

The Case of the Missing Memories

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Overview

Summary of player characters

- **Special Detective Lisstree Serthalen** (female drow, 183): assassin in exile on the surface; police contractor on lucrative or interesting cases; head of this investigation; terrifying knife fighter; magical ability to teleport short distances (blink).
- **Sergeant Ambrose Cartwright** (male human, 29): career policeman; easygoing and a friend to all; competent but soft-hearted; carries a pistol.
- **Warrant Officer Zhushessash “Zed” Xashtli** (yuan-ti, 41): forensic specialist for the Snakesford constabulary; Lord Sumner’s appointment to this investigation; keen interest in solving puzzles and constructing jury-rigged devices; has a bomb disposal golem and a pistol.
- **Acolyte Velaro** (newly transformed illithid, apparent age early 20s): very recently created acolyte of The Reformed Temple of the Awakened Brain; fearless but with no real world experience; eager to consume the stolen memories so that they can be returned to the temple; fledgling psionic abilities; small chance of host memory flashbacks.

Dramatis personae

Nobles and their relations

- **Osiric, Lord Foxfire** (male yuan-ti, 49): ordinary member of the Council; believed to be the city’s spymaster
- **Lady Clarissa Sumner** (female human, 70, sort of deceased): Lord Foxfire’s mother
- **Edward, Lord Sumner** (male human, 62): another member of the Council; Foxfire’s political enemy and Clarissa’s younger brother. He is the sponsor of the upcoming trade agreement.

Illithids

- **The Elder Brain** (illithid elder brain, 502, deceased): the Elder brain of Snakesford’s tiny illithid temple, which was killed in the attack. For years it assisted Foxfire in decrypting enemy communications.
- **Sovoro** (illithid, 5): the illithid who was once Lady Clarissa Sumner. It has retained some degree of fondness for Foxfire, and is his loyal ally.

The Northern Union

- **Marcus Copperthorn** (male half-elf, 70): the ambassador of the Northern Union to Snakesford
- **Rilen** (male human, 32): ambassadors aide and commando in charge of the attack on the illithid temple
- **Valessa** (female elf, 150): elven infiltrator with the power to control animals’ minds. Disguised as a drow.
- **Bartholomew Cabbage** (male gnome, 35): an engineer; creator of the Marvelous Mind Engine.
- **Otto** and **Harald**, two soldiers providing backup
- **Bogdan** and **Royce**, two local ruffians hired as additional muscle

The Temple of the Sun

- **Grand Master Charavon** (male human, 51): fire mage; head of the Order of the Sun
- **Ecbert Skinner** (male human, 22, deceased): street thug who became the host body of Velaro
- **Benjamin, Albert** and **Tom**, Ecbert’s unfortunate partners in crime

Others

- **Commander Rose** (male human, 49): an officer of the Snakesford Constabulary
- **Deputy Constable Evan Gnarfsson** (male goblin, 19): a police carriage driver
- **Alfein Glavoreth** (male drow, 406): the president of the Maple Street Hunting Bat Society
- **Bruno the Magnificent** (male human, 37): proprietor of the Oldmarket Street Magyck Shoppe

Yuan-ti name pronunciation guide

Zissarthaz *zi-sar-thaz*

Zhushessash Xashtli *zhoo-sheh-sash zash-tee*

What is publically known

Last night the Reformed Temple of the Elder Brain was **attacked** by unknown assailants and **set on fire**. The assailants fled; there are reports of casualties. When the police arrive, the illithids and their wealthy and powerful patron, Lord Foxfire, tell them that some unknown organisation has **killed the Elder Brain** and **stolen memories** from it which are of crucial religious importance and **must be recovered**. They believe that the theft was accomplished with the assistance of **another illithid brain**, which is now on the loose in the city. Evidence found at the scene points towards the **Temple of the Sun**.

The illithids inform the police that one attacker was **gravely wounded** and beyond medical help, which is why they used his body to host an **illithid tadpole**. Foxfire insists that this **newborn illithid**, Velaro, be included in the investigation as a representative of the temple. He also suggests that its body could be **evidence**, and that its participation in the investigation could **jog its host memories** of the crime.

Lord Foxfire is a member of the council, and is widely believed to be the city’s **spymaster**. He is known to be a bitter **political rival** of another council member, **Lord Sumner**. He is also extremely badly disposed towards **yuan-ti**, despite having yuan-ti blood himself, and is believed to have helped depose the last yuan-ti emperor.

What actually happened

The Elder Brain was assisting Lord Foxfire with his **intelligence work**, **decrypting enemy communications** and analysing trends in reports from Foxfire’s network of agents. Foxfire recently obtained some Northern Union despatches which unbeknownst to him contain information about **secret zeppelin shipyards** which the Union plans to use in a future **invasion** of the city.

The Union learned of the leak, and orchestrated the attack to **destroy the Elder Brain** after **stealing a copy** of its memories using an **artificial Mind Engine** built by a union inventor. They did this with the assistance of the **Temple of**

the Sun, a local religious organisation with Union ties. Their careful plan was **disrupted** by the unexpected tenacity of an **illithid caretaker**, and they had to **flee in disarray** before destroying the evidence as thoroughly as they would have liked.

Foxfire **knows nothing of the invasion**, and thought only to dig up dirt on the upcoming treaty. Now, however, he **suspects** Union involvement in the attack and is concerned that something very serious is going on. Without the memories he has no proof.

Velaro's host was not in fact as close to death as the illithids told the police, but they really needed a host for their surviving tadpole. It will be difficult to prove foul play now that the evidence has been destroyed.

Cover stories

Only **Foxfire and Sovoro** know about the intelligence. Foxfire has told Velaro that if it finds the brain it must do whatever is necessary to get it back to the temple, including eating it, and that if this is impossible it must ensure its destruction, since the **illithids will be in danger** if the memories fall into enemy hands.

The thugs from the Temple of the Sun were told that the illithids were **holding people captive** in their temple and wanted to convert them by force. They thought that they were supporting an undercover rescue operation.

What will happen next

While Foxfire (through the investigators, particularly Velaro) tries to **recover the memories** (or failing that, **destroy them**) the agents of the Union are trying to **get the memories out of the city** (or failing that, **destroy them**). The memories are a **double-edged sword**: each side values the **enemy intelligence** they contain, but doesn't want its own **sensitive information** to fall into the enemy's hands. This data is **inseparable** without a detailed analysis either by a new illithid brain or by the Union's technicians.

The Union planned to get the Mind Engine out of the city **quietly**, before the fire was set. Now all the gates out of the city are being **watched** by illithids and all traffic is being **searched** by the police—Foxfire has used his influence to ensure this. With too much **risk of detection** along these routes, the agents will first try to get the Engine aboard a ship exiting the city **along the river**. This attempt will fail. Thereafter they will be left with a desperate **last-ditch plan**: to escape by air after making a rendezvous with a **zeppelin** at the top of the city's **tallest building**, an ancient clock tower which currently contains a sprawling slum.

If at any point the agents feel **threatened** enough to start planning to **destroy** the Mind Engine, its inventor, Bartholomew Cabbage, will **defect to the City** and tell the investigators everything he knows in exchange for **political asylum**.

Lord Sumner is keeping a **careful eye** on the investigation because he is hoping that it will **dig up some dirt** that he can use against Foxfire. As the **sponsor of the treaty** he will not be happy to hear **wild conspiracy theories** about an invasion. He is, however, **a loyalist**, and if presented with compelling evidence will reluctantly put his rivalry aside to **protect the city**.

Timeline

History

- 50 years ago** Lady Clarissa elopes to Yuan-ti Kingdom
- 49 years ago** Lord Foxfire born; Lady Clarissa returns to Snakesford
- 48 years ago** Lord Sumner's family usurps Lady Clarissa's title
- 30 years ago** Reformed Temple of the Awakened Brain opens in Snakesford
- 25 years ago** Lord Foxfire begins to work with the Elder Brain
- 20 years ago** Lord Foxfire orchestrates coup of Zissarthaz the Mad Emperor and is elevated to the nobility
- 5 years ago** Lady Clarissa becomes the illithid Sovoro

Recent events

- One year ago** Northern Union begins construction of zeppelin shipyards
- Two months ago** Lord Foxfire acquires some Northern Union despatches
- One month ago** Northern Union agents infiltrate the city
- Last night** attack on the illithid temple goes wrong; agents flee in their carriage
- This morning** agents are evicted from Order of the Sun safehouse

Scheduled events

- Early afternoon** agents attempt to hijack a ship and fail, abandoning their carriage and stealing an oxcart
- Shortly afterwards** agents buy magical flotation devices at Oldmarket Street Magyck Shoppe
- Shortly afterwards** agents fire signal flare to summon nearby zeppelin
- Before dusk** agents make their way to the Old Clocktower from the warehouse
- Dusk** agents ascend the Old Clocktower to rendezvous with zeppelin; exciting battle hopefully ensues
- Evening** political aftermath

Background

This story takes place in a world which is an approximate cultural and technological analogue to 19th century Europe—but with the addition of improbable steampunk tech and magic. The world is populated by generic fantasy races such as elves, dwarves and goblins; as well as some staples of the D&D setting: the drow, the yuan-ti and the illithids. All of these races have traditionally been portrayed as supernaturally evil villains. In this module, assume that they both have reasonably normal, functioning societies (if not particularly nice ones—but neither was ancient Rome!) and that the ludicrously evil excesses usually attributed to them are either nasty human propaganda or memories of a less civilised time.

Drow

These estranged **cousins of the elves** inhabit a vast network of **underground caverns** in the area. Their **matriarchal** society is divided into several **houses**. Today, their frequent infighting is more likely to take the form of **sophisticated political intrigue** than open warfare, but they're not above a bit of **sabotage and assassination**.

Drow worship a **goddess** known as the **Dark Lady**. **Spiders** are believed to be the Lady's favoured creatures, and thus they are revered in drow society and frequently kept as **pets**. Some spiders found in the underground reach **enormous sizes**.

Like elves, most drow are able to call upon some form of **innate magic**.

Yuan-ti

Since the dawn of history, the yuan-ti have been **remaking themselves** using their magic-enhanced **bioengineering skills**. They worship a **snake deity** which they call the **Great Serpent**, and they are still seeking the **perfect blend of humanoid and reptilian** qualities to pass on to future generations. Exactly what this blend is, and how they will know when they have found it, is a subject of constant philosophical debate. Different families have **very strong opinions** about how this search should take place.

Some yuan-ti look **almost human**, and they usually serve as the **public faces** of their families when they need to negotiate with outsiders. Others have prominent **snake-like** characteristics—such as a snake's tail in place of legs, or a snake's head—and some look almost completely like snakes. Regardless of their appearance, they are all able to speak their common tongue—one full of **sibilants**, of course.

A few decades ago, the yuan-ti nation endured a period of political instability owing to years of rule by **Zissarthaz the Mad Emperor**, whose nickname was entirely deserved. He was eventually overthrown in a coup, which greatly improved the nation's relations with its neighbours.

Illithids

Illithids are a **psionic race** whose reputed abuse of their mental powers and parasitic relationship with other sentients has led to their persecution and isolation throughout the ages. They **ingest brain matter** for its nutritional value, although despite a common misconception it can be provided by non-sentient livestock.

More disturbing is their means of **reproduction**: the asexual, genderless adult illithids spawn octopus-like **larvae**, also colloquially referred to as **tadpoles**, which after a period of gestation in proximity to an entity known as an **elder brain** must be implanted into a **living sentient host**. The larva burrows into the host's head, devouring its brain, and rapidly grows to **replace its entire head**. The host body becomes physically stronger and healthier.

The resulting entity usually retains **none of the host's memories or personality**, but exceptions occur. Hope of this very unlikely outcome is what drives the **uneasy symbiosis** that modern illithids have established with their neighbours in some urban centres. Those who are extremely old or gravely ill have **little to lose** in such a desperate gamble.

Illithids do absorb the memories of other illithid brains that they ingest. **Elder brains** are very old illithids who have eaten many others and whose bodies have **atrophied** over time—they live suspended in tanks of cerebral fluid. They are known to be particularly **powerful psions**. At the end of its lifespan, every illithid offers itself to its community's elder brain, adding its own knowledge to the shared pool. The brain uses its psionic abilities to share some of this wealth with other illithids in the community, and with the larvae that gestate in its tank.

Humans

These **resilient omnivores** can survive almost anywhere, and are found all around the world. Human settlers **migrated** into this area from the **north** at the behest of nobles wishing to **expand their territory**. Ultimately this expansion plan proved more trouble than it was worth—but although the northern cities **abandoned** their colonies, the colonies proved to be quite tenacious.

The largest surviving human settlement in the **south** is the city of **Snakesford**. In the **north**, the dominant political power is the **Northern Union**, a collection of human city states, elven nations and dwarven kingdoms which have formed a close alliance.

The dominant human **religion** in the south is the faith of the **Two Gods**: the Mother, the goddess of the sun, life and light; and the Father, the god of the moon, death and darkness. This religion has also been **adopted** by most urban **goblins**, who have come to interpret the animal totems worshipped by their ancestors as facets of the Mother.

In the **north**, humans have increasingly become influenced by the **culture of the elves**, and in recent centuries the faith of the Two Gods has been **sidelined** in favour of various interpretations of the **elven religion** and its large pantheon. An extreme example of this is the **militant Order of the Sun**, which reveres the **elven sun god** in his **wrathful** aspect above all others.

Technology

In recent decades, arcane **devices that combine magic and mechanical mechanisms** have become more commonplace. The difficulty of creating and maintaining the magical systems which often power these devices has made **mass-manufacturing rare**, but hardly a year goes by without some crazed sorcerer or inventor unveiling a new creation.

The most common mode of transportation is the **horse-drawn carriage** (for the wealthy) or **foot** (for the less wealthy). **Oxcarts** are used to move goods. **Autocarriages**

are curiosities—many Snakesford residents will have seen one, but children will still come out to stare.

Airships have recently been invented, but the few examples seen in Snakesford have been finicky prototypes, prone to drift back to earth or get blown off course by the wind.

Revolvers, pistols and rifles, firing **paper cartridge ammunition**, have become standard issue for the military and police, replacing swords and bows as the primary weapons used by such forces. Ordinary citizens and criminals might own guns too, although the **expense of maintaining them** and manufacturing ammunition has thankfully limited their use.

Revolvers commonly have **six shots**. **Rifles** are breech-loading and **single-shot**.

Snakesford

Once a semi-permanent camp at the **intersection of a busy road and a river**, **Snakesford** grew into a fortified town. In earlier times, it was perpetually defending itself against raids from **yuan-ti to the south** and **drow underneath**, and on a few occasions was the unwilling host of **territorial disputes** between the two. Eventually, however, the three civilisations began to resolve their differences more **amicably**, and Snakesford became a convenient **trade hub**. Soon it **cut all ties of fealty** to its distant parent cities in the north, and became **independent**.

Today it is a **bustling and prosperous** human city, although one with a reputation for **decadence, crime and corruption**. It maintains somewhat **cold diplomatic relations** with the **Northern Union**. It has a much **closer relationship** with the nations of the **yuan-ti** and the **drow**, which are right on its doorstep. Many drow and yuan-ti have **purchased land** in Snakesford, and now occupy entire **neighbourhoods**. The **demographics** of the city have shifted, and humans barely maintain their historical majority.

The city is run by a **council of lords**, which comprises a few dozen **hereditary nobles**. In recent years, noble titles—and thereby seats on the council—have been **granted to commoners** who have made a significant contribution to the economic wellbeing of the city. Titles are **inherited** according to the law of **equal primogeniture**: children inherit before siblings, and gender is irrelevant.

As a body, the council is motivated mainly by **profit** and a desire to **maintain the status quo**. **Only humans** may sit on the council, but exceptions have been made for certain persons of mixed blood, and wealthy drow and yuan-ti are known to **“own” certain councillors**.

The **Order of the Sun** has spread even to Snakesford, where it has found **support among humans** who believe that the city should be **purged** of its unsavoury elements: criminals, corrupt nobles and merchants, and usually also anyone who **isn’t human**. Once an easily dismissed **fringe group**, it has gained some **powerful backers** and has become increasingly **brazen** in its activities—openly styling itself after ancient **military orders of knights**. The **Northern Union** embassy has been accused of **aiding** the order in an attempt to **destabilise** the city, and the order’s followers are suspected of practicing **illicit fire magic**, but neither of these allegations has ever been proved.

A lot of **technological innovation** in the city has been driven by **goblins** finding **workarounds** for technologies on which the old city guilds held **monopolies**. Their success eventually led to the **guilds’ obsolescence and demise**. After competition between the goblins and the guilds erupted

into **rioting** in the streets, the council sided with the goblins and all the **guilds were banned**—with the exception of the **Guild of Mages**, which is permitted to exist under a **special charter** in exchange for its absolute **loyalty** to the council.

Magic use is heavily regulated. Use of **powerful raw magic** within the city limits is **almost entirely illegal**. Magic is available to the **general public**, but only through **enchanted items** and **potions** which have a controlled and predictable effect. The **Guild of Mages** polices magic use among **humans and goblins** with an **iron fist**. **Drow and yuan-ti** are free to use **their own magic** on their **private property**, but they need **guild permits** in order to practice it in the rest of the city, or to **sell magical products and services** to human and goblin citizens. Of course a **thriving black market** exists, and there is widespread off-label use of common potions.

A few decades ago a **small illithid temple** was established in a poor neighbourhood in the city. It has attracted very few followers other than the old and infirm.

Over the past few years Snakesford has been negotiating a significant **trade agreement** with the Northern Union. This treaty is important because it represents a **thaw** in the relationship between the two nations. In the past they have come perilously close to **outright hostilities**, although fortunately the spectre of war has been kept at bay by the **long distance and inhospitable terrain** that separate them.

Plot

Lord Foxfire's family history

Osiric, Lord Foxfire is officially an ordinary member of Snakesford's Council of Lords and is unofficially widely believed to be the city's **spymaster**. He is the illegitimate son of **Lady Clarissa Sumner**, once a well-known Snakesford socialite and anthropologist, and an **unknown Yuan-ti nobleman**.

Lady Clarissa was **disinherited** by her father when she **eloped** to the yuan-ti kingdom during a period of **heightened hostility** between the two states (due mostly to the unstable reign of **Zissarthaz the Mad Emperor**). Upon Osiric's birth, it was discovered that he was an **albino**. Among yuan-ti, albinism is considered to be an **undesirable trait**, and its appearance in a noble bloodline caused much embarrassment. Fearing for her infant son's safety, Lady Clarissa **quietly returned home**—where she and the infant Osiric were **ostracised** by her influential family and left to their own devices. She was **disinherited**, and removed from the **succession** for her title under an archaic **treason** law.

Lady Clarissa spent many years surviving on the **charity** of her friends and professional contacts, and Osiric was able to gain entry to a prestigious city school on an **academic scholarship**. He was a model student and eventually obtained a job as a minor **civil servant** attached to the office of the previous **unofficial spymaster**—Lord Chandler, who was officially in charge of the city's postal service. A few years later he was offered a **title in his own right** for unspecified "services to the city". It is rumoured that these services had something to do with the **decryption of intercepted correspondence** between Zissarthaz' court and his agents within Snakesford—shortly before the **coup** which deposed the Mad Emperor and replaced him with a far saner and more popular cousin.

Various yuan-ti have been theorised to be Lord Foxfire's father, including the Mad Emperor himself. Lady Clarissa has never confirmed or denied any of these rumours. Lady Clarissa's **current whereabouts are unknown**, and it is uncertain whether she is alive or dead.

Because of his complexion and his long serpentine tail, Lord Foxfire is often nicknamed "**The White Worm**"—but never within his hearing. People who upset Lord Foxfire tend to disappear under mysterious circumstances, or have other misfortunes befall them.

Lord Foxfire **despises the current Lord Sumner**, who is Lady Clarissa's brother and thus Foxfire's uncle, because of his abandonment of Clarissa. They usually find themselves on opposite sides of any political dispute. Lord Sumner believes that Lord Foxfire is using a variety of **underhanded tactics** to try to ruin his family. He is probably right about a lot of them.

The Reformed Temple of the Awakened Brain

This **small illithid temple** is located in **Larch Avenue**, formerly a wealthy neighbourhood which is now **quite run-down**, full of large manors which have mostly been converted to **crowded family housing**. The temple purchased a manor house several decades ago, and has been attempting to attract converts in the city ever since, through the

distribution of **informational pamphlets** about the illithid lifestyle.

Needless to say, the prospect of having one's brain **devoured by a toothy octopus**, with the minuscule chance of retaining one's identity afterwards, is **not appealing to most people**. However, the temple has had some small measure of success among **the elderly and the ill**, who have very little to lose—there have been some very controversial deathbed conversions. As a result, most illithids in the city are **slight and frail**, and do not live long before offering themselves to the elder brain. Nevertheless, even a very old host can live for a good twenty years after conversion.

To avoid bringing metaphysics into inheritance disputes, the Council has declared that any person who undergoes the conversion process **legally dies** and is reborn as an unrelated entity, regardless of any memories that they may retain. Because converts bring no money with them, the temple is **very poor**, and many citizens have wondered how it can afford to stay open and buy a regular supply of brains from local butchers. It has long been rumoured that it is subsidised by a **wealthy patron**. This patron is thought to be **Lord Foxfire**, and those in the know believe that he supports the temple for the sake of **his mother**, who has herself converted.

The temple has about **ten illithid converts** at any one time, together with a **one or two larvae** and a **modestly-sized elder brain** in a vat. In the years since her conversion, the illithid **Sovoro**—formerly Lady Clarissa—has performed the role of High Priest. Now that the elder brain has been killed, Sovoro will almost certainly begin the process of **ascending** to become the new Elder Brain, but it will take decades for it to reach a comparable level of power.

The brain dabbles in espionage and invites disaster

As a young man, Osiric understood the **full potential** of the illithid elder brains. He made a deal with the brain of the Reformed Temple, enlisting its aid in **decrypting encoded communications** in exchange for the promise of later patronage. This was the breakthrough that allowed him to help Chandler to bring down the Mad Emperor, and earned him his title.

After Zissarthaz's fall from power **this relationship continued**. In addition to decoding correspondence, the elder brain has also used its immense intelligence to **collate and analyse** information provided by Foxfire's intelligence network, searching for **trends and patterns** that a mere human brain would miss.

During the long period of cooperation between her son and the illithids, Lady Clarissa became **fascinated by their culture** and the idea of symbiosis and eternal life through the elder brain. A few years ago she **became a convert** and is now known as Sovoro. This is not widely known, but the few people who are aware of this believe that Lord Foxfire supports the temple financially for his mother's sake.

Foxfire recently came into possession of some **encrypted Northern Union despatches** which he suspected would illuminate some aspects of the upcoming **trade agreement**. In actual fact, they contain evidence that the Union is **building zeppelin shipyards**. The construction of flying machines on such a vast scale has never been attempted before. Knowledge of these plans would **completely change the political landscape**. Despite the enmity between the Northern and Southern nations, war has long been considered absurdly infeasible, because of the expanse of near-impassable

mountainous terrain which separates these regions. It appears that the North is preparing for an **unprecedented incursion by air**.

Foxfire had **no idea** what he had, and thus was **unprepared** for the lengths that the Union would go to recover this information once it was aware that it was in his hands. Union agents had long been aware of his special relationship with the temple, and concocted a plan to **destroy the illithid brain** after **copying its memories** into a **mechanical device**, the Mind Engine, created by Union inventor Bartholomew Cabbage. This mission had the dual purpose of **removing the despatches** from Foxfire's possession, and **obtaining intelligence** which would allow the Union to track down and **destroy Foxfire's entire spy network**.

Knowing that the thugs from the **Temple of the Sun** are almost certainly connected to the Northern Union, Foxfire now suspects that this is about more than just a trade agreement—but **without any evidence** of the Union's wrongdoing his hands are tied. He is unaware of the existence of the Mind Engine, but theorises that the Union brought in a rival elder brain in a box to steal the temple brain's memories before it was destroyed.

Foxfire **wants the memories back**—the brain was on the verge of decrypting the despatches. Foxfire has copies on paper, but it would take him decades to decrypt them from scratch, even with the assistance of Sovoro. If the memories **cannot be recovered**, he wants them to be **destroyed**, since they also contain information that could unravel his entire spy network.

Apart from Sovoro, the illithids are **completely unaware** of the brain's clandestine activities. It was very good at compartmentalising. All the illithids are distressed at the loss of the memories because of their **importance to the temple and their way of life**, and desperately want them returned so that they can be absorbed by Sovoro, who is to become the **new elder brain**.

Bartholomew Cabbage and his Marvelous Mind Engine

Bartholomew Cabbage is a Northern **gnomish inventor** who created an artificial thinking machine, the Mind Engine. A few months ago he was approached by the **government** of the Northern Union and offered unlimited funding if he agreed to work for them. He was then immediately tasked with the development of a **psionic interface** which could allow the Engine to **absorb information** from an illithid elder brain—something which he considered a **fascinating intellectual exercise**.

After **many failed attempts**, with government agents breathing down his neck and demanding progress, Cabbage managed to cobble together a **prototype psionic helmet** out of a severed illithid spinal column and many temperamental mechanical parts. After the first successful laboratory test, the Union **sent him to Snakesford** with both engine and helmet, to provide **technical assistance** to the agents during a field operation. Cabbage is really **not comfortable** with this turn of events, but he would be even less comfortable letting his beloved Mind Engine out of his sight, to be pawed by ignorant military meatheads.

Cabbage **loves his Engine like a child**. He is loyal to the Union mostly out of habit (and because he has been taught some distressing propaganda about the Southern nations), but he will **turn on them like a shot** if there is any suggestion that they mean to harm the Engine. The other agents

have carefully **avoided mentioning** in his presence that they **intend to destroy it** if they fail to smuggle it out of the city.

The attack on the Temple

Valessa, an elven Union agent, was embedded in the city **disguised as a drow**. She joined the **Maple Street Hunting Bat Society** and used her ability to control the minds of animals and see through their eyes to **conduct surveillance** of the temple for several weeks. She learned the **layout of the building** and the illithids' **daily routine**, and discovered the temple's extremely **lax security**: the only illithid who regularly slept on the grounds outside the dormitories was the **ancient, frail caretaker**.

The Union launched their attack **shortly before midnight** last night: the party of intruders comprised the **four agents** as well as **Bartholomew Cabbage** and an escort of **eight thugs** from the Temple of the Sun. The agents travelled in a **large carriage** which also carried the boxes containing the **Mind Engine** and the **psionic interface helmet**.

Valessa entered the temple first, and used some **magical spells** purchased at the Oldmarket Street Magyck Shoppe to **seal the doorway** connecting the illithid dormitories to the rest of the building. Once this was done, the agents **grabbed the boxes** from the carriage and **ran to the inner sanctum, breaking down doors** and damaging frames to clear the way for the large box containing the Engine. They ordered the thugs to **stay outside** the inner sanctum and prepare to **set a fire** while they entered the sanctum to **perform the memory transfer and kill the brain**.

It was at this point that everyone discovered that the **frail illithid janitor** was a **lot less harmless** than they had assumed. Its host body had been a goblin commando in the Snakesford army who had spent many years waging **guerrilla warfare** out in the sticks. It had spent its entire existence as an illithid apparently puttering around and making small repairs to the temple building—but was in fact absent-mindedly **boobytrapping** the entire place with a variety of ingenious concealed devices. When the attack began it was **awoken from its slumber** above the inner sanctum and proceeded to **maim and kill** the attackers with every resource at its disposal.

Although it was **eventually killed** and could not prevent the death of the brain or the theft of the memories, it **killed three thugs**, maimed many more, and **completely derailed** the strike team's plans. The agents **fled in the chaos**, taking the precious Engine with them, leaving the Temple of the Sun thugs to **fend for themselves**. The delay allowed the other illithids to **break out of the dormitory**, and although the panicking thugs did **start a fire** before running away it was too late and **too haphazardly done** to destroy the building. The local fire service was able to **put it out** with the assistance of the neighbourhood.

Before it died, the brain screamed out a **psionic warning** to the illithids that its **memories were being taken** and that they should **warn Foxfire**. It was unable to go into any more detail. The brain's tank was **smashed** and all **larvae** except one died in the subsequent fire. That larva was placed into the body of a **captured thug**, Ecbert Skinner, to create Velaro. Of course the illithids told the police that he had been injured so badly that he could not be helped, but this is a **convenient exaggeration**.

The Union's predicament

The Union agents want to **extract** the Mind Engine from the city and return home with it, where its contents can be analysed. It is impossible for them to determine anything about the memories in their current state, without access to expert analysts and laboratories. They **cannot separate** the information about Foxfire's network (which they want to get out of the city) from the encrypted despatches which they want to keep out of Foxfire's hands, and thus would ideally like to destroy.

They had planned just to drive the carriage out of the **city gates**, intending to be far away from the scene of the crime by the time their allies set the fire. However, all the gates are now being **watched** by the police and by the surviving illithids, and all outgoing traffic is being **searched**. The Mind Engine is not inconspicuous, and is sure to be **flagged** by the searchers for further inspection even if they don't know what it is.

The agents were using a **safehouse** known to the Temple of the Sun as their base of operations. However, after the attack on the illithid temple drew attention to the Temple of the Sun, they had to **clear out** of it in a hurry at Grand Master Charavon's insistence.

There is another way to leave the city: **along the river**. A police **checkpoint** has been set up at the **docks**, which are quite close to the **heart of the city**. The **river gate** at the actual wall is a lot **less well observed**, and so the agents will attempt to **hijack** a small merchant vessel **between** the checkpoint and the exit—and attempt to **lower** their cargo onto it from a **bridge**. This attempt will **fail** following an **altercation** which should not involve the investigators.

After this setback the agents will be left with only one route out of the city: **the air**. They will arrange to rendezvous with a **zeppelin** at the top of the tallest building in the city: an **ancient tower** close to the city centre, which has a **clock** built into the top and is filled with **slums** at the bottom. The agents need to **lift** the heavy Mind Engine to the **top of this building**. To achieve this, they have bought every flying, floating or lifting magic spell and device from the Oldmarket Street Magyck Shoppe and have combined them into a **jury-rigged harness**.

Local politics

Lord Sumner is trying to find out what is going on. He is convinced that the attack on the temple has something to do with Foxfire and his **shady activities**, and sees the investigation as a perfect opportunity to find some **incriminating information**.

Foxfire is trying to steer the investigation **without revealing** his suspicions about the Union directly, because he is aware that **Sumner is involved**—and that if Sumner gets wind of Foxfire's true intentions before Foxfire has **concrete evidence** of the Union's wrongdoing Sumner will most likely be able to **ruin his reputation** in the Council. Sumner could easily accuse Foxfire of **manufacturing** a fictional threat to keep himself in business. After all, as the city's spymaster, Foxfire has **thrived** during periods of instability, and **lost influence** and prestige as relations between Snakesford and its neighbours have improved.

Foxfire sees Sumner as **strongly allied** with the Union representatives because he is **sponsoring the trade agreement**. While Sumner is **heavily invested** both in the trade agreement and in striking a blow against his bitter rival, he

is **genuinely loyal** to the city and will do whatever is necessary to **protect it** if he is shown **compelling evidence** that the Union is acting against its interests. The evidence will, however, need to be extremely compelling.

Rules

A brief introduction to The Window roleplaying system

The Three Precepts

The intent and flavour of the rules is described by three precepts:

- Everything about a Window character is described with adjectives rather than numbers.
- It is the actor's responsibility to play their role realistically.
- A good story is the central goal.

Traits and Skills

Traits (i.e. stats) and Skills are described using adjectives. Each adjective is also associated with a die on the competency scale (see next section). The die is what is rolled when the Trait or Skill is tested.

The Traits are: *Strength, Agility, Health, Perception* and *Knowledge* (of the world).

Skills can be very broad or very specific. It's up to you as the DM to rule whether a particular aspect of a character's prior experience is applicable to the situation.

Competency Levels

The competency levels (and generic example adjectives) are:

- d4 - Incredible
- d6 - Very High
- d8 - High
- d10 - Above Average
- d12 - Average
- d20 - Below Average
- d30 - Low

Rolls

Rolls usually require rolling less than or equal to a difficulty set by the DM, on a single die. The default difficulty is 6, but feel free to adjust as you like. Lower rolls are better successes; higher rolls are worse failures.

- **Success Roll:** Used to determine the success of an uncontested action. Roll the appropriate Skill or Trait die against the difficulty.
- **Contest Roll:** Each contestant rolls an appropriate die. Lowest roll wins. Ties are ties.
- **Health Roll:** When a character is struck or suffers other injury, you may call for the player to roll their Health Trait die against a difficulty. If they fail, you may drop their Health Trait by zero or more competency levels (usually they drop to the next biggest die). This is the primary damage mechanic.
- **Armour:** Before asking for a Health Roll, you may declare that the character's armour could protect him or her from injury. The player then rolls the armour die against a difficulty. If the roll succeeds, he or she need not make the Health Roll. At your discretion, you may ask the player to roll the armour die again to see whether

the armour has sustained serious damage—in which case it will drop by one competency level.

Use rolls sparingly. It is recommended that you save contest rolls for interactions with important antagonists, and resolve encounters with minor NPCs using simple success rolls against a difficulty. Cut-down stats for important NPCs have been provided. Should it become dramatically appropriate for a contested roll to be made against another character, assume his or her trait or skill to be Average (d12).

Assume that NPCs' health is approximately proportional to their training in close combat: skilled brawlers are likely to be of Average or Above-average health, while mages and snipers are more likely to be of Average or Below-average health.

Important combats might be resolved blow by blow, but don't let them drag on. Switch back to rolling to resolve entire contests with single checks as necessary.

Searching the crime scene

It is recommended that—rather than requiring each player character to meet a target difficulty before revealing a specific clue to him or her—you ask all the player characters to roll their observation-related Trait or Skill, and parcel out the available information to the characters according to the focus of their Skill and how well they succeeded. For example:

The characters arrive at the ruined inner sanctum at the Reformed Temple of the Awakened Brain and examine the scene of the crime:

- **Zed** rolls **forensic analysis** (d8)
- **Ambrose** rolls **crime scene** (d10)
- **Velaro** rolls **illithid culture** (d12)
- **Lisstree** rolls **politics** (d8)

They all succeed and received information as follows:

- **Zed** examines the bodies, determining time and cause of death and finds residues of the fire magic used to start the fire.
- **Ambrose** notices the cartwheel ruts and scrape marks in the corridors, estimating the weight and size of the item dragged into the temple.
- **Velaro** notices that none of the dead attackers are close to the Elder Brain and deduces that it was somehow prevented from using its psionic powers to defend itself.
- **Lisstree** sees signs of poorly controlled fire magic and deduces that unlicensed fire mages—likely followers of the Temple of the Sun—were probably responsible.

Magic

Velaro, Lisstree and some NPCs have the ability to perform magical feats. A character who can do magic has a magic trait or skill, and a description of the flavour of magic which they can perform.

A character must make a successful check using the magic trait (or skill) in order to perform magic (if the character is using magic continuously, for example during a battle, make checks at some appropriate interval). The magic trait behaves like the Health trait—every failure causes it to be reduced by one competency level. When it has been reduced to Low (d30), the character may still attempt to perform magic, but any further failures will begin to affect his or her Health trait!

Resting for a few hours will restore the magic trait to its original level.

Player characters with magical traits:

Velaro has weak psionic abilities. It can detect nearby minds automatically. With a successful roll, it can sense another person's surface **emotions (d20)** or share simple **images (d12)** with someone. These abilities can be used creatively both to receive and transmit. They do not require physical contact, but Velaro must be quite close. If Velaro succeeds, the subject may resist with a relevant skill, or without any training (**d30**), by beating Velaro's roll. Velaro can also attempt to recall its **host's memories (d30)**, but only in places where Ecbert Skinner has been.

Lisstree has **blink at d6**: Blink allows Lisstree to teleport small distances (up to roughly 5 metres) and make small adjustments to her orientation and velocity as she does so. Lisstree is a master of this ability and will never fail in ordinary circumstances. If Lisstree attempts something particularly difficult, introduce a chance of failure by applying a +2 penalty.

Dark vision

Velaro and **Lisstree** both have dark vision—a magical sight that allows them to see even if there is no light at all. Dark vision extends only ten metres—much less far than ordinary sight.

Scenes: 0 hours

A waiting carriage outside the offices of the Snakesford Constabulary

It is **dawn**, and everything is covered in dew. The **three police officers** (Lisstree, Zed and Ambrose) are inside the carriage. **Commander Rose** is briefing them from outside the carriage. He **summarises** what the police know so far:

- An **unidentified group of perpetrators** has attacked the **Reformed Temple of the Awakened Brain** and attempted to **burn it down**. The illithids have reported that **their brain is dead** and that some **memories have been stolen**, apparently with the aid of **another brain**. This brain is now **loose in the city**, and all **gates** leading out are **being monitored**. Illithids have been dispatched to these exits in the hopes that they will sense its presence if the culprits try to smuggle it out.
- At the scene they are to **meet an illithid called Velaro**, who is to be attached to the investigation and **assist the team**. Rose looks pained when he says this. He then explains that Velaro was created from the **body of a suspect** who was badly injured in the attack. The illithids *claim* that this person was beyond medical assistance.
 - Velaro’s body may be a useful piece of **evidence**, and it is possible although unlikely that something about the investigation will **jog its host memory**.
 - Velaro is also a **representative of the temple** who is to be consulted as to the proper procedure for handling any **holy relics** of the illithids that may be recovered.
 - It supposedly also has a lot of **inherited memories** about the temple and its denizens, and may be helpful in their search of the crime scene.
- Some other attackers and illithids have also been killed, and their bodies are still at the crime scene waiting to be examined. It has been alleged that the dead attackers are followers of the Temple of the Sun.
- Finally, Rose informs them that two members of the council are **breathing down his neck**, which he does not like at all. He wants the investigators to **do whatever is necessary to solve the case** as quickly as possible while **involving him as little as possible** and **upsetting the politicians as little as possible**.

At the conclusion of the briefing, the carriage will swiftly carry the investigators to the temple.

The driver of the carriage is **Deputy Constable Evan Gnarfsson**, a young goblin. He is very fond of horses and will be very upset if anything happens to the ones attached to this particular vehicle during the course of the investigation.

The (somewhat singed) Reformed Temple of the Awakened Brain

Larch Avenue was **once a nice part of town**—the wide, tree-lined street is flanked by **manor houses** with extensive grounds. However, they are somewhat the worse for wear. Most have been converted to **overcrowded housing units**, with impromptu wooden extensions spilling out on all sides.

Litter fills the gutters, and **washing lines** stretch from tree to tree. **Dogs bark loudly** at the police carriage as it passes.

The **temple** is one of these run-down manor houses. What was once a carefully manicured garden has been neglected badly and is overgrown with weeds. The appearance of the building has not been improved by the **fire damage**. As the investigators arrive, sooty members of the **fire service** are packing up their hoses and buckets and stuffing an unconscious water mage into the passenger seat of a deflated fire engine. **Curious neighbours** are standing around and gawking, being kept back by two **tired-looking beat cops**. Constables Porter and Hrungrasdottir have been here for a while.

A conspicuous empty space has been left around a very **fancy carriage** with drawn curtains. Investigators familiar with city politics may recognise the **Foxfire crest** on the door.

Lord Foxfire and the illithid

Lord Foxfire will **exit the carriage with Velaro** when he sees the investigators arrive. He is an **imposing man**. Below the waist he has a **snake’s tail** which he keeps tightly coiled around itself. It barely fits inside the carriage. His complexion is **extremely pale**—skin, scales and hair. He is dressed in a fine nobleman’s shirt, coat and cravat, and wears **tinted glasses** which make it unsettlingly difficult to tell where he is looking.

- He will introduce Velaro, and inform them that Velaro has received a **special appointment as a police consultant** for the duration of this case.
- He will impress on them his **grave concern** about the fate of the memories stolen from the illithids, which are of **irreplaceable cultural value**, and the **urgency** of recovering them as swiftly as possible. He **requests to be informed** of the investigators’ progress, and **offers his assistance** should they need it.
- He will suggest that the culprits may intend to smuggle the memories **out of the city**, and must be prevented from doing so at all costs. He will avoid going into **too much detail** about this. He does not want to bring up the espionage at this stage because he does not want to **reveal his hand** in front of Sumner’s lackey. If pressed, he will only say that he couldn’t possibly make more specific accusations without evidence, as it would **prejudice the case**.
- He says that although most of the illithids have been sent to help search the traffic through the city gates, **the High Priest, Sovoro**, is still in the temple purifying the desecrated inner sanctum and will be available to **answer their questions**.

He will then leave the investigators to their work, and **depart in his carriage**.

Observant investigators may notice that Foxfire appears to **treat Zed more coldly** than the rest of the team, although he conceals it well. They may also notice that he was being **evasive** when discussing his suspicions about the culprits.

Ambrose is likely to **recognise Velaro’s body** as previously belonging to **Ecbert Skinner**, a minor street thug with connections to the **Temple of the Sun**—especially if Velaro shows him some of **the body’s tattoos**. There appear to be **no serious injuries** on Velaro’s body—only rapidly healing cuts and bruises.

Investigating the scene of the crime

- Although the street outside has been **thoroughly trampled**, it is still possible for a perceptive person to see the **deep grooves** left just outside the gate by the **wheels of a carriage**. A more careful investigation will reveal that a **very heavy object** was removed from and later loaded back onto the carriage, probably in quite a hurry.
 - Someone might notice that there is quite a lot of **guano** on the outside of the temple—far more than on any of the neighbouring buildings. If Zed or Lisstree examine it more closely they'll conclude that it comes from a **large bat**. They are not native to the area, but have been **kept by drow for hunting** in the past. Anyone who knows the city or knows about the drow may remember that there is a **hunting bat society in Maple Street**, not too far away.
 - There are **drag marks all along the path** leading from the gate to the building, and **inside** the building as well. There is a lot of damage to the **doorways** inside the building: doors have been **knocked down** and **ripped off their hinges**. Door frames are **cracked and broken**, as if a **large, heavy object** had been forced through.
- The outside of the inner sanctum is a scene of carnage.
 - **Three singed human bodies** lie in unnaturally twisted positions. They have various **tattoos**, some of which identify them as followers of the **Temple of the Sun**.
 - Some of the bodies are **impaled on spikes** or **tangled in netting** protruding from odd places in the walls and the floor. Further examination will reveal that they appear to have been caught in various **homemade boobytraps**. The traps have an **ingenious but bizarre construction**—they seem to have been built over a **period of decades** out of a diverse collection of **household materials and garbage**.
 - Lying some distance away is a **dead illithid** with a **slight, frail build**. It has clearly **died violently**, and its entire body is **covered in stab wounds**. If Zed **examines the corpse** they will find that the injuries are **mostly not defensive**, and it is covered in quite a lot of **blood** that belongs to **other people**. This body has also quite obviously been **moved**, and is now lying on its back with its arms folded.
- The door leading up to the **illithid dormitories** has been **smashed from the inside**. It is impossible to open it otherwise, because the entire outer edge is **sealed** with magically **transmuted rock**. Zed, Lisstree or Ambrose may recognise this as a specific **security spell**, which is registered as a product by a particular mage: **Bruno the Magnificent**, who has a shop in **Oldmarket Street**.
- The inner sanctum contains the **shattered fragments** of a large glass **tank**, a pool of stinking, viscous **liquid**, a dead and partially burned **person-sized brain** with tentacles, and a few sad-looking dead **tadpoles**. **High Priest Sovoro** is kneeling in the corner of the room, apparently lost in a meditative trance.
 - Velaro may notice that none of the dead attackers are close to the brain, and deduce that it was some-

how **prevented** from using its **psionic powers** to defend itself.

- Lisstree is likely to conclude that the **fire** had been started by **crude, unlicensed magic**—probably wielded by inexperienced mages. This is something the Temple of the Sun is known for, although it has always been difficult to catch anyone in the act.

Questioning Sovoro, the high priest

High Priest Sovoro is wearing a white robe much like Velaro's, but also several items of ceremonial jewellery. It exudes an aura of **calm and dignity**, speaking softly and never appearing to lose its temper.

If the investigators make an effort to discern the species, gender and approximate age of Sovoro's **host body** they will probably guess that it used to be a **human woman in her sixties**. If they compare the skin on Sovoro's **face** to Velaro's and the dead illithid's in an attempt to determine its age, they may conclude that Sovoro has been an illithid for **about five years**.

Sovoro will greet the investigators, and assure them that once the fire had been **put out**, and the **surviving tadpole** had been saved, and the body of poor **Drenelo the caretaker** had been laid out in a more respectful pose, the illithids had made an effort not to touch **anything else**.

Sovoro will answer the investigators' questions reasonably honestly, but deny all knowledge of anything that Lord Foxfire may have been doing at the temple.

- It will describe what the **illithids saw and heard** during the attack.
 - They were awoken by **noise** and the **psionic screams** of the brain shortly **after midnight**, and found themselves **locked into their dormitory**. It took them some time to break through the door—they were **not quick enough** to save the brain, but did see some of the perpetrators **running away**, and managed to **put out the fire** with the help of their neighbours and the fire service.
 - The fleeing attackers were carrying a **large box**—it took four of them to carry it. They were accompanied by someone very **slightly built**—like a goblin or a small child. They were carrying a smaller box. Regrettably, none of the illithids saw their faces in the darkness and smoke.
 - Just before it died, the brain **screamed a warning** to them that its memories were being stolen. Sovoro will not mention that it also instructed them to warn Foxfire. One of the investigators may notice this evasion.
- Sovoro will explain as best it can about Drenelo and its boobytraps. None of the illithids suspected what it was doing—it just seemed to be **really conscientious about building repairs**. It had never shown the **slightest inclination** towards violence during its entire illithid lifespan, which had lasted over thirty years. Sovoro supposes that its memories must have **manifested subconsciously** during its maintenance of the temple, and in its **final moments** when triggered by the **dangerous situation** it found itself in.
- If asked, Sovoro will repeat the story of **Velaro's creation**, sticking firmly to the claim that the thug was close to death and could not have been saved. The cause of this

was a devastating **head injury**, of which—of course—no evidence remains.

Questioning the neighbours

Various neighbours will be only too happy to offer their **witness statements**. They may not all **particularly like** the illithids, and may **complain** about them at length, but they see them as *their* illithids and are **outraged** that someone would come into their neighbourhood and do something like this—particularly since many of them live in **very inflammable** wooden structures that could easily have caught fire from an unchecked blaze.

- Many people can describe the **carriage** used in the attack, and although some of the descriptions **don't quite match up** (particularly whether it was grey, blue, green or teal), there is a general consensus regarding its **size, shape and number of wheels** (four). The investigators can probably **narrow it down** to a couple of models and **notify** the rest of the police force to **keep an eye out** for it.
- Several people will corroborate that **four people** ran out carrying a **big box**, and a very **small person** ran out carrying a **smaller box**. Unfortunately it was **too dark** to see their faces, and nobody was very eager to confront a gang of crazed arsonists at close quarters.
- They will add that after the carriage sped off, **four more people** ran out of the temple grounds and **ran away on foot**, scattering in different directions.

Optional: questioning the Snakesford Gazette reporter

- The Gazette reporter, **Stanley Shortbottom**, is lurking at the scene and **pestering everyone** for interviews.
- If threatened by the investigators, he will **complain** a lot about infringement of the **freedom of the press**,
- He is full of **elaborate conspiracy theories**, which he will share if given the slightest excuse. He will suggest that Lord Foxfire **set fire to the temple himself** in an illegal magical experiment gone wrong, that he is **secretly an illithid** himself, that the **Mad Emperor** was his father, and any number of other ludicrous ideas. He will be quick to elaborate that he isn't actually making any accusations, and is just *thinking out loud*.

Scenes: 1 hour

Optional: Maple Street Hunting Bat Society

This is a decaying, **gloomy building** in a cul-de-sac. There is a large open-air **terrace** on the second floor. Observant investigators may notice that the air is perfectly **still and silent** here—there is no birdsong, and there are certainly no buzzing insects. Inside the reception hall, the **ornate drow interior decor** is completely at odds with the external architecture. All the windows are **tinted** and covered with **heavy drapes**. Everything looks dusty and neglected, and there is not a soul to be seen. Lisstree is aware that bat hunting **hasn't been fashionable** since she was a small child, and it appears that it hasn't had much success in Snakesford either.

The Reformed Temple of the Awakened Brain is **not visible** from this distance—not even from the terrace, if they check later.

There is a **large silver bell** hanging in the corridor. If someone tries to ring it, it appears to make **no sound**—but seconds afterwards a **massive winged shape** will swoop down from the darkened ceiling and glide off into the depths of the building. An **old drow** will emerge from inside shortly afterwards, with a **gigantic bat** dangling from his arm, attempting to devour a mouse in one piece. The drow will introduce himself as **Alfein Glavoreth**, the president of the Society, and the bat as **Alarophon**, a **retired champion** of many competitive bat racing and hunting events.

Questioning Alfein Glavoreth

Alfein is a very **old-fashioned** male drow. He is over four hundred years old and was once a **servant** to a family in the underdark, looking after their bats. He will be **very deferential** towards Lisstree, because she's a drow lady and because he knows her specific reputation, and treat the rest of her companions with impeccable politeness because they are clearly her **retainers**.

- If he is questioned about his bats and who has been flying them recently, he will tell the investigators about a **recent visitor**—a young drow woman who called herself **Valessa**.
 - She came to the Society with no prior introduction, and said that she missed bat hunting at her family's estate. She then regularly visited the society **at night** to fly bats from the **terrace**. She **did not come last night**.
 - She specifically asked for the most **placid and even-tempered** bat, and was given Alara, one of Alarophon's many grandchildren. Alarophon himself was clearly unsuitable—he is cranky and very difficult to control.
 - Valessa did not appear to be very interested in hunting. She would send Alara out for **long periods of time** and wait for her on the terrace, **lost in thought**. Alara seldom brought anything back, and Valessa never talked about the kills.
 - Alfein can **describe** Valessa's appearance in detail. If asked to provide a **mental impression** of her face for Velaro he will **decline** with barely concealed revulsion, but will offer to **sketch a drawing** and send it to the investigators later in the day. It will be a pretty good drawing.

- She spoke with a **slight foreign accent** that Alfein could not place.
- He noticed that Valessa's eyes **reflected light** like a cat's—a common side-effect for spells that **simulate dark vision**. This suggests that her own dark vision is **deficient**. He did not ask her about it, as it would have been a very rude question.

- Because Alfein prides himself on anticipating the needs of his noble associates, and because newcomers are seen at the Society so infrequently, he took the liberty of doing some **research** on his visitor. His **curiosity** drove him to lengths which might be considered **impertinently intrusive**, so he will at first be **reluctant** to admit how much he knows. However, it will not be difficult for Lisstree to persuade him to spill the beans.

- Alfein **made inquiries** among the city's drow about Valessa, and discovered that she **has no contacts** among them and **nobody knows who she is**.
- He **tailed** her into the city a few times. She never went to drow neighbourhoods. He always **lost her** in public areas—he could probably have tried harder to maintain the tail, but did not want to risk getting caught and causing a terribly awkward situation. It became clear to Alfein that she'd had considerable **covert military training**.
- He tracked her to a particular **tea salon** near the city centre several times. On the last occasion, a few weeks ago, he saw her sitting at a table apparently **lost in thought**, her tea untouched. A few tables away he recognised the **Northern Union ambassador** having tea with his aide. At this point Alfein decided that whatever was going on was **above his pay grade** and **abruptly ceased** all his surveillance attempts.

Alfein is **eager to be helpful** to a high-status drow, and wants to stay on Lisstree's good side. He will offer to **assist Lisstree** if she ever needs his bat-related expertise. Lisstree could potentially arrange to **borrow Alarophon** to assist in the final mission at the tower—he is quite smart, and can both follow simple instructions in drow and communicate simple concepts with squeaks.

Alfein knows what **Rilen, the ambassador's aide**, looks like, and could potentially identify him from a picture.

Optional: Temple of the Sun

The temple is a large edifice built in a **middle-class human neighbourhood**. Here the non-human investigators are likely to attract many **unfriendly stares**—especially in the temple itself.

The most noticeable feature of the temple interior is a massive **gold-plated statue** of the God of the Sun, clad in golden armour, holding a sword in one hand and pointing at something accusingly with the other. He looks angry, and each of the investigators will have the unsettling impression that he is pointing his finger directly at them.

If they ask to speak to someone in charge, the investigators will be shown to a small room and kept waiting for quite a long time. Eventually **Grand Master Charavon** will show up and reluctantly consent to a brief interview.

Interview with Grand Master Charavon

Grand Master Charavon is a **consummate politician** and a skilled fire mage. He **despises** non-humans and infidels, but he didn't get to be Grand Master of the Order of the Sun without learning how to disguise his naked loathing with a **polite smile**. He is far too clever to get his hands dirty.

- He will categorically **deny** having anything at all to do with the attack on the illithid temple. He will admit to **preaching** in his sermons that the illithids are repellent monsters who **coerce** people into submitting to their horrifying devouring ritual, but asserts that he has the right to express his **religious opinion** without being persecuted for it, and that he cannot be held responsible if his sermons are misunderstood by more easily confused, uneducated members of his flock.
- He will suggest that the investigators speak to the **specific people** involved—who, of course, have nothing to do with him.
- He will milk Velaro's **dubious creation story** for every possible tactical advantage. The odds are extremely low that Ecbert would have consented to the procedure, and everyone knows it.

Velaro might experience a **flashback** to Charavon giving some kind of impassioned and aggressive sermon.

It's not difficult to see that Charavon is being dishonest, but it is extremely hard to find anything to pin on him. However, Charavon is also extremely **self-interested**. He is quite **angry** that the Northern Union's shoddy intelligence left several of his people **dead** and an obvious trail of **evidence** leading back to his front door.

- He has already thrown the agents out of his **safehouse**, and he's not above leaking its **location** to the investigators if he thinks it will get them off his back. Officially it's a small townhouse where the **visiting faithful** can stay rent-free with few questions asked. Charavon will claim that some strange foreigners recently lived there for a few weeks and mysteriously disappeared that morning.

Ecbert's neighbourhood

Ecbert's home is in a **poorer human neighbourhood** in the shadow of the Temple of the Sun. It's not hard to see that the Temple has a lot of support here—the locals are **not pleased** to see Lisstree or Zed here, and especially Velaro. Ambrose will have to work hard to prevent some kind of altercation from taking place as the investigators search for Ecbert's friends and associates.

It is not difficult to find the **three surviving thugs, Benjamin, Albert and Tom**—they're not criminal masterminds, and after the fiasco at the temple they simply came home to lick their wounds. When they see the police, they might **run** or try to **resist arrest**, or they might **come quietly**—it depends on how the investigators try to approach them. Velaro can be used as an effective intimidation tactic, especially when the identity of its host body is revealed.

Velaro may experience several flashbacks here.

Interviewing Ecbert's friends

The thugs are **badly shaken** by their experiences. It's clear that they weren't expecting the kind of resistance that they found in the temple.

- In a **sermon** a few days ago, Grand Master Charavon said that the squidheads were holding **prisoners** captive in their temple and eating their brains by force.
- Shortly afterwards, some **strangers** made contact with Ecbert—three human men and an elven woman. All of them seemed to be from out of town—they spoke with slight **foreign accents**.

- The woman and one of the men seemed to be **in charge**—the other two men didn't say much and just followed orders.
- They identified themselves as **secret warriors** of the Order and asked Ecbert to assemble a trusted group of friends to help them with a mission to help them rescue some prisoners from the squidheads.
- They met as a group a few times at a local **safe-house**—a small townhouse where visiting faithful can stay rent-free with few questions asked. At these meetings the strangers would often assure them that **in the future** places like the squid-head temple would have **no place** in the city. They seemed **very confident**.
- A **gnome** was always with them, but he did not seem to be a holy warrior. The others kept telling him to **shut up**. He blurted out a few things that the thugs probably weren't supposed to hear—he once called the woman “Val” and the man “Ry”. He was preoccupied with the **big box** and the **small box** which the strangers brought with them on the mission.
- The thugs can give detailed **physical descriptions** of the strangers, and possibly offer mental images of their faces to Velaro—although they won't be happy about it. The physical description of the elven woman will match Alfein's description of Vallessa (if they have it) except for the skin colour.

- At the raid they were told to **wait outside the inner sanctum** for their own safety while the others went in to deal with the brain. They didn't see what happened inside—only that the strangers took in both the boxes.

- When the others came out, they were to **set fire** to the building—this way they would both cover their tracks and burn all the squidheads to a crisp, since they'd been **locked** into their dormitory.
- Then everything went **horribly wrong**. There was a squidhead left outside, and it looked **old and frail**, but it **fought like a madman**. Diabolical **deathtraps** started popping up seemingly from nowhere, and they were besieged on all sides by spikes, nets and spring-loaded weapons.
- They barely managed to **put the squidhead down**, by which time three of them were dead or dying and they'd lost sight of Ecbert.
- The mission rapidly descended into **chaos**—the strangers ran out of the inner sanctum in an enormous hurry as the other squidheads were **breaking through the door**.
- They panicked, and **rushed through setting the fires** before fleeing. Outside they found the **carriage gone**, and were forced to run away on foot, dodging nosy neighbours.

Optional: Order of the Sun Safehouse

This small townhouse is in a somewhat **shady street** near the Temple of the Sun. There is a **suspicious absence** of litter or graffiti from the front, despite its abundance around all the neighbouring properties. There's a key under the welcome mat.

Inside the house is very **sparsely furnished**. It does not look lived-in—but it does look as if someone was **recently here** and left very hurriedly.

If the investigators have **missed a lot of other clues**, they may encounter **one of the agents** here, perhaps coming back to retrieve weapons or magical spells from a hidden cache. They might also find **Bartholomew Cabbage**, abandoned or imprisoned by his companions (see the section on Cabbage's possible defection). Ecbert has been in this house, so it could trigger a **flashback** for Velaro.

Otherwise, Zed can find some **forensic evidence**, including:

- Stray **hairs** from all the agents: some human hair, and long **pale elven hair** with **dark roots**.
- **Boot imprints** and **clothing fibres** can be kept for later comparison.
- Fragments broken off the **boxes**: slivers of wood, chips of paint, etc..
- **Mud** on the floor could be compared to samples taken elsewhere: it will match samples from the illithid temple.
- **Droppings** of various of common urban and domesticated **animals**: rats, mice, hamsters, pigeons, cats, dogs...

An observant investigator might find a cache under the floorboards, which seems to have been emptied out in a hurry. Some small items may have rolled too far under the floor and been abandoned:

- Some **paper cartridges**, of a type commonly manufactured in the Northern Union
- A **flare** for a flare gun

Interviewing a nosy neighbour

Mrs Lacey lives **across the street** from the safehouse, and takes a great interest in its goings on. She is completely **oblivious** to the nature of its use by the Order of the Sun, and believes merely that an **extremely irresponsible landlord** has made a series of poor renting decisions. The Order of the Sun won't touch her despite the nuisance she causes because she's **eighty-seven**.

She will describe in elaborate detail the last occupants, complaining that were running some kind of **illicit animal smuggling operation**, which the police did nothing about despite her many detailed reports. She was delighted to see them **move out earlier that day**, in a great hurry, probably skipping out on the rent, which serves their landlord right. She watched the whole thing over her fence through a pair of opera binoculars, and can offer specifics about the agents, the precise appearance of the carriage, etc..

Oldmarket Street Magyck Shoppe

This shop is full of **colourful displays** and **advertisements** for magical wares. The investigators may notice that some of the displays seem a little **minimalist** when compared to

the clutter of the rest of the shop—as if a lot of the stock had suddenly been **removed** and the rest had hastily been **rearranged** to compensate.

The proprietor of the shop, **Bruno the Magnificent**, is known to the police (and particularly Ambrose) because of some past forgetfulness concerning the proper filing of **magical paperwork**. The investigators may remind Bruno of this if it is necessary to encourage him to talk.

Questioning Bruno the Magnificent

Bruno is **not very good at lying**, and is very obviously **nervous and flustered**.

- He will initially offer some **fake records** of the sale of the sealing spells. It isn't difficult for the investigators to detect the forgery. If he is confronted and sufficiently intimidated, he will soon spill the beans about what really happened. He is **afraid** that he's involved in something **big and unpleasant** and may demand **police protection**.
- A **human man and a drow woman** came to buy the spells a few days ago, and overpaid.
- Earlier today—only about **half an hour ago**, in fact—they **came back**, bought every **flying, lifting and floating** device and spell that he had in stock, overpaid again, and cautioned him to keep his mouth shut about the whole thing. They seemed out of breath and agitated, and in a **great hurry**.
- He doesn't know their names, but he can **describe** them. He will reluctantly agree to allow Velaro to read the images of their faces from his mind, if pressed.
- They implied that he would be **rewarded further** for his services in the future. He felt as if they were **promising him a job**.

Important: The investigators have **just missed** the agents coming here in a hurry to make their purchases, shortly **after** fleeing from their failed hijacking attempt on the **bridge**. As they exit the shop, the investigators should be **informed of the incident** by another police officer—it has been linked to their case because of the **carriage** which has been abandoned nearby.

Piracy foiled on the bridge

The investigators are informed by another officer that about an hour ago a **shootout took place** on a **bridge** a short distance downstream of the **docks**, when some unknown assailants attempted to **hijack** a small merchant vessel. Although the attempt was foiled, the suspects escaped, fleeing in a **carriage** which matched the description of the carriage seen outside the temple. The carriage was subsequently found **abandoned** in an alley.

Statements from police at the scene

- Members of the public informed police officers **stationed at the docks** to search outgoing traffic that a ship hijacking was in progress at a bridge downstream. The crew of the ship had been **overpowered and subdued**, but a cabin boy managed to jump overboard and make enough noise to **raise an alarm** on the shore. Several officers were dispatched to the bridge **on foot**.
- They arrived to find a **blue carriage** parked on the bridge, with four persons beginning to lower a **large box**

onto the ship below on ropes. As the officers approached, the suspects rapidly pulled the box up and made their **escape**, while opening fire from the back of the carriage. The officers returned fire, but were unable to continue their pursuit for long without a vehicle.

- When reinforcements arrived they performed a thorough search of the area, and found the carriage **abandoned** in a nearby alley.

Investigating the carriage

Zed can find a wealth of **forensic evidence** inside the carriage:

- Stray **hairs** from all the agents: some human hair, and long **pale elven hair** with **dark roots**.
- **Boot imprints** and **clothing fibres** can be kept for later comparison.
- Fragments broken off the **boxes**: slivers of wood, chips of paint, etc..
- The entire carriage was converted to **make room** for the huge box: some seats were removed and others moved closer together.
- **Mud** inside the carriage and on the wheels could be compared to samples taken elsewhere: it will match samples from the illithid temple and from the safehouse.

Tracking the suspects further

If the investigators enquire whether any vehicles have been stolen in the area, they will receive a report of a **stolen oxcart**. The oxcart is a lot more **slow-moving** than the carriage—it is possible to deduce from this that the suspects are unlikely to have moved far from the **city centre**.

The investigators may come up with a clever plan to **track** the oxcart or perform a **systematic search** for it. Otherwise, at a suitable later point, if the investigators are stuck, they may be approached by one of Ambrose's **street informants** and told that the oxcart they've heard the coppers are looking for has been **spotted** somewhere nearby—either at the **warehouse** or at the **Old Clocktower** itself.

Optional: Meeting with Lord Sumner

Lord Sumner surreptitiously **tails** the investigators in his carriage. If he sees an opportunity to ask them for a **progress report**—especially if he can **avoid including Velaro**, or possibly **approach Zed alone**—he may take it. He will express his concern for the **welfare of the temple**, diplomatically voice some **misgivings** about Foxfire's relationship to it, and offer to render any **assistance** that the investigators might require—particularly if they are being **pressured by Foxfire** to do something that they do not want to do.

Alternatively, the investigators might **seek out** a meeting with Lord Sumner—perhaps because Zed has persuaded them to speak to him, and perhaps because they want to ask him questions about Lord Foxfire.

Lord Sumner knows what **Rilen, the ambassador's aide**, looks like, and could potentially identify him from a picture. He may be reluctant to incriminate his ally without good reason.

Optional: Meeting with Lord Foxfire

The investigators might ask Lord Foxfire for assistance, or attempt to question him about the true nature of the memo-

ries. He likes to **play his cards close to his chest**, and will be especially reluctant to speak freely in front of Zed. If he considers a particular line of questioning to be insufficiently productive and overly intrusive, he may get snippy and **drop some veiled threats** to persuade the investigators to get back to work. He's unlikely to go as far as to threaten their lives, but he would certainly threaten their careers.

Lord Foxfire knows what **Rilen, the ambassador's aide**, looks like, and could potentially identify him from a picture—if he thought that it was time to make the Northern connection public.

Optional: Velaro disturbs the citizenry

Velaro is **unusually young-looking** for a city illithid. This may **unsettle** some of the more conservative citizens of Snakesford: why would such a **young person** agree to conversion? Was some kind of **foul play** involved?

Optional: the flare

The investigators may see a **signal flare** go up from a location near the city centre. It won't help them to locate the suspects—the agent who shot it was smart enough not to do it from the warehouse.

Scenes: 2 hours

Optional: The Warehouse

The warehouse is near the **centre of town**, not far from where the incident on the bridge took place. It is owned by a small importer of porcelain fittings. The Old Clocktower is **prominently visible** from here. There is no guard on duty, but the warehouse door used to be locked with a chain and a padlock—the chain has been cut.

There is **no oxcart here**, but there's a mess of **deep oxcart tracks** all around the outside of the building, as well as some ox **hoofprints and droppings**.

The investigators might find **Bartholomew Cabbage** inside, abandoned or imprisoned by his companions (see the section on Cabbage's possible defection).

If Zed is interested in looking for **forensic evidence** inside, a variety can be found:

- Stray **hairs** from all the agents: some human hair, and long **pale elven hair** with **dark roots**.
- **Boot imprints** and **clothing fibres** can be kept for later comparison.
- Fragments broken off the **boxes**: slivers of wood, chips of paint, etc..
- **Mud** on the floor could be compared to samples taken elsewhere: it will match samples from the illithid temple, the safehouse and the carriage.

Tracking the suspects further

It should be possible for the investigators to **track** the oxcart in the direction of the **Old Clocktower** from here, which should lead them to deduce that the agents are headed for it if they haven't already. This may also be a good time for them to see the approaching **zeppelin** in the sky.

Optional: what's that in the sky?

At some point after the flare is fired, the investigators may spot a **glimmering shape** in the sky which resolves itself into a **zeppelin** as it gradually comes closer. It is coming from the direction of the closest **mountain range**, east of the city, and should reach the city at about **dusk**. This is an unusual occurrence—zeppelins are **not unheard of**, but they are **unusual curiosities**. This one appears to have **no identifying markings**. To the best of the investigators' knowledge, the city has **no particular protocol** for dealing with flying machines—it's not really something that has come up.

Optional: Cabbage defects or is left behind

It is likely that at some point in his ill-fated mission Bartholomew Cabbage will discover that the agents are planning to **destroy the Mind Engine** if the extraction goes wrong, using an **explosive device** built into the **lid** of the heavy **box** used to transport it. Clearly, this is unacceptable to Cabbage.

He may **confront** the agents and end up getting tied up and **left behind**, either at the **safehouse** or at the **warehouse**, while they complete the mission (intending to send someone to fetch him later). He may also **sneak away** from

them while they're preoccupied with their planning, and **turn himself in** to the police.

Either way, he will **tell the investigators everything** and offer to help them to **extract the memories** from the Mind Engine, in exchange for **political asylum** and the assurance that they will recover the Engine **unharméd**. He knows about the rendezvous with the **zeppelin**, and can direct them to the **Old Clocktower**.

If Cabbage stays with the agents until the final encounter, he should discover their plans at some appropriate point during the battle.

The Old Clocktower

The once-grand **twenty-storey** clocktower is now **derelict** and occupied by a small community of **squatters**.

The **ancient brick walls** enclose a single large square room, divided up into floors by wooden beams and boards. The boards are in dire need of repair and maintenance and a few of the beams have collapsed with age.

Built into opposite sides of the tower are two **stone spiral staircases**. One of these has been converted into a **service elevator**, although it too is in need of maintenance.

The roof of the tower is framed by **crenellations**.

The **clock** itself is much newer, but still decades old and **stopped many years ago**. The city had planned to renovate the tower in time for the celebrations surrounding the signing of the trade agreement but squatters have refused to be evicted. The more **aggressive residents** and some sympathisers are currently **camped outside** the tower, preventing entrance. Negotiations with the protesters have been ongoing. After sunset, a couple of **unlucky constables watch the camp** and attempt to keep the peace.

Investigators' preparations

After the investigators discover the importance of the clocktower, there may be some in-game preparation as they decide on how they want to handle the confrontation at the tower.

Possible preparation options:

- They might attempt to convince Foxfire or Sumner that the Northern Union is going to attack and try to **bring in the military**.
- They might request **police backup** from Commander Rose.
- They might gear up and **go for glory by themselves**.

Northern Union agents' preparations

Fleeing via zeppelin is a last resort for Rilen and Valessa, so their preparations have been rather hasty. After the failure at the bridge, the agents have:

- Stolen an **oxcart**.
- Acquired every conceivable **magical flotation** device from Bruno the Magnificent.
- Hired a **pair of local ruffians** (which gives them four thugs in total).
- Rigged an **explosive on the Mind Engine** so that they can destroy it if needed.
- Valessa has stolen a **bag of grain**.

Their plan is as follows:

- **Wait for dusk**.

- Convince the assembled protesters outside the tower that they are attempting to **blow up the clock**.
- Convince the protesters to **distract** the small police presence.
- **Move the oxcart up** to the far side of the tower unobserved.
- Attach the magical flotation devices to the box containing the Mind Engine and **ride it up** the outside of the tower to the roof.
- Once at the top, **barricade** the entrances and maintain a low profile until the Northern Union zeppelin arrives.

Once they're discovered, they will abandon stealth and attack:

- Rilen and the hired muscles have guns they can use to **fire from the roof top** or at people forcing their way through the barricade. Valessa has a crossbow.
- Valessa will scatter the bag of grain over the roof, **attracting hundreds of birds** for her to control.

Once the plan is disrupted, they will improvise as best they can. Rilen and Valessa can be very inventive. The muscle will just follow orders.

Their goal is to flee with the Mind Engine, or failing that, destroy the Mind Engine by detonating the explosive.

Outside the tower

Upon arriving the investigators will encounter the angry protesters camped outside:

- If military or police **backup is present**, they may be able to force their way in by **strength of numbers**. However, this will leave a large portion of their force outside **keeping the enraged protesters under control**.
- **Ambrose** might **talk** the protesters into letting a small group through, but he'll need a good story and a successful roll.
- **Lisstree** might **intimidate** the protesters into letting a small group through, but she'll need a good threat and a successful roll.
- If the investigators are hot on the heels of the agents, they may arrive in time to **see the agents ascending** on the box. This will likely result in a **brief exchange of gunfire**, which will make it imperative for the investigators to get inside and out of sight as quickly as possible.
- If an opportunity presents itself, **Valessa will mind-control the ox** and cause it and the cart to barrel through the investigators, perhaps injuring them or at least slowing them down.

Ambrose may know one of the protesters—this might be an advantage or a hindrance, depending on the situation.

Inside the tower

Inside the tower is **musty, damp and surprisingly quiet**. The locals are not friendly to the investigators, especially if Ambrose is still in his police uniform—but most of the people who want a fight are outside. Inside are non-combatants and those who just want to be left alone.

Some old people gather in a sullen huddle, muttering and grumbling. A worried mother grabs a toddler who is running around in a filthy shift and pulls it into a patched-up tent.

There is a strong smell of **woodsmoke and mould**. The high storeys of the ancient brick structure have been subdivided into more floors by makeshift **wooden platforms**, often not maintaining a consistent height.

Squawking chickens run underfoot, pursued by giant hairy spiders. Bats chitter in the eaves. There is a skinny goat tied to a platform several metres up—it seems unconcerned by this, and is eating what look like old paper pamphlets out of a bucket.

The investigators are likely in a hurry to get to the top.

Getting to the top

Inside there are two routes to the top:

- The **service elevator** is faster but will require **Zed** to figure out how to manipulate the old oft-repaired counterweight mechanism.
- **Racing up the stairs** will take longer, but might allow the investigators to approach more stealthily.

It is possible that the investigators will **combine the two options** and take the elevator to near the top and the stairs the rest of the way.

Ascending the outside of the building is difficult. The walls are sheer and the agents will be able to fire on the investigators as they make their way up.

The top of the tower

The staircases and elevator emerge from **two small cylindrical rooms** onto the flat stone rooftop.

Rilen, Valessa and their four thugs have **barricaded the doorways** as best they can, but the materials on hand are limited to old boards, furniture and debris retrieved from the floor below. The barricades are only likely to delay the investigators momentarily.

Crenellations surround the edge of the roof. Near one edge, the **box containing the Mind Engine floats**, providing partial cover for Rilen and his team to fire from.

Valessa has scattered grain all over the rooftop, **filling the cool evening air with birds**.

In the distance, an unmarked dark grey **zeppelin approaches silently**. A magical sphere prevents the roar of the engines from reaching those on the roof until the zeppelin is right above it.

A rapid and brutal gun-fight is likely to ensue:

- The combat should be **short and brutal**.
- **Lisstree** automatically succeeds at blink and attack rolls and **should kill a person a round** unless circumstances intervene. Lisstree is also **very hard to hit** as long as she keeps changing position.
- **Pistols are deadly**—a failed health check should leave someone **severely wounded**; a successful health check **still results in a wound**.
- The **birds** are a nuisance unless an investigator is unable to defend themselves. Valessa will use them to **obscure vision, create cover and distract attackers**.
- The **bomb disposal golem is impervious** to gunfire.
- If things are going badly for the agents, they will **attempt to activate the bomb** in the box. **Zed** should have an opportunity to **defuse it**, possibly with the **bomb disposal golem** if it is present.
- If **Cabbage** hasn't already defected, he **might defect** in the middle of the fight.

- If **Velaro** retrieves the illithid helmet, it will be able to make **ranged mind-control attacks (d8)**.

Zed, Ambrose and **Velaro** are not in the same league as Lisstree, but should be allowed to shine in other ways:

- **Zed** can **defuse the bomb**, or **act via the bomb disposal golem**.
- **Ambrose** is **effective with a pistol**, and **may have an opportunity to negotiate** if there is a pause in the shooting.
- **Velaro** is **strong**, and should immediately be **aware of the illithid helmet** in the smaller box.

The arrival of the zeppelin

The arrival of the zeppelin drastically alters the situation on the roof. The evening air is suddenly filled with the **roar of the zeppelin's engines**. The zeppelin is **unmarked**, but is **crewed with military precision** by ten people in dark uniforms armed with **rifles**.

The crew's aim is to **retrieve the Mind Engine**, Cabbage, Rilen and Valessa, and **leave as quickly as possible**.

- The crew will open with a **volley of rifle fire** to subdue anyone on the roof who isn't Cabbage, Rilen or Valessa. It would be a good idea to have cover.
- Going **toe-to-toe** with the riflemen **will not end well** for the investigators.
- If the Mind Engine is lost, Rilen and Valessa will attempt to escape rather than retrieve it.
- If **Lisstree** blinks across to the zeppelin and starts killing people, the zeppelin will be forced to leave.
- If **the bomb** from the box is **detonated on the zeppelin**, it will catch fire and plummet to the ground.

This scene should be kept short. If it's dragging on, resolve it with a few high-level rolls to cover key contests.

Scenes: 2 hours 45 minutes

Epilogue

Do the investigators recover the **Mind Engine** and the **il-lithid interface helmet** intact? Zed and Velaro should be able to reverse the memory extraction process to **return the memories** to the new Elder Brain, Sovoro—especially if **Cabbage** is available to help. Although as a young Elder Brain-to-be Sovoro has only a fraction of the previous brain's mental capacity, it will be able to **read the contents** of the Northern Union's despatches, since the deceased brain had mostly **finished decrypting** them at the time of its death.

This will reveal the existence of several **massive zep-pelin shipyards** which the Union is constructing, which very strongly suggests that they are planning some kind of **invasion by air**. It is early enough that the city can attempt to prepare some **countermeasures**, and start forming stronger neighbourly alliances—at the very least, the Union's element of surprise is lost.

Lord Foxfire will be pleased to be **vindicated**, and he is sure to **prosper** in the rapidly cooling political climate. He will be very well-disposed towards the investigators, especially if Lord Sumner is caught unprepared by the revelations.

The fallout will **damage Lord Sumner's reputation** no matter what happens, but he is astute enough to avoid the worst of it if he is **warned** by the investigators early enough to be able to take a proactive role in turning on his Northern friends. Naturally he will be very **grateful** for their assistance.

If the memories are **not recovered**, the whole affair can probably still be linked to the Northern Union, but a lot more **tenuously** and with more **circumstantial evidence**—and of course without the information contained in the despatches Snakesford will be caught **unprepared** by the Union's plan.

If some of the agents are **taken alive**, they are unlikely to reveal anything under interrogation—but there are many people who can **identify Rilen** as the Northern Ambassador's aide. (Of course this is also applicable if Rilen is dead, but recognisable).

Optional: Arresting the Union ambassador

By the time the sun has gone down, Marcus Copperthorn will have heard enough from his city contacts to know that the plan has gone **badly wrong**—and decide that it's time to abandon the trade negotiations and **slip out of town** with his retinue.

The investigators may attempt to **arrest him**. He **won't put up any resistance**, and will tell his bodyguards to stand down. He has nothing to gain through violence—he knows he's far too important to be harmed, and that the Union may be able to spin his detainment into a convenient *casus belli*. The investigators had better have some **bulletproof evidence** if they don't want to make the council extremely upset.

NPCs

Northern Union

Marcus Copperthorn

- male half-elf, 70
- ambassador of the Northern Union
- Skills:
 - politics (d8)

Rilen

- male human, 32
- ambassador's aide, and commando in charge of the attack on the illithid temple
- Traits:
 - strength (d10), agility (d12), health (d8), knowledge (d12), perception (d8)
- Skills:
 - pistol (d8), melee (d10), leadership (d10)

Valessa

- female elf, 150
- elven infiltrator with the power to control animals' minds
- sometimes disguised as a drow
- Traits:
 - strength (d12), agility (d8), health (d12), knowledge (d12), perception (d10)
- Skills:
 - disguise (d10), crossbow (d8), control animal's mind (d8)

Bartholomew Cabbage

- male gnome, 35
- an engineer
- creator of the Marvelous Mind Engine
- Traits:
 - strength (d12), agility (d8), health (d12), knowledge (d8), perception (d12)
- Skills:
 - repair mechanomagical devices (d8), bargain (d12)

Otto and Harald (soldiers)

- two trained monks to provide additional muscle for Rilen's unit
- Traits:
 - strength (d8), agility (d12), health (d10), knowledge (d20), perception (d20)
- Skills:
 - melee (d10), pistol (d12)

Bogdan and Royce (ruffians)

- two poorly-trained ruffians hired off the street in a hurry by Rilen
- Traits:
 - strength (d8), agility (d12), health (d12), knowledge (d30), perception (d12)
- Skills:
 - melee (d10), pistol (d12)

Zeppelin Crew

- ten well-trained special forces soldiers crewing the zeppelin
- Traits:
 - strength (d10), agility (d10), health (d10), knowledge (d12), perception (d12)
- Skills:
 - melee (d10), rifle (d10)

Temple of the Sun

Benjamin, Albert and Tom

- rough and uncouth followers of the Temple of the Sun
- Traits:
 - strength (d8), agility (d12), health (d10), knowledge (d20), perception (d20)
- Skills:
 - melee (d10), pistol (d12), fire magic (d20) - *only a few thugs have this*

Grand Master Charavon

- male human, 51
- head of the Order of the Sun
- Skills:
 - fire magic (d10), politics (d10)

Minor NPCs

Deputy Constable Evan Gnarfsson

- male goblin, 19
- police carriage driver
- Skills:
 - handle horse (d8)

Bruno the Magnificent

- male human, 37
- proprietor of the Oldmarket Street Magyck Shoppe
- Skills:
 - appraise magic devices (d8), lying (d20), very nervous and flustered (d20)

Stanley Shortbottom, Gazette Reporter

- male human, 23
- obnoxious reporter for the Snakesford Gazette
- Skills:
 - wheedle information (d10), make friends (d20)

Alfein Glavoreth

- male drow, 406
- president of the Maple Street Hunting Bat Society
- eager for interaction with others
- Skills:
 - drow etiquette (d8), handle bat (d8)

Alarophon (hunting bat)

- hunting bat, 50
- ancient champion hunting bat, creaky joints
- Skills:
 - hearing (d6), hunt small prey (d10), communicate with squeaks (d10)

Important City Officials

Commander Rose

- male human, 49
- an officer of the Snakesford Constabulary
- Skills:
 - politics (d12), manage policeman (d10)

High Priest Sovoro

- illithid, 5
- the illithid who was once Lady Clarissa Sumner
- has retained some degree of fondness for Foxfire, and is his loyal ally
- Traits:
 - knowledge (d10)
- Skills:
 - illithid culture (d10), psionics (d10)

Council Members

Lord Foxfire (Osiric)

- male yuan-ti, 49
- albino
- ordinary member of the Council
- city's spymaster
- Lady Clarissa's son
- Skills:
 - politics (d10), spying (d8), resistance to psionic abilities (d10)

Lord Sumner (Edward)

- male human, 62
- ordinary member of the Council
- Foxfire's political enemy
- Clarissa's younger brother
- sponsor of the upcoming trade agreement
- Skills:
 - politics (d10), public speaking (d8)

Credits

- **Writers:** Adrianna Pińska and Simon Cross
- **Playtesters:** Alastair Pearson (GM), David Sharpe, Wayne Human, Neil Muller, Beth Tolson