and a third full of honey, most of it hardened and cracked, but its core liquid. There is a service hallway at the back of the larder that leads to the kitchen and to the staff quarters.

Right: Governor's Office

On the right is a long single-story building with a ruined tile roof. Its walls still hold some of their white plaster covering, with brickwork showing through the gaps.

Inside to the left is a larger room that comprises nearly half of the building's space, and to the right are three smaller rooms in a shotgun-layout. The first appears to be a waiting room with a desk at one side and rows of benches on the other. The second has a set of elegantly matched table and chairs, with collapsed couches no longer hidden by the dried-up linen curtain on the opposite side. The final room has crumbly shelves and stacks and stacks of ruined paper and vellum, the corner darkened with a stain of ink-powder.

The larger room is a mess. It has a long table made of a single slab of wood, its chairs scattered and broken. The close end of the table has a large scorch mark and the close edge has burned to charcoal. The head of the table rests against an elegant, elevated desk with a chest of drawers adjoining at an opposite angle, its frame now trapezoidal. Inside the desk are scrolls and codices and large sheets of loose vellum all in old common. Some are long sections of prose and some are tables with matrix after matrix of numbers and short descriptions. In the bottom drawer is an old-fashioned makeup box. With an intelligence check of 15, you notice that most of the deteriorated cosmetics inside could be used as spell components. In the back corner of the drawer is a small wooden box, with a brass lock on it. Inside is a silver amulet with a small stone setting of whatever the birthstone of the holder/wearer is. It is rolled in a small scrap of scroll with messy scrawlings on it. It is a prototype of the amulet that Pyreçjo is wearing, and causes all wild magic effects to roll with disadvantage against the wearer.

17 - La Murego

A carved roadsign has fallen across the road that the party enters the district through, chips of cheerful paint still annealed to its raised lettering: Bonvenon a La Murego! This equivalent of a redlight district is named for the wall looming behind it.

The foundations of the ruins look little different from those closer to the main thoroughfare, but the roads are narrow. Most of the buildings are two stories tall, some with evidence of third floors above. The ruins themselves are in poor shape, as more often than not, they lack stone or brick components. The winds whip into their swirling rut on the north and northwest edges of the district, the great blocks of sandstone muting the cacophony elsewhere.

The Brothel

The party encounters a wooden building in good shape, with its roof still mostly intact - they enter to find a large central room on the bottom floor with a stage in its center - in the center of the stage is a tall, wooden pole of polished walnut in glistening, impeccable condition. It has come loose from its moorings as the stage has sunk over the years and is leaning against what was once a ring of curtain-rod housing. It is almost eight feet long and upon closer inspection reveals a spiral of words burned into its surface running down its length - the enchantment makes the user appear alluring in low-light. The magic suffusing the area causes the inscription to glow faintly. The ends are capped in bronze. It can be used as a +1 quarterstaff.

The Polished Pole | versatile

One-handed: 1d4 dmg, reach (doubles melee range). | Two-handed: 1d8+1 dmg, +1 AC if proficient.

The Bootlegger's Tunnel

While exploring the area, the party comes across a building nestled against the wall whose only remains are the brick walls of most of the bottom floor. The roof has slid backward into the gap behind it and the wall, jutting oddly into the air. Strangely, there doesn't seem to be anything growing from the inside of the building despite the open space. If the party goes inside, they notice that the ground within has sunk toward a yawning opening in the ground: a tunnel that leads under the wall. The tunnel is mostly intact. The wooden supports have rotted away, but there are enough columns of brick to keep it navigable. The magic suffusing the area has caused some of the roots emerging from the walls and ceiling to sprout a plant of their own, growing in the wrong direction toward nothing. A little ways in, there is a minor collapse, a large sandstone block leaving enough space for anything under medium size to go through easily. Medium characters could squeeze through, but doing so requires a dexterity saving throw of 15 or the wriggler disturbs the column of brick and begins a cave-in, causing the section of the wall above the tunnel to collapse.

18 - Market District

The streets here all spiderleg toward a flat plaza, paved with brick, daubed in patches with shrubs and weeds in a lethargic campaign to churn pavestones under their roots. The magic has caused some of the ruined market stands' tent-poles to sprout, and pale-blue flax blossoms scraggle toward the spiral sky from their linen drapery. One section of bricks all stand on end rather than flat, still strangely mired in the sand beneath. Beyond the plaza, the buildings lean into the sky, stonemade to wooden and formal to vernacular the higher they remain.

The Money-Lenders

On the edge of the plaza sits a three-story building with a gaudy facade styled to look like an ancient ruin, complete with sandstone pillars and bas relief trim of mythological figures. Strangely, the building features a patchwork of additions of blocks and planks from the surrounding buildings keeping it fully intact. A wooden sign above the door reads "Lucksupera Financado" (*Supreme Luxury Financing* in the modern dialect).

A slow, faint mason's *tink* rings dully through the closed door. Inside, a merregon carefully chisels a stone taken from the building next door into a replacement corner piece for the exterior's top trim. Nearby, a hollyphant dozes on the ground, eyes flitting open each instant the merregon's hammer strikes chisel.

Should the party knock on the door, they will hear a final timid *tink*... then a clatter as something heavy drops onto wooden floorboards, and a flurry of boot-shod steps confusedly shuffle toward the back of the building.

Regardless of the manner of ingress, the hollyphant Brilo introduces himself first. He has pale golden-yellow skin with thin, translucent hair that shines when it catches the light. He is missing one of his wings. Behind him in the darkness, a metallic figure clanks over to the windows and throws open the shutters. Even in the diffused light inside the storm, even in its battered condition, the merregon's strange armor gleams, evidence of meticulous care. None of his flesh is visible- the gaps in his armor reveal cloth, only some of the original satin red visible between patches. A great beard of many tiny droplets of gold, silver, and copper have been welded onto the mask covering his face. When prompted, he turns his expressionless face toward the party and introduces himself telepathically: "Brilo."

Long ago, these two worked as the vault guards for Lucksupera Financado. They survived the magical explosion due to the magical shielding in the vault along with the devilish once-proprietor and a single client. The fate of the client is unknown, and the devil's rivals engineered their demotion to a lemure. Through a loophole in the business contract and licensure (Ambriaso Korvulo is on the board of investors and is not dead), Brilo the merregon escaped hostile takeover by the higher-ranking devils. Brilo and Brilo are now the only two employees, and have been paying themselves from the vault for two hundred years. Brilo's beard is made of melted coins from his wages. Brilo, however, is investing his pay- it sits in a separate pile inside the vault.

The interior of the building has a large front room with a reception desk and a waiting area. The back portion of the room is covered in clutter from the Brilos' ongoing construction and tinkering. Strangely, there is no balcony or walkway for the second floor. The doors for the side rooms sit some ten feet up in the wall of the main room. At the very back of the room in the middle of the wall is a simple door set into an ornately carved door frame of dark polished

wood. Which room this door leads to depends on the pattern with which you knock. The upstairs offices are accessed by knocking the room number, 1 through 4. The vault and the proprietor's quarters are each a separate cadence. The wild magic has rendered the mechanism a little finicky- if you input the code too slowly, the destination gets scrambled. During the witching hour, the paths are completely random. If two people open the door from different rooms at the same time, they link to each other.

The threshold to the vault is inscribed with a glyph of warding that is set to cast suggestion (“*drop your valuables and leave*”) should an entrant not be accompanied by one of the amulets that the staff wear. The interior of the vault is enchanted with a private sanctum spell for protection. Additionally, Brilo has been tinkering with new defenses: there is a prototype counterspell tripod, set to burn through the enchanted ring it uses as a focus, and there is a set of 12 napkin rings with a scroll of tiny servant woven into its center, set to cast and relay the instruction: “*come home*” after it reaches a certain radius from its carrying-case.

Private Sanctum | 4th level abjuration

You make an area within range magically secure, deciding from any or all of the following properties:

Sound can't pass through the barrier at the edge of the warded area.

The barrier of the warded area appears dark and foggy, preventing vision (including darkvision) through it.

Sensors created by divination spells can't appear inside the protected area or pass through the barrier.

Creatures in the area can't be targeted by divination spells.

Nothing can teleport into or out of the warded area.

Planar travel is blocked within the warded area.

Brilo | Merregon

20 HP | 16 AC | 30 movement

+3 str | +2 dex | +3 con | -2 int | 0 wis | 0 cha

Halberd: +4 to hit, 1d6 damage. Can strike with the haft as a bonus action, +4 to hit, 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

Bodyguard: when an ally within 10 feet takes damage, Brilo can move to intercept, taking the damage for them.

Brilo | Hollyphant

20 HP | 12 AC | 20 movement

0 str | 0 dex | 0 con | 3 int | 4 wis | 3 cha

Tusks: +3 to hit, 1d6 damage.

Aura of Invulnerability: Brilo emits an aura with a 10 foot radius that prevents spells below level 5 cast from outside the aura to affect anything inside the aura.

19 - College District

The thoroughfare turns west uphill toward the temple. On a flat section of the hillside stands a ring of impressive stone ruins, with a wide plaza in the middle. Rather than the normal overgrowth of scrub and grass punctuated by scraggly trees, a carpet of wildflowers perforated by cypress spread outward from a great olive tree in the center of the plaza. The drone of locusts fades when amid the flowers, replaced by silence, a breeze, and a family of wren singing during the day. If Luno is with the party, they cannot approach the tree and have to stay at the edges of the plaza because it is another god's domain. Their avatar, Foliaro, is in ruins in the temple. Luno refers to the god as Foliaro too.

The College

The entire northern edge of the plaza faces a building built into the cut-away side of the hill. The bottom three stories still stand, a large undercroft, then wide windows with a balcony running the whole length of the second floor, then rows of smaller windows above. Evidence of a fourth floor still stands at ground level with a small road on the hillside above. A wisteria vine grows down from the fourth floor's hillside along the open western side of the building. Strangely, its cascades of flowers point the wrong way, confused by the wild magic. the building is in good condition- its floors are littered with fallen ceiling tile and thick layers of dust, but some of the white plaster still survives on interior walls.

Undercroft

A great buzzing of glowing ethereal locusts obscure an object in the back of the undercroft. They are swarming a large, bubbling alembic that is functioning without a heat source. The swarming locusts eventually fall into the main chamber, are subsumed into a glowing steam, condense, and drip out into a mass of feeding locusts, which invariably fall into the main apparatus. The locusts can be driven away temporarily with fire or permanently with dispel magic. When the locusts are driven away, the alembic still functions, and the remaining mass of locust drips out into a pure distillation of their magic. If a character drinks it, their player re-rolls the character as a sorcerer (locust). Limit the amount of available distillate to your discretion.

Second Floor - Library

The second floor holds a series of lecture halls that extend into the hillside. The eastern end of the second floor holds a library. Most of the scrolls are academic in nature, but a cabinet girded with iron behind the desk in the center of the room holds spell scrolls. Each of the scrolls are trapped and shock the holder for 1d4 damage when removed from their iron environs. The magical trap can be dispelled by writing the password "password" in goblinesshi on them. There is a vellum codex under the central main desk that contains an anthropological study of the Goblins of Savos - on the inside cover is written "çifro: pasahitza".

Old Scrolls

The text of these scrolls is written in old common, and requires a history check of 10 in order to get the pronunciation correct. On a failed roll, the spell malfunctions: roll on the wild magic table, or improvise a fitting fizzle.

Find Familiar | Mirror Image | Bestow Curse | Magic Jar

If a character successfully casts any of these spells, they can reroll their character as a level 1 wizard.

Third Floor - Offices and Dorms

As the party approaches the third floor, they begin to hear a lazy, winding, apathetic melody, plucked on a lyre. The third floor is a hallway with offices on the south (windowed) side and small dormitory rooms on the north (underground) side. The music is coming from one of the offices. It has an intact door. As the characters approach, the music turns eerie, creepy, matching their footfalls. If the characters knock or open the door, the music climaxes into a flurry of excited strumming. If the characters open the door without knocking, they are greeted by a shriek. The tiny lyre is strummed by a foot-tall homunculus that looks like a person with the proportions of a four-armed monkey, prehensile tail included. It has a mostly hairless body except for its face and the front of its torso. It has sharp teeth. The homunculus is of Afshano's creation, and plays music on the lyre to match the mood of the situation. The homunculus is not hostile, and if the characters are friendly, it will follow them around, usually by hopping up onto their shoulders. The lyre has a an ethereal bass string that has come unstrung and waves about, playing its own bass note. The music itself is Afshano Njato's anchor and if the characters play or sing along to the music, they can open a telepathic channel with the homunculus and therefore with Afshano, whose psyche has deteriorated into a bass line. The character(s) can mantle Afshano and re-roll as a bard. If mantled or if the lyre's ethereal bass string is restrung, what is left of Afshano is exorcized. His removal from the well has a lesser effect on the storm than the others. If the lyre is broken, Afshano dies and is poured into the magical well, adding a strange musical quality to the din of the storm.

20 - Administrative Quarter

The buildings' footprints become larger and larger. The sprawl of buildings turn to a grid of wide orderly lots, some walled-in, some open, often with broad pave-stones. trees and hedges grow in orderly lines along lot boundaries up to a certain height, from where they sprawl erratically and unnaturally. There is a taller, grandiose building toward the center of the district, visible behind other ruins and trees from most places. It is in good shape, and appears to be made of stone and concrete.

The Baying Pack

As the party enters the area, they hear occasional yelps and chirps from a distance. They notice a dog following them at a good distance on more than one occasion. On a perception check of 15, they notice that it's more than one individual.

The party hears a howl from behind them, and two dogs come loping out from behind buildings and shrubbery, followed by a third, then a fourth, forming a wide line from the direction the party came. They snarl through the clattering buzz of locust wings and start to advance toward the party, slowly at first but speeding up more and more, barking as they do so. If the party runs, they are chased toward the building in the center. As they near, they emerge into a wide yard whose unpaved spots have sprouted dense shrubbery, punctuated by strange, spindly looking trees. A single, larger dog snarls, wide-stanced between the party and the large building.

Wild Dog

4 HP (6 HP for the alpha) | 10 AC | 40 movement

+1 str | +1 dex | 0 con | -2 int | +2 wis | -1 cha

Bite and Shake:

+2 to hit, 1d4 damage. Must save on strength 10 or be dragged to the ground if it is the beast's opening attack.

+1 damage if they are already prone.

The Council Chamber

The grandiose central building of the district consists of an antechamber, a hallway leading to the two wings, then a grand central chamber with a long marble table and amphitheater seating along the back wall. The wings are full of offices, richly adorned, with large windows that have not preserved their contents well. Plants climb inside in their stretching endeavor for more sun.

The council chamber features a throne and pulpit on the back wall before the seating. In the throne is a blur of glowing, flitting shapes: a host of ethereal locusts writhes in the seat, rotating through three separate faces in expressions of struggle atop the swirling mass. One of them is the Risen Hand encountered at the eye of the storm: a head-shaped mass covered with a shifting burlap hood. The other two are faces of a handsome man in his thirties with well-trimmed facial hair, and the other is a mask of mirth and rage, alien and strange in its appearance. A silvery thread sprouts from the back of the chair and points toward the locus of the storm. This is Eorgia's anchor - the swirling faces are of Eorgia, the devilish patron Rhetitia, and the locust lord all fighting for control. A character can grasp the thread and witness a flashing whirlwind of the three aspects from afar, or can sit in the throne and add their face to the mix, mantle Eorgia and Rhetitia, and re-roll their character as a level one warlock with Eorgia and Rhetitia as their patron.

Eorgia and Rhetitia

At the moment of mantling, time seems to stand still as the character witnesses Eorgia and Rhetitia's struggle for power. Each has long-brewed magic ready to erupt against their foe, but needs a corporeal form to do so. Eorgia seems dogged in his determination, adrenal but on the brink of fatigue, eager to cast aside his yoke. Rhetitia seems strange, so old as to be rendered alien, full of righteous indignation and raging, ecstatic glee. The warlock-to-be can side with either, allowing their chosen entity the option to banish the other to the nine hells. If the character attempts to mantle both, they must succeed on an intelligence saving throw of 18 or their conflict destroys part of their soul as Eorgia and Rhetitia burn each other into nothingness using the character as fuel. On a failure, they lose the ability to dream and the inside of their mind feels terrifyingly empty. They feel alone and compelled to seek possession of some kind, to find someone else to inhabit their mind.

Eorgia

Should the character mantle Eorgia, Eorgia will have the opportunity to free himself from Rhetitia's control. Eorgia's intent is to demote Rhetitia to a lemure and use the exothermic spell to fuel his own ascent to devilhood, allowing him to exist whole and free again from the soul well (this doesn't quite work, more on that in the level 3 section below). Eorgia explains their pact: Eorgia will grant the character their magical ability as long as the character allows Eorgia to possess them. Eorgia claims that they need a subject to possess or they will cease to exist. Eorgia tells the character they will not be able to give them all their ability at once, because they have not had a physical form in a long time and thus are unfamiliar with the mechanics of casting. Both of these claims are lies: Eorgia's triumph over Rhetitia has rendered him a devil, and he does not need to possess the character to continue to exist: he only needs to possess the character to avoid being turned into a lemure after breaking his pact with Rhetitia. Eorgia slowly giving the character access to stronger spells is simply a method to establish control in their relationship. Due to this, any pact with Eorgia is fundamentally void and has no repercussions for the character breaking it, regardless of whether the character consents or not.

When the character casts spells, they begin to manifest physical elements Eorgia. The more frequent and desperate the spell cast, the more complete the manifesting becomes (like Johnny Silverhand from *Cyberpunk 2007*).

Rhetitia

Should the character mantle Rhetitia, Rhetitia will have the opportunity to punish Eorgia for breaking their pact and rebirth him as a lemure. The hells claim his soul and he is ripped from the soul well, collapsing the magical storm a little. Rhetitia offers the character a pact: they have languished far too long trapped in the soul well and have lost significant political footing in the hells. The character will be part of Rhetitia's struggle back to their old position of influence. In return, Rhetitia will provide ability to the character in a trickle so as to help them grow into their latent power. Additionally, the character must make an effort to notice the beauty in the world.

If the character accepts, they realize they are holding a loaded quill in one hand and the bottom of an unfurled scroll in the other- they sign to accept the pact.

In addition to whatever the character finds beautiful, they also find a strange beauty in cracked stone, charred wood, the smell of rust, and exhaustion. They also get a rush from violence.

Level three - Eorgia

The character wakes up very late at night noticing the complete absence of Eorgia in their mind. Rhetitia appears to them in a form intended to appear beautiful to the character, tempered by Rhetitia's own strange tastes. Rhetitia has temporarily separated the character from Eorgia. Rhetitia explains the truth of the nature of the character and Eorgia's non-pact, the nature of Eorgia's possession of the character, and the lie that he cannot bestow all of his power to the character at once. Rhetitia offers the same pact with the character as above, but with the added ability to completely remake themselves. This could be as minor as choosing different spells or invocations or as major as becoming a whole different person, complete with real memories. Should the character do so, they do not remember their old life, but will have dreamt about parts of it their whole life. If the character accepts Rhetitia's offer, Rhetitia turns Eorgia into whatever pact boon the character chooses: Eorgia is remade as an imp, as a sentient pact weapon, or as the sentient cover and binding of the warlock's tome.

If the character rejects Rhetitia's offer, class progression with Eorgia works as normal. Eorgia is not aware of Rhetitia's visit.

Level three - Rhetitia

Rhetitia appears to them in a form intended to appear beautiful to the character, tempered by Rhetitia's own strange tastes. They are in a very good mood and offer a boon to the character: Eorgia fashioned into an imp, into a sentient pact weapon, or into the sentient cover and binding of the warlock's tome.

21 - South Gate

As the party continues south along the main road, a large, fortified gate framed with tower and crowned with parapet looms higher into the air. The south gate of Vis is its largest, wide enough to fit four wagons abreast. Three metal portcullis bar the opening, the inner two still intact, showing only minor wear. The outermost has fallen from its moorings, and leans crookedly against the middle portcullis.

The towers have dilapidated wooden shacks at their entrances on the inside of the wall, and the stairs up to the parapets are mostly rotten. With an acrobatics check of 15, a character can ascend unharmed. On a failure, they shear off a stair as they put their weight onto it and gouge rotten wood into their leg, taking 1d4 damage. The top of the wall has a walkway along its length.

22 - Thoroughfare

A wide central thoroughfare runs from the southern gate uphill into the city until the slope begins to increase and it winds away to the west. Along the road are the remnants of large, stonebuilt buildings in better shape the farther from the center of the storm they are. Tiny alleyways snake between them, punctuated by larger arterial streets.

Animated Ruins

The party encounters a jumble of rubble in the middle of the wide central road. As they approach, the frequency of bugs smacking into them increases, and a great swarm of locusts rushes into and animates the rubble into a colossus. It is too large to navigate into the alleyways, but can fit down most sidestreets. The alleyways are confusing to navigate, and after too many turns the lack of a visible sun disorients the party. When in the alleyways, the party becomes easily confused about what direction they are heading and when they exit the alleyways onto the main streets, they are not where they intended to be. Have them roll navigation checks. On a critical success, they get lucky and navigate just fine. On a critical fail, the colossus is waiting for them.

Locust Colossus

100 HP | 14 AC | 20 movement

+5 str | -2 dex | +4 con | -4 int | -2 wis | -4 cha

Slam: +4 to hit, 1d6+2 damage. Any character hit must save on an athletics or acrobatics check of 16 or be knocked prone.

The rubble is held together and animated by a great swarm of locusts. The locusts are weak to fire damage and any fire damage taken requires the colossus to make a wisdom saving throw of 10. On a fail, the swarm loses hold of the rubble in that body part and it drops off of the larger form. The colossus's total health reduces by 20 for each limb it loses. Bonus: characters near the colossus must make a dexterity saving throw of 10 to avoid the falling rubble, and take 1d4 damage on a fail.

23 - Eye of the Storm

A great roaring column of swirling storm and locust whips a spiral up into the clouds, which descend to form the dome. Upon approach, the ruins begin to grow shorter and shorter, and the base of the column touches the earth at the middle of a gravel pit. The bottom of the column swirls more slowly than the whipping winds would suggest. Only upon close inspection are the locusts that comprise the column visible through the swirl of thick dust. At the very base of the column, they crawl upon each other in a spiral, losing density and speeding up only as it grows in height.

As they reach the lip of the crater, the characters are greeted cordially by a singular chorus of voices: "Ah, welcome." Characters that speak multiple languages fluently can hear the greeting simultaneously in more than one language. A portion of the swirling column high above clears and reveals a chunk of building, lavishly decorated, suspended in the center, buoyed by a great mass of locusts. A hooded figure in dark, rough linen robes with knee-high black chitinous boots greets them, coupe glass twirling in its fingers. "You've just made it in time for digestifs- come, come, I'll show you in." The cloud closes again and a door to a spiral staircase up the inside of the column appears at its base. The staircase and hallway are made of locusts.

The hooded figure is the Risen Hand, and the first time the party encounters them, they have just "eaten" and are lethargic. They taunt the party, explaining that they haven't aggregated anything other than animals in so long, and pull or shed locusts from or to the swirling column to appear as the character they just consumed, someone the party has met and became separated from— perhaps a soldier of the centuria or one of the oar-pullers from the warship.

The character is resigned and broken and has joined the Hand of their own coerced will. They have a vague understanding of what has happened.

If Luno is with the party, the figure mentions that he isn't welcome before they enter, and a mass of locusts swarm onto his head, blocking the animating connection. If the party reacts to oppose, roll initiative. The figure will launch swarms of locusts and spells at the party. Once his head is cleared of locusts, Luno will cast a big dispel magic that burns out his consciousness and crashes the building into the side of the pit to allow melee.

If Miryamo is with the party, she whips into a shaking, screaming rage and starts casting spells at the Risen Hand. Roll initiative.

If the party has already exorcized one of the councilmembers, the Hand does not allow them to leave, and combat begins.

If the party has exorcized more than one, the Hand will try to entice them up the same way, then collapse the locust stairway on them. If the party doesn't enter, the Hand will try to gain some kind of advantageous attack against them and initiate combat.

If the centuria is with the party, the column is instead silent, and two massive rubble-and locust colossi approach the formation from behind. Once attention is drawn to them, the Hand begins phase two early, and starts to salvo spells into the formation's new rear.

The Risen Hand

40 HP | 10 AC | 30 movement

0 str | 0 dex | +2 con | +3 int | +3 wis | +3 cha

Resists: force, radiant, necrotic

Weak to: fire

Locust Lair:

The chunk of tower is held up by a great mass of locusts, which share a weakness to fire and intolerance for smoke with their kin.

Locust Blast: 1d4 damage, +3 to hit

The Risen Hand calls a group of locusts from the buzzing wall. The locusts fall dead and they hurl the chromatic energy animating them at their target.

Amorphous Form | Legendary Action

When grappled, knocked prone, or shoved, The Risen Hand can dissipate their form into a cloud of locusts and reform on their feet, ready for action up to five feet away.

Eye of the Storm | Lair Action

While inside the swirling column of locusts, The Risen Hand can dissipate their form into the wall of insects and reform anywhere else along the edge of the arena.

When the Hand reaches half health, he enters phase two, manifesting enemies from the column of locusts to match the number of opposing combatants. The enemies are all comprised of the people the Hand has aggregated, beginning with NPCs the party knows, then Imperial soldiers, then Visian guards, then Visian civilians. They fight as they would have in life. If the party has exorcized all the council members, these new enemies have trouble holding shape.

Locust Apparition

1 HP | 1 AC | 30 movement

Fight: 1d4 damage, +0 to hit

Any roll to hit other than a critical fail connects.

The Hand flees at the brink of death, losing cohesion and dripping dead locusts as they run, until their form dissolves into a disjointed swarm of locusts. They fly away through the sudden sun and clatter of the storm dropping all its locusts as it fizzles and dissipates.