

The Cage of Secrets



A Scenario for Fastaval 2023
by Troels Ken Pedersen

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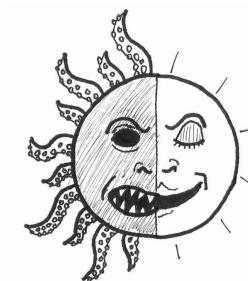
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Playtesting credits: Anne Vinkel Hansen, Cecilie Fakkelskov, Ivan Kalatchev, Lars-Ulrich Jørgensen, Liselle Angelique Krog Awwal, Louise Beck, Lærke Hvid Pedersen, Marie-Luise Lubich and Terese Nielsen.

Help and proofreading credits: Eleonora Kapow and Lotte Melchior Larsen.

Character illustration credits: Oliver Nøglebæk.

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Preview

Title: The Cage of Secrets

Writer: Troels Ken Pedersen

Pitch: In the forgotten, underground temple to the Moon Goddess, a handful of spoiled, young nobles risk their lives to uncover the secrets of a rebel leader.

Key Words: Secrets, D&D 5E, Dungeon Drama

Preview: A handful of young people have grown up in extreme wealth as children of leading citizens of The City, but now an uprising threatens to overturn their carefree lives. One of their friends is missing and a rebel leader is riling up the masses by exposing the dirty secrets of the leaders of the City. In the forgotten, underground temple to the Moon Goddess, the youngsters will try to find their friend, and to restore their failing world of privilege by uncovering the sordid secrets that the rebel leader herself left behind lock and key in *The Cage of Secrets*.

They have much to lose, but can they stick together as their own secrets appear in the moonlight? Can they survive both the death traps and the schemes of the rebels? And can confront their own worst failings without breaking?

The Cage of Secrets is dungeon crawl noir. The stakes are high, the traps are cruel and no one is clean.

Contains intimate partner violence, coercive control and violence against children.

Player Type: You want to explore a dangerous dungeon, and you want to play drama about antiheroes with secrets both trivial and dire. You might want one or the other *more* – that is fine. D&D experience is not necessary, but you will need dice.

GM Type: You want to support drama with lots of moral and psychological nuance, and you want to manage a dynamic dungeon with puzzles, death traps and thinking creatures. Years of D&D experience is not necessary, but you should have seen the inside of a dungeon or two.

Participants: 4 players and a DM

Runtime: 5 hours

Languages: All materials in English and Danish

Age Limit: 16+

Reading Materials: 4 pages

Introduction and User Manual

Welcome to The Cage of Secrets, a dungeon crawl noir about secrets, self-deception and the experience of struggling against no longer being free to walk all over people in ways that you are used to. About being challenged on your bullshit by people who are themselves not morally pure, but who nonetheless insist that enough is enough. About sticking together around privilege – or not. Yes, this is about #MeToo, but it is about much else as well.

The Player Characters

The player characters (PC's) are a handful of 19-years-old children of leading merchants in the city where the scenario is set. The city is ruled by merchants, and in practice, the PC's are young nobles. They all have secrets stemming from the fact that they have been used to being able to get away with practically anything. Now, a rebellion is brewing, and they have a chance to stop it.

The four players must pick their characters from a menu of five, presented with charming images and by which D&D class they belong to – cleric, bard etc. However, this is a trick, as they are all rogues trying to pass themselves off as something else, which the players will discover as they read page two of their characters.

The fifth, not chosen character is not out, but becomes an important secondary character (non-player character or NPC). To begin with, the fifth character is the main motivation of the player characters for venturing into a dank dungeon, and later, as the priest of the Moon Goddess, their in-character introduction to the special rules of the game. The players know that this is someone just like their characters, and that makes for a special relationship.

The PC's and their NPC's are utterly central to everything in the game. Note that page 1-2 of the PC's start on p 48, while their page 3's are gathered from p 58 – this is because they need to be handed out at different times. Page 3 contains their deep, shameful secret, and the players should be able to form a self image and relationships for their PC's before they are exposed to the secret that they don't want to acknowledge. Getting to grips with the third page of the PC is in a way what all the rest of the game is about.

The scenario is written for the PC's that come with it, and will not work with other, arbitrary level 2 D&D characters, though you might be able to lift a few traps or other ideas for a game of your own.

Use

I assume that you, dear reader, are a facilitator ('Dungeon Master' or DM according to the old ways) intending to run the scenario. If you are just here to read, that is OK, but note that the scenario is tightly packed with spoilers.

Start out by reading the whole scenario. However, skipping ahead to read the player characters as the very first thing is a good idea – much of the rest will make a lot more sense. You should read 'Style of Play', 'Mechanics and Secrets' and 'Multi-Layered Reality' in order to make sense of the parts that follow, but will not need them as you are running the game itself.

Use the chapter 'Introductory Runthrough' to handle the part of the game that takes you to the entrance to the dungeon. It should take about an hour.

When you are in the dungeon proper, 'The Cage of Secrets', run the game both from the chapter 'Runthrough', which describes how events unfold based on time and the movements of enemies, and from the chapter 'Locations', which describes the places that the PC's (and their enemies) pass through. The players have a map (which their characters also possess) and you have a DM's map that shows the location of traps and the like. As DM, you also have an aid sheet, primarily for keeping track of time and to remind you of what their secrets and secondary character relationships are. Also, there are some handouts for the players to help them get to grips with a couple of the puzzles they might face. The dungeon crawl should take about three and a half hours in total, with a deadline after three hours where they will be doomed if they have not made their way out of the magical parts of the Cage.

Finally, there is a brief epilogue where you determine outcomes for The City and the PC's based on the events of the game.

Variant: Three Players

The scenario can also work with three players. In that case, two characters will not be picked by players during casting. The challenges will be a little harder, but keeping the time limits will get a little easier.

- Choose one not-chosen character to be the priest – the other one has become the Censor.
- In the encounter where the non-priest character's NPC is in play, you might want to replace them with two ordinary rebels, but otherwise reduce the size of both rebel encounters by two ordinary rebels.
- Reduce the hit points of the censor from 24 to 18 (it already says so in the Census location).

Playstyle

The Cage of Secrets is a dungeon crawl, and it is a drama game about over-privileged, emotionally neglected young people with skeletons in their closets who are way, way out of their depth. The game will be best if the players are on board with the style of the game, both as dungeon crawl and as drama.

Dungeon Crawling

On the dungeon side of things, the game is exploration under time constraints. Exploration means talking with the DM who tells you about the surroundings. You can react to that, which will make the DM tell you some more. If uncertainty comes up, you can handle it with dice rolls and mechanics, but the conversation is the main thing. There are traps and puzzles that you need to get past (and fast), and this is easiest if you form some understanding of the temple as a place, but the time constraints mean that it is not possible to get deeply into the details (which would in any case quickly become boring for most people).

Sometimes, they will get into fights – things are set up to make for brutal and dangerous but quick fights, rather than grand, tactical chess games. The scenario assumes that you use "Theater of Mind", possibly seasoned with a bit of pointing at the map, rather than figures and careful positioning. Both opponents and PC's are dangerous but fragile.

The extra rules about secrets (see the following chapter) mean that in practice, PC's have an extra life until they have revealed their deep secret, but after that they can die. The interplay of D&D

mechanics with cruel deathtraps and opponents will give strong incentives to the players to bring their secrets into play to gain access to the game mechanical resources that the secrets mechanics offer.

Dungeon Drama

From the beginning, the PC's have a community based on class and on shared, public secrets. They also each have a really ugly secret that the others do not know about. It is not given that all secrets will be revealed, but aside from the game mechanical incentives, many players will simply want to bring their deep secrets into play.

When the deep secrets are brought into play, it will strain the relationships between the PC's. They can reject each other over the terrible revelations or bond over a community of far worse secrets. Strange imbalances will also be brought into their relationships and hierarchies because their secrets are not all revealed at the same time.

In The Cage of Secrets, the PC's will also meet NPC's that they have horribly wronged or otherwise involved in their misdeeds, and this will force them to deal with their own guilt and complicity – possibly by justifying or denying, or perhaps they might even betray each other in favour of the rebels to atone or to save important relationships with NPC's. Or maybe something else entirely.

How the drama will unfold is as open as the dungeon is constraining. Therein lies a good deal of the excitement of the game.

Mechanics and Secrets

When you are on the two upper, magical levels of The Cage of Secrets (see the next chapter, p 9), you can offer up your secrets to The Moon Goddess. She will help you, but demand that you reveal your secret to the world (ie the other players). When the priest explains this to the players, you can give them the p 44 handout which explains the secret-revealing mechanic.

You can reveal both the the little/public secrets and the deep secrets, and they have different effects.

You can only use the secrets from your character sheet, not things that you just make up.

Revealing Your Public Secret

- Each secret can only be revealed once.
- Public secrets *cannot* be revealed during combat.
- If you reveal your public secret, both of the PC's involved in it regain 1d6 lost hit points.

You are primarily supposed to reveal your own secret, but if the other person involved activates it, that is all right – in practice, this will often be something that you do together. So, using public secrets, each PC can be healed twice. These secrets are not actually *super* secret, but saying them out loud still has an effect.

Revealing Your Deep Secret

- Each secret can only be revealed once.
- You CAN, in your mind, promise The Moon Goddess your deep secret during combat – then you settle the debt by revealing it afterward.
- If you try to hold back your secret once you have had time to tell it, you get sick as if the words are rising in your throat like bile, and you have *disadvantage* to all rolls until you have told someone about it who can actually hear you.
- As immediate benefit, you can choose between *healing* and *inspiration*.
 - **Healing:** You regain all lost hit points, escape if you are caught or trapped, and remove all conditions.
 - **Inspiration:** You can change a failed d20 roll to a natural 20 immediately after rolling. In addition, you regain 1d8 lost hit points.
- After you have told your secret, in your mind The Goddess will offer you a gift, and you can choose between *Holy Insight* and *Holy Strength*. These are permanent abilities (with unfortunate side effects). The abilities are described in player-addressed handouts on p 45.

Holy Insight

On the plus side:

- You can understand the story behind a secret that you find in physical form here in The Cage. Specifically, this makes you able to understand the underlying story when you see secrets manifested as sculptures in The Cage of Secrets.
- You can see certain hidden paths, follow them and bring others along. Specifically, this makes you able to follow The Way of Light going downward between the levels without solving riddles, so that the players can easily descend to the earthly level at the end.

On the minus side:

- Strong stress makes you uncontrollably shout secrets if you fail a *difficulty 8 Wisdom saving throw*. Shouting secrets is an action in each round. If you fail your saving throw, you can try again at the end of each turn you take.

Holy Strength

On the plus side:

- In combat, you can reveal your animal side and turn into a rat person.
- If you attack as a rat person, you can bite people with your sharp front teeth. This is an extra attack, using the same stats as a dagger, whenever you use your main action to attack in melee.
- When you are a rat person, you only take half damage from weapons not made of silver.

On the minus side:

- When you are a rat person, you take double damage from weapons made of silver (and if the group does not get along in the final confrontation, who has the silver dagger-key can be pretty important).
- Strong stress makes it difficult NOT to turn into a rat person – if you fail a *difficulty 8 Wisdom saving throw*, you turn.

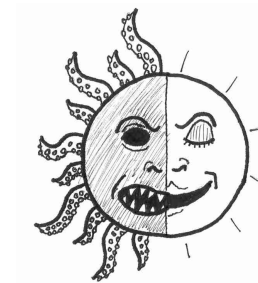
Multi-Layered Reality

On nights of the full moon, multiple levels of reality exist on top of one another in The Cage of Secrets.¹ It is best if the layering appears both creepy and mysterious AND as something that players can form a degree of understanding of. There are three levels.

Level 1 is the **earthly** which exists all the time. All locations are in play, and the exit from the Hall of Stairs actually leads out. Generally, the places are worn-down and dirty, and the mechanisms are as broken as they would realistically be after centuries of neglect. Of proper inhabitants, there are only a few animals, and you can run into other people from the outside. From the Sanctum you can go to level 2 if the fair face in the Hall of Stairs has its eyes closed – which it has to begin with.

Level 2 is the **trial**. All locations are in play, but the exit to the outer world from the Hall of Stairs does not work. This level only exists on nights of the full moon. If you have become part of the workings of the level, you are carried along to the next night of the full moon when dawn breaks, but otherwise you are horribly destroyed. The place is mostly intact and the mechanisms are working perfectly, bordering on the magical. Some of the locations have inhabitants. The portal in the Sanctum leads to the earthly level if the fair face in the Hall of Stairs has its eyes closed, and to the topmost, The Cage of Secrets proper, if the eyes are open – switching this and moving back and forth is, physically speaking, what the trial is.

Level 3 is **The Cage of Secrets** proper. Here, only the Sanctum exists, and being here is very hard on the mental well-being of humans.



¹ If this reminds you of the regio rules from *Ars Magica*, you are absolutely correct.

Introductory Runthrough

This chapter describes the first part of the game and brings you to the entrance to the dungeon. Some of it is logistics and explanations, but some of it is also an occasion to tell stories together and play with things that you will need later. The initial exercises are necessary preparations for fun in the dungeon, but they also have potential for being good play if you give them some love.

Welcome!

If you are playing at Fastaval 2023, I will give the following intro and sort the players into groups. If you are playing elsewhere, you will have to serve up the points regarding genre, style, system and setting yourself.

First, read out the **preview** so everyone is freshly reminded.

Expectations – it is a low level 5E dungeon crawl under time pressure. There are some extra rules regarding secrets and some storytelling play to begin with, but we will take that as we go.

Playstyle – the most important thing is exploring the fiction by talking with the DM and with each other. Dice rolls and mechanics are there to handle uncertainty, but we shouldn't be rolling for everything all the time – talk to each other. Also, not everything is balanced, fair encounters but rather dirty, dangerous (imagined) reality.

D&D quick intro – still at the group sorting.

- **D20 + bonus vs difficulty.** Eg d20 + attack vs armor class.
- **Advantage and disadvantage.** If you have advantage, roll 2d20 and pick the better. If you have disadvantage, roll 2d20 and pick the worse.
- **Action economy.** In one combat round, you can do one **movement**, one **action** and one **bonus action** (if you have abilities usable as such). Outside your turn, you can do one reaction if you have something to react to.

Congratulations, now you know D&D 5th edition.

Setting – we are in a setting reminiscent of the European Late Middle Ages, with everything a bit dirty and corrupt. There are certainly people who want to tell you about The Struggle Between Light and Dark, and they are probably after your savings. Magic exists, but if you run into something that seems supernatural, it is most often just a misunderstanding or trickery.

- We are in **The City**, a wealthy trading city-state ruled by the **Merchants' Guild**. The whole city is organized in and by guilds, from the mighty merchants to the humble rat-catchers.
- **Some centuries ago**, the people, led by the merchants, overthrew the kings and the nobles, who had become quite insufferable. Now the merchants have become quite insufferable.
- **The religion** is the '*mysteries*', a modern religion promising salvation after death. In the old days, people worshipped gods that offered practical advantages but no salvation.

- **The rebellion** is on the verge of breaking out. The rebel leader **Jasca** has revealed several embarrassing secrets detailing misdeeds committed by leading merchants, and The City is about to boil over.
- The symbol of the rebellion is the **dock-worker's cap**. This is a conical cloth cap that you fold down to the right in a particular way to show that you are a member of the Dockworkers' Guild (or, these days, a rebel).

Now please go to your allotted rooms (at Fastaval).

Nicely greet each other. From you begin the casting, you should take at most an hour to reach the dungeon.

Casting

Lay out the menus (pp 46-47) on the table and ask the players to pick a couple of characters that they might like to play. There are more PC's than players, so not all characters will be played. Then let the players work out who plays who. Give the players page 1 (introduction) and 2 (D&D stats) of their chosen characters, and ask them to read both pages and signal you when they are done.

You should take a moment to skim the fifth, not-picked PC, who will appear in the scenario as an important NPC.

If anyone has questions regarding their game mechanical abilities, now is a good time.

Introduction of Player Characters

Now ask them to introduce their PC's to each others and ask them to mention both their NPC and their public secret. DM, start out by introducing the fifth, not-picked PC (who will be an important NPC in the game). And if anyone fails to mention their NPC or public secret, ask them to do so.

Building Relationships

Next, the players must build relationships between their PC's using their public secrets. The fifth character is NOT involved in this, though they are generally part of the social circle. It is done like this, for each PC in turn:

- 1) The player BRIEFLY describes a recent occasion when their PC was in trouble over their public secret.
- 2) The player then asks the player to their right how *their* character helped them get out of trouble.

This forms a ring of stories and relationships around the table. It works best if you stick to how people are actually sitting, rather than just asking somebody.

Deep, Terrible Secrets

A couple of months ago, rumours about leading merchants started circulating. Ugly rumours that made a lot of people very angry. Of course, there have been rumours before, but these rumours hit a nerve and were believed more than previous ones. The mysterious, feared rebel leader Jasca is said to be behind both the rumours and the escalating riots that threaten the Merchant's Guild's control of The City.

Here is an example of one of the rumours.

The Burial Fund for Poor Widows. The Alderman Amatus is mother's brother to Belladonna and uncle (father's sister's husband) to Darek. And he manages The Burial Fund for Poor Widows. He had widows exhumed to reuse the same grave over and over, pocketing the money and disposing of the corpses in a latrine. An angry mob broke open the latrine and found the bones.

Now hand out page 3 of the characters. Tell them to read their secret and signal to you when they are done.

Terrible realization – each player must briefly narrate how they each realized that this is serious, that the rebellion threatens their existence and that of their whole class.

The Fifth Character Is Missing!

The fifth character has gone missing without a trace! The situation is somewhat chaotic in The City, and the family of the missing character is not talking, but something is clearly wrong. You are worried.

The Cage of Secrets

Here, you must narrate your way to the point where you are ready to enter a dungeon. The missing one had been looking into sinister, old writings and rumours dealing with *'The Cage of Secrets'*, an abandoned, underground temple to The Moon Goddess. The missing one was convinced that this was where the rebel leader, Jasca, got her hands on the secrets of the merchants.

Which is obviously crazy!

- One of you helped the missing look into the rumours – who was it?
- Who of the other three did the co-conspirator (from above) first share their worries with?
- How did the last two friends get on board? (Or the last one if you have three players.)

Here is what you know from the notes of the missing character:

- The Cage of Secrets only "works" when the moon is full, otherwise there is just nothing to find.. Which sounds like nonsense, but the notes were very clear and the friend did go missing when the moon was full, one month ago.
- To get secrets from the Cage, you must leave behind some of your own. Jasca must have done this, and such a person must DEFINITELY have some nasty secrets – this was what the missing wanted to get their hands on.
- You have a map with rambling, hand-written notes that the missing character left behind with their papers – give them the player map handout on page 40.

Time for a Break?

If you want to take a short break before you get going in earnest, this is a good time.

Runthrough of Secrets

When the PC's arrive at the underground temple, events are shaped by both place and time. 'Place' means the locations, described in the next chapter from p 20 onwards, while 'time' is described in this one. The 'time' framework is pushed by two things – the rebels pursuing the PC's and the sun, the coming of which makes the higher levels of the temple stop existing.

On the DM's Aid Sheet (p 38) you can note the starting time, when they start playing at the entrance, and dawn, three hours later (be ready to give warning 15 minutes before then). Generally, you can treat time at the table as time in the game, so the deadline is for both characters and players. This does not mean that you must be totally done playing at dawn/after three hours, just that you must be playing the last part, back on the earthly level.

The Narrative of the Night, Briefly

On a night of the full moon, while the city is in chaos, the PC's enter the forgotten, underground temple of the Moon Goddess known as The Cage of Secrets. But they are not the only ones on a mission in the temple that night – a group of rebels are coming to stop them. The rebels include a handful of secondary characters who have personal relationships with the PC's and reasons to want to stop them. In the temple, the PC's meet the 'priest', the fifth character, who has become part of the temple and who helps them understand a bit of the challenges on the way to the secrets themselves. However, the challenges will require some of them to reveal their (extremely) dirty laundry to the others, and this can create significant tensions in the group.

Magical events will (if it can make sense) split the otherwise superior force of the rebels, so that the PC's have their first confrontation with a group of rebels who have just panicked and killed the priest. Then the PC's get an opportunity to access the secrets – both their own and those of others.

As they try to leave the temple, they are confronted by the rest of the rebels, and each of the PC's will have to decide if they even have the will to stop the rebels now that they have seen a selection of the horrors that they themselves have perpetrated with impunity on account of being upper class.

What If They Do Something Else?

The runthrough assumes that the players do the reasonably obvious things – taking on the mission of the 'priest', reaching the Cage etc. But if they do something completely different that "ruins" the plot, it might turn out all right as long as they do not just leave the dungeon right at the beginning. After that, it is your task as the DM to adapt to events as needed – for instance if they make it all the way to the Sanctum only to go back and examine things on the earthly level, it might make sense for them to run into the full force of the rebels coming after them.

The Way In

The entrance is in a dangerous, rebel-dominated quarter, so they can only sneak in safely after dark, and they have had to avoid riots and rough people. So, they only get there after midnight.

The PC's find the entrance and pass through first The Hall of Stairs and then either Timor or Census on their way to the Sanctum. They have a map of the place with notes urging them to hurry. On the way, they see the earthly, non-functional version of the areas. On one hand they might pick up valuable hints for later use, on the other they might also spend too much time here. Nudge them if they are going TOO slowly.

The Priest in the Sanctum, Trials

When they enter the light ('The Path of Light') in the Sanctum, they get to the second level, the trials. Here they meet their missing friend and learn a lot of information (see Sanctum, trials, p 34). The brief version – the 'priest' was caught in the temple (on the trial level) by the dawn at the last full moon and only survived because the temple had an open position as priest. Now, their friend is supernaturally bound to the place, exists only on nights of the full moon and will die the instant they break any of the many rules that bind a priest. Among them, it is forbidden for priests to leave the place, to reveal secrets and to help with challenges. It is bad, and yet, the priest can see beauty in the situation.

- **Adelina** has become a priest for something genuinely holy. Bloody and without promises of salvation, sure, but *holy*.
- **Belladonna** has an important role to play in a bloody and amazing theater play.
- **Cleo** has found a place where magic isn't bullshit, and where there is room to be Cleo.

- **Darek** has found a place where there is honour and dignity in doing his duty.
- **Ethan** has become a part of the workings of the most strange and wondrous machine.

Then, the PC's must make their way through the non-harmless versions of Timor or Census to get to the trial version of the Hall of Stairs, where they solve a puzzle to redirect the Path of Light from connecting the earthly and trial levels to connecting the trial level and the Cage itself. Meanwhile in the Sanctum, the advance force of the rebels has just passed to the trial level as the redirection cuts them off from the main force on the earthly level.

Back to the Sanctum, First Confrontation

Next, the PC's must go back to the Sanctum. As they are passing through Timor or Census (and are probably busy dealing with traps), a scream sounds in the distance. The rebels have killed the priest (and the priest has taken one of them along) – the priest was, after all, one of their enemies from the Merchants' Guild, and they freaked out over being cut off. Suddenly, their allies stopped coming through, and when they tried to go back, they came instead to a horrifying place – the Cage of Secrets.

The advance force consists of two named NPC's and three ordinary rebels (one rebel if there are three players). Stats below.

'Jackdaw' (hired by Clementius to murder his wife, Hermine)

- Athletic, middle aged woman.
- Fiercely, bloodthirstily eager to do violence.
- Experienced killer for hire, has done a lot of work for members of the Merchants' Guild.
- Fervent follower of Jasca, blames the merchants for the all the murdering that she has done.
- Supposedly, Jackdaw is the leader of the whole rebel force here, but she is a bit lost without Katya to explain what is going on.

Str +2, dex +2, con +0, int +0, wis +1, cha +1

AC 13, HP 13, init 12, move 30, Stealth 15, Perception 14, see through lies 14, resist intimidation 16 (and will only be temporarily shaken, not cowed)

Attack +4, damage 1d10+2 (longsword) or 1d4+2 (dagger)

Determination: Can add 1d6 to attack or damage AFTER rolling, once. Use it as soon as it makes sense!

Ferman (Adelina's bodyguard & father figure)

- Strong man, on the older side of middle age.
- Calm and deliberate but ready to do violence.
- Loves Adelina but is convinced that the merchants are monsters and must be crushed. Including Adelina.
- Same stats as Jackdaw.

Three rebels (1 if there are 3 players)

- Wear dockworkers' caps, armed with hand axe/nail-studded club/cutlass.
- Ordinary workers of mixed ages and genders. Not professional warriors, and fight with suicidal bravery (until it makes more sense for them to panic).
- Ardent followers of Jasca, could tell many terrible stories of how the merchants have wronged them and theirs.
- They are not named but GO FOR IT if you can easily add a little detail that makes it clear that they are people. And when they die, they are people dying, not game pieces being eliminated.

Str +1, other stats +0, AC 10, HP 7, init 10, move 30, skills 11

Attack +3 (with advantage from recklessness), damage 1d6+1

Recklessness: Can choose to take advantage on melee attacks, then enemies have advantage on attacks against the rebel until the start of the rebel's next turn.

As the PC's approach, the rebels are standing on the floor between the Path of Light and the dais with the statue of the Goddess. The priest and a rebel lie dead on the floor in pools of blood. Jackdaw holds a bloody longsword (and one of the rebels is in the way of a clear shot at her). Jackdaw and Ferman are arguing, but if the PC's barge in, they put aside their differences.

Surprising the rebels requires *difficulty 14 Stealth* from the PC who has the least bonus to stealth, and if the PC's carry light or just come charging in, obviously it will not matter.

Talking with the rebels is not impossible, but Jackdaw will subtly maneuver to get within striking distance of one of the PC's and strike within a few minutes at most, unless it makes no sense whatsoever.

In The Cage of Secrets

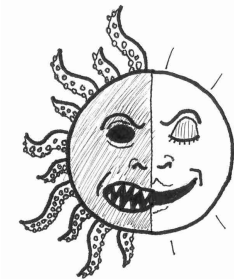
Via the Path of Light, the PC's can now get to The Cage of Secrets, the heart of the matter. Here, they are confronted with the tyranny of the Merchants' Guild, with the misdeeds that they have committed, protected by their merchant status, AND by the fact that the rebel leader, Jasca, is no paragon of virtue. It is possible that the revelations will make them reflect or fight, and there should be room for that. It is also possible that they do not talk much, and that is fine as well.

If we are approaching the time when the higher levels will stop existing (three hours after entering, see the DM's aid sheet), you can warn them about strange tremors and moonlight that is starting to fade. Give the warning about fifteen minutes before the deadline.

If someone has *Holy Insight*, they can follow the Path of Light downwards, from the trial to the earthly level, even though the connection passes between the trial and the Cage. This means that they DO NOT have to go back to the Hall of Stairs and make the fair face close it's eyes. PLEASE do tell people with Holy Insight that they can see the way out when they are on the trial level of the Sanctum after having left the Cage.

Caught by the Dawn

If the PC's are in the Cage proper or on the trial level when the sun rises (three hours after they enter), by default they will die and fall as corpses on the earthly level. If there is a free spot as censor and someone has Holy Strength, the Goddess offers them a chance to take the spot. If there is a free spot as priest and someone has Holy Insight, the Goddess offers them a chance to take the spot. If they say yes immediately and without hesitation, they get the spot – otherwise they die. If there are multiple candidates for a spot, it goes to the one who says yes first.



The Final Confrontation

As they are on their way out through the earthly level, they run into the rest of the rebels. The rebels were originally led by Jackdaw, but in her absence, Katya, Ethan's assistant, has taken over. You can play out the confrontation in two versions, either an ambush if the PC's are still in good shape and need a bit of pressure for things to get exciting, or as the PC's and rebels simply bumping into each other if you would rather be a little nice. Regardless of the version, do your best to push one or more PC's to hesitate or change sides, without forcing them.

If it is an ambush: In the Hall of Stairs. There is a lantern on the floor between the two stairs. Ginette (Belladonna's girlfriend) comes out of the darkness, puts on a dockworker's cap and accuses the PC's of being oppressors. The rest of the rebels are lying in wait west of the staircases in the hall. At some appropriate point, they attack the PC's unless the PC's have changed sides in a REALLY convincing manner. When the rebels strike, the PC's must each make a *difficulty 10 Perception* check to be able to act in the first round of the fight. If the PC's are very engaged with Ginette (or with arguing with each other), they have disadvantage on their rolls.

Even though it turns into a combat, milk both Ivo and Katya (and Ginette as well) for all the drama that they are worth.

If it is an unplanned encounter: In the Sanctum. The PC's come tumbling out of the light and run right into a chaotic discussion that the rebels are having over what to do. Try to start out with a conversation, but let the situation turn violent if it makes any sense – which it probably will.

There are three named NPC's and four ordinary rebels (two if there are three players).

Katya (Ethan's assistant)

- Intense, stocky young woman.
- Analytical but *really* angry, at merchants in general and Ethan in particular.
- Watchmaker by guild, brilliant inventor by trade.
- Sees the rebellion as her chance to get the recognition she deserves.

Str +2, dex +1, con +1, int +4, wis +0, cha +2

AC 12, HP 11, init 11, move 30, see through/resist 13

Iron torch +4, damage 1d6+2

Bonus Action: Screamer Flare, reach 5 feet, 1 fire damage and *difficulty 14 Constitution saving throw* or partly blinded and deafened: disadvantage on attacks and skills until the end of their next turn, and others have advantage on attacks against the person affected. Burns for two rounds, bonus action attack.

She can light her iron torch as a free action by raking it against stone like a matchstick.

Ginette (Belladonna's girlfriend)

- Wears a dockworker's cap, armed with a cutlass.
- Pretty young woman.
- Frightened, angry, determined.
- Potter, and rebel because it is her way out of an intolerable situation.
- Loves, fears and hates Belladonna.

Str +1, other stats +0, AC 10, HP 7, init 10, move 30, skills 11

Cutlass +3 (with advantage from recklessness), damage 1d6+1

Recklessness: Can choose to take advantage on melee attacks, then enemies have advantage on attacks against the rebel until the start of the rebel's next turn.

Ivo (Darek's servant)

- Wears a dockworker's cap, armed with a longsword.
- Athletic, young man.
- Unhappy but determined to overthrow the cruel, corrupt merchants.
- Wants to turn and protect Darek – or kill him. Personally.

Str +2, dex +2, con +0, int +0, wis +1, cha +1

AC 13, HP 13, init 12, move 30, stealth 15, perception 14, see through lies 14, resist intimidation 16 (and will only be temporarily shaken, not cowed)

Attack +4, damage 1d10+2 (longsword) or 1d4+2 (dagger)

Determination: Can add 1d6 to attack or damage AFTER rolling, once. Use it as soon as it makes sense!

Four rebels (two if there are three players)

- Wear dockworkers' caps, armed with hand axe/nail-studded club/cutlass.
- Ordinary workers of mixed ages and genders. Not professional warriors, and fight with suicidal bravery (until it makes more sense for them to panic).
- Ardent followers of Jasca, could tell many terrible stories of how the merchants have wronged them and theirs.
- They are not named but GO FOR IT if you can easily add a little detail that makes it clear that they are people. And when they die, they are people dying, not game pieces being eliminated.

Str +1, other stats +0, AC 10, HP 7, init 10, move 30, skills 11

Attack +3 (with advantage from recklessness), damage 1d6+1

Recklessness: Can choose to take advantage on melee attacks, then enemies have advantage on attacks against the rebel until the start of the rebel's next turn.

Epilogue & Consequences

After the final confrontation, you do not have to play out walking the rest of the way out. You can narrate the epilogue together. The big question is in two parts:

- Does someone who has Holy Insight, and who has seen Jasca's secret in the Cage, get out alive?
- If yes, will they use their knowledge to undermine the rebellion? Or will they stay silent? If just one person with Holy Insight spreads the story, it will be believed – otherwise it is just a rumour that makes no difference.

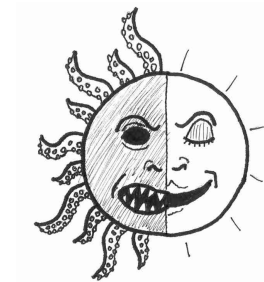
If the answer to both questions is "yes":

The rebellion loses momentum and ends up a bloody mess. The Merchants' Guild hangs on to power for the time being, but is weakened. Everything will *not* be as it used to!

Otherwise, the rebels overthrow the Merchants' Guild before the next full moon, and Jasca seizes power.

Based on the overall outcome, the players can tell their epilogues as they like. Preferably briefly, and not with a timeframe longer than the coming year or so. The players of dead characters can contribute to the stories of the others or ideas about how things go in The City.

And now, you are done playing the scenario.



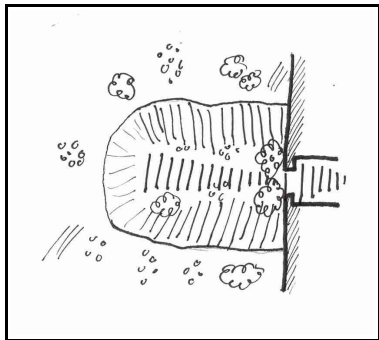
Locations

Here are the places in the Cage of Secrets, with descriptions of which levels they exist on. Make sure that the players can follow the action on the player map (p 40).

The Entrance

Only the earthly level exists.

Use the entrance as an introductory exercise in exploring and interacting with each other and the fiction, but do push a little if the players draw it out too much. The entrance is in a dangerous, rebel-dominated neighbourhood, so they can only sneak in there safely well after dark, and they have had to avoid riots and dodgy characters. So, they only get here after midnight.



Description in Points

- **Light** – the full moon.
- **Overgrown garden.** Dry shrubbery, piles of earth and stone and rubbish such as broken pottery and animal bones.
- To the east, an old palace of massive stonework. Now in part a cooper's (barrelmaker's) workshop, in part slum.
- **Graffiti** on the stone wall (visible if they bring light): "**Death to mercants**" (yes, with bad spelling).
- **A hole/ditch** up againstst the cooper's workshop conceals the **entrance**.

Dangers: None as such. But the area is under rebel influence.

Other difficulties: Really, they can just ask and then you answer. If they want to roll dice, players who are eager can roll for Investigate, and then you tell them a bit more.

It is just over midnight when they get to the place where the entrance should be. It has rained a bit but it is dry now, and the full moon sends down clear light from above. The area is not safe during daylight hours, so they have not checked it out before now. It actually isn't safe now, either, but sneaking in is easier.

The entrance is in a hole that turns out to be a worn, partially buried stone stairway leading to a doorway into the stone wall, hidden by dry shrubbery. One of two bushes is completely withered and lies loose. If moved, it reveals the doorway and stairs leading down into darkness. There are no tracks, but it has rained recently after all.

The pale face is a stone relief of a stylized, smiling full moon. The eyes are closed and the mouth is a deep crack, wide enough that *you could reach a hand into it*. The face is two and a half meters in diameter and three meters over the floor level. The stairs leading up to it narrow towards the top so that it is only possible for one person to stand before the face. When you are close, you can see that the closed eyelids could be raised, but they are impossible to force open. If you look or feel around in the mouth (light?), about a meter in there is an object of dark metal lying on the tongue. The object is lightly held in place by some metal, but working it loose is easy enough – it is a dagger of blackened silver, the rear end of which is a key (see the cover of the scenario). **Difficulty 12 Investigate** reveals sharp points further in that indicate the presence of a trap, but the mechanism is broken and the trap is not dangerous.

The dark face is stone too. At a distance it appears to have dark flames or rays around it like a dark sun, but on closer examination, the corona turns out to be suckered tentacles. The eyes are empty holes. The nose is wide and with large nostrils. The mouth has teeth of rusty iron and a long tongue of verdigrised bronze sticking out. If someone spends a lot of time examining it and refuse to be nudged on, see the trial version – this is a version without glass eyes, and where the traps do not work.

The inscription is on the floor just east of the spot between the two stairways, so that the best place to read the inscription is standing right between the stairways. The text is partly worn away – see the handout on p 41, not to be confused with p 42, the intact text. If anyone *specifically* looks for trap doors and makes a **difficulty 20 Investigate**, they find a 2½ by 2½ meters trap door between the stairways, but it cannot be opened.

Runtbrough: *In a standard run, it is on their way out through the Hall of Stairs (earthly) that the final showdown between the PC's and the rebels will take place. See Runtbrough pp 17-18.*

Hall of Stairs, trial

Here, the trial is opening the eyes of the pale face to make the Path of Light in the Sanctum lead up to the Cage. Traps and mechanisms work, and there are neither rats, stinking corpses nor barrelmaking supplies. There is no way to the world outside on this level.

Description in Points

- **Light** – solely what people bring with them (at least until the pale face opens it's eyes).
- **Relief of a world map** where the exit was on the earthly level. There are no stairs leading up to it.
- **Stairs** up to faces to the north and south.
- **Pale face** to the north, with a mouth *that you could reach a hand into*.
- **Dark face** to the south. Monstrous on closer examination.
- **Inscription** on the floor, now fully readable. See handout on p 42.
- Relief of **elephant's head** over hallway to the northeast.
- Relief of **bull's head** over hallway to the southeast.

Dangers

- **Pale face**, spear trap in the mouth. *Difficulty 12 Investigate, difficulty 15 L&T, difficulty 14 Dexterity saving throw* (disadvantage?), 2d10 damage.
- **Dark face**, poison trap in nose. Investigate and L&T – see description. Poison – see description below.
- **Trap door** between stairways, *'the abyss'*. *Difficulty 20 Investigate, difficulty 15 Dexterity saving throw*, 2d6 damage.

The Puzzle: Helping the Light See the Dark

The priest in the Sanctum will have given the PC's a task, to help the Light see the Dark (see p 35). When this is done, the Path of Light in the Sanctum will lead to the Cage of Secrets, instead of back to the earthly level.

What this means in practice is that they must get the pale face to open it's eyes, and they are closed to begin with. Direct manipulation of the pale face is a dangerous red herring, however. The inscription on the floor (see the handout on p 42) gives a clue to suggest that they need to manipulate the dark face. Aside from being helpful, this is ALSO a trap – when you open the eyes of the Light, you also open 'the abyss', a trap door in the floor just where it makes the most sense to stand to study the inscription.

The pale face is a stone relief of a stylized, smiling full moon. The eyes are closed and the mouth is a deep crack, wide enough that *you could reach a hand into it*. The face is two and a half meters in diameter and three meters over the floor level. The stairs leading up to it narrow towards the top so that it is only possible

for one person to stand before the face. When you are close, you can see that the closed eyelids could be raised, but they are impossible to force open.

If the PC's HAVE NOT removed the dagger-key from the mouth on the earthly level, it is still there on the trial level. If you look or feel around in the mouth, about a meter in there is either a dagger-key held in place by a metal brace, or just a strange metal brace. *Difficulty 12 Investigate* reveals the two tips of the spear trap further into the dark, guarding the dagger-key. If someone just grabs the dagger, or pulls the brace, or tries to work loose the dagger but fail a *difficulty 15 Locks & Traps*, it sets off the **spear trap**. The trap hits the person at the top of the stairs. Avoiding it takes a *difficulty 14 Dexterity saving throw*, with disadvantage if you have your arm in the mouth. The bronze blades of the trap stab out with great force and do 2d10 damage. The spears slowly retract after use, and the trap will soon be ready to go off again.

The trap is also set off if you try to force open the eyes.

The dark face is stone too. At a distance it appears to have dark flames or rays around it like a dark sun, but on closer examination, the corona turns out to be suckered tentacles. The nose is wide and with large nostrils. The mouth has teeth of rusty iron and a long tongue of verdigrised bronze sticking out. The right eye is an empty hole, but the left is dark, glittering crystal or glass behind heavy lids of stone. On the tongue is a sphere of glass or crystal that is 12 cm in diameter.

Here is what **Investigate** reveals. Several people can take turns trying, though there is only room for one at the top of the stairs. You get all information up to the difficulty that you manage.

- 10+ Behind the tongue is a canal into the darkness.
- 12+ The canal is about 12 cm wide.
- 13+ It does NOT look like the mouth has moving parts.
- 14+ The tongue, on the other hand, looks like it could tip up or down a bit.
- 16+ There is some discoloration around the nostrils.
- 18+ The space behind the left eye is about 12 cm wide and reaches into the darkness.

This is the mechanism: If you stuff the 'eye' from the tongue down the throat of the face, it pops up in the left eyesocket after about 30 seconds. *Ask where everyone is when someone does this.* When the left eye clicks into place, three things happen:

- 1) The pale face opens it's eyes, revealing sparkling, luminous crystals that cast a soft, rainbow sheen over the middle of the hall.
- 2) The abyss opens (see below).
- 3) The tongue is fixed in place so that the poison trap in the nose cannot be set off.

If someone moves the tongue up or down, or removes the eye from the tongue without doing anything to replace it or hold the tongue in place, it sets off a trap that makes poison spurt out of the nostrils, right into the face of the person at the top of the stairs.

Blocking the nostrils requires something to do it with and *difficulty 12 Locks & Traps* (only roll when the trap is set off – the pressure is considerable). Replacing the eye on the tongue with an equivalent weight is *Locks & Traps* or *Sleight of Hand difficulty 18*. Just holding the tongue in place is less classic but only *L&T* or *SoH difficulty 10*.

If the poison trap is set off: *Constitution saving throw difficulty 12*. **Success:** 1d4 damage and no further effect. **Failure:** 1d6 damage and poisoned condition (disadvantage on attack and ability rolls, but not saving throws) – new saving throw at the end of your turn, with the same consequences as the first, including damage.

'**The Abyss**' is a trap door of 2½ times 2½ meters of the floor right between the stairways. If is placed so that if you are studying the inscription (handout on p 42), you are standing on the trap. The trap is not set off not from stepping on it, but from the Light opening it's eyes. Finding the trap requires *difficulty 20 Investigate* (and actually looking!). Avoiding the trap requires a *difficulty 15 Dexterity saving throw*. The Abyss is a shaft six meters deep with a skeleton at the bottom – falling in does 2d6 damage, and getting up without help is difficult.

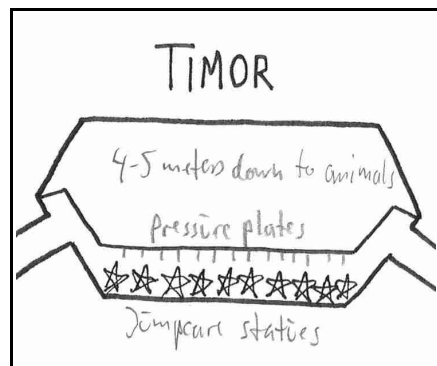
Holy Insight: When the eyes of the Light have opened, people with Holy Insight will have a strong sense that the puzzle is solved, and something is waiting in the Sanctum.

Runthrough: *The puzzle here is a central bottleneck in the scenario. If they are hopelessly stuck, you will have to offer them whatever help they require in return for deep secrets. See Runthrough, p 14.*

Timor

Exists as earthly version and as trial. The theme here is testing through fear and confusion.

A rather more low-ceilinged hall, where the way through is a ledge along a menacing drop, set with grotesque sculptures.



Timor, Earthly

The traps are not really working here, and you can gather some hints as to what they are, but you can also end up using dangerous amounts of time on them.

Description in Points

- **Light** – a bit of pale light shines from the corridor towards the Sanctum, otherwise only what they bring with them.
- **Smell** of animals and mold.
- **Narrow ledge** between the two corridors.
- 4-5 meters under the ledge, a lot of **animal sculptures**.
- Along the ledge, a row of **grotesque statues** of beast-people in stone, wood, metal and leather. Some of them have (seized-up) mechanical parts and rusty claws or built-in weapons.
- There are large streaks of **mold** on the north wall. If the PC's do not bring light, some of it is visibly luminous, but it does not illuminate the room.

Dangers – there are none on the earthly level, really. *Difficulty 20 Investigate* reveals that the entire length of the ledge is made up out of pressure plates, if someone specifically looks for them. However, in practice they activate nothing.

Timor, Trial

Now, the traps are working! Unpredictable and dangerous, but designed more to terrorize than to kill. They are designed to fuck with people who think they have everything figured out, so the room is not safe even though you have passed through it before.

Description in Points

- **Light** – mold on the north wall shines faintly but visibly, in a way that is pretty creepy if there are no other significant light sources.
- **Smell** of animals and mold.
- **Sound** of squeaking, snuffling and scraping from below.
- **Narrow ledge** between the two corridors leading out.
- 4-5 meters under the ledge, a lot of **animal sculptures** making it impossible to see everything on the floor.
- Along the ledge, a row of **grotesque statues** of beast-people in stone, wood, metal and leather, with claws or strange weapons. Here, it is not obvious that they are mechanical.
- There are large streaks of **mold** on the north wall. Here, they shine with enough light that the effect is impossible to miss.

Dangers

- **Giant rats** on the floor. Lots of giant rats, hidden by the sculptures so you cannot count or shoot them from above.
- **Jumpscare traps** among the beastfolk statues on the ledge. Investigate and L&T – see description. Jumpscare – *difficulty 10 Wisdom saving throw* to not jump off the ledge (1d6 damage plus rats). If you do not jump off the ledge, *difficulty 14 Dexterity saving throw* or 1d6 damage plus *difficulty 8 Strength saving throw* or be pushed off anyway. Different places at different times of passage (see below).
- **Blade traps** if you try to crawl over the statues instead of walking in front of them. Investigate and L&T – see description. *Difficulty 16 Dexterity saving throw* or 2d6 damage plus *difficulty 10 Strength saving throw* or fall off the ledge.

Most of the **grotesque statues** are capable of attacking. For example, a rat man with a large roasting fork, a wolf-woman with iron claws. If someone actively *investigates* the statues: Roll Investigate: 10+, most of the statues have moving parts and rods connecting to the wall behind them. 15+, on the wall behind and over the statues there are holes and grooves suggesting traps if you crawl over the statues. 20+, the whole ledge in front of the statues is pressure plates. There are so many plates and moving parts that jamming them with Locks & Traps will take far, far too long – say it clearly if someone seems to be suggesting doing that.

As the whole ledge is a row of pressure plates, avoiding them is practically impossible if you want to pass along the ledge. Every time the group passes, there will be 1-2 attacks, by different statues each time. The system is cunningly made so that pressure upon a

plate can set off an attack against a plate further back that is still pressed down (eg because someone is standing on it). So, just pressing down plates in front of you as you go will NOT keep you safe, and the front PC will not necessarily be the one attacked.

The first time the group passes the room, they are attacked once, but twice the second time.

The traps are conceived as *jumpscare*. As DM, you should announce them by jumping to your feet, shouting "**SUDDENLY! A wolf-woman attacks Belladonna with her sharp claws!**" or something like that, to give the players a taste of the PC's experience. The target of the jumpscare attack must make a *difficulty 10 Wisdom saving throw* to avoid jumping off the ledge – 1d6 damage for the fall, and see below.

If you DO NOT jump off the ledge, you must make a *difficulty 14 Dexterity saving throw* to avoid the statue's attack, which does 1d6 damage and forces a *difficulty 8 Strength saving throw* to avoid being forced off the ledge.

On **the wall behind the statues** there is a couple of blade traps targeting people trying to avoid the ledge by climbing over the statues. *Difficulty 16 Dexterity saving throw* to avoid, 2d6 damage plus *difficulty 10 Strength saving throw* to avoid being pushed off the ledge.

The floor is 4 meters below and there is a great mass of stone sculptures of animals down there – lots of giant rats but also dogs, cats, wolves, snakes etc. If you fall in, you take 1d6 damage and need to get up fast to avoid being attacked by lots of giant rats. It takes *difficulty 15 Athletics* to get up under your own power –

from the taller animals, you can jump up and grab the edge. With advantage if someone above reaches down an arm, or automatically if they lower a rope.

After a couple of moments to do something, two **giant rats** appear and attack, and then two more per round, with a practically unlimited supply. Folk making ranged attacks from above have disadvantage on account of cover from animal statues. Stats:

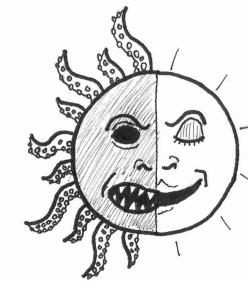
Str -2, dex +2, con +0, int -4, wis +0, cha -3

AC 12, HP 7, Init 12, move 30

Bite +4, damage 1d4+2

Rat Pack Attack: Advantage on attacks when they have an ally in melee with the target of their attack.

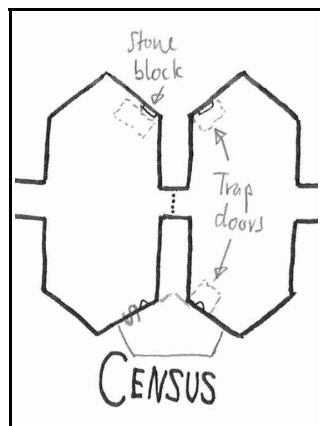
Runtbrough: *If the PC's come through here on the way back from the Hall of Stairs towards the Sanctum, the one of them who is closest to the Sanctum hears a scream coming from there – this is the priest being killed by the rebels. Preferably while the PC's are well and properly occupied dealing with traps. See Runtbrough, p 14.*



Census

Exists as earthly version and as trial. The theme here is testing through clever handling of lethal traps.

Two tall chambers separated by a trellis gate that you must solve mechanical puzzles to pass.



Census, Earthly

Here, the traps do not work. Some of them have already been set off, so you can see where and what they are.

Description in Points

- **Light** – a little pale light shines from the corridor to the Sanctum, otherwise solely what you bring.
- **Smell** – just a little dusty.
- **High-ceilinged** chambers.
- **Trellis gate** of thick, verdigrised bronze bars between the two chambers. The gate is down, but there is a hole in the grill.
- **Large rat face** in verdigrised bronze at the southern end of both chambers.

The Western Chamber

- Massive, carved **block of stone** against the northeast wall.
- **Massive chains** of green bronze reach from the block up into a hole in the ceiling which is the size of the block.
- An arm and a leg of an otherwise crushed **skeleton** protrude from under the block.

The Eastern Chamber

- **Shaft** in the floor in front of the rat face on the southwest wall.
- Dark metal plate with a **keyhole** in the northwest wall.

The eyes of the **rat faces** are holes into the wall (there is a dark chamber behind them) if you study them closely. There is a secret door next to the rat face in the western chamber. *Difficulty 15 Investigate* reveals the presence of the door, but it cannot be opened from the outside.

The shaft in the eastern chamber is three meters deep. There is a human skeleton and a snake skeleton at the bottom. There was a trap door, but it was never closed after the last fall.

The keyhole in the eastern chamber does not work, regardless of whether they use keys or thieves' tools – the mechanism has seized up. *Difficulty 13 Investigate* reveals that there is a trap door in the floor in front of the keyhole, but it cannot open.

Census, Trial (West)

Here, the traps are working, and the place is overseen by a terrifying guardian, the *Censor*. The descriptions of the western and eastern chambers are separated for ease of use.

Description in Points

- **Light** – solely what people bring with them.
- **Smell** – there is a smell of wild beast.
- **High-ceilinged** chamber.
- **Trellis gate** of dark, dull bronze between the two chambers. The gate is down.
- **Large rat face** in dark, dull bronze at the southern end of the chamber.
- On the northeast wall, a stone relief of a **moon face**, about a meter in diameter. It's mouth is closed but can open.
- Shiny silver plate with **two tumblers** set with tiny pictures on the wall to the left of the moon face (see p 43 handout).

Dangers

- **Falling stone block** over the puzzle in the northeast wall of the western chamber. See the description below.
- **The Censor**, a murderous rat-person who can be let into the western chamber if they do not handle the challenges (in both chambers perfectly).

The eyes of the **rat face** are holes into the wall (there is a dark chamber behind it) if you study them closely. *Difficulty 11 Perception* reveals that the beastly smell comes from here. The metal face depicts a rat head but is the size of a human head.

There is a secret door next to the rat face in the western chamber. *Difficulty 15 Investigate* reveals that the door is there, but it cannot be opened from the outside.

The Western Puzzle – Tumblers and Moon Mouth

The puzzle in the western chamber is in two parts. First you must solve the riddle of the tumblers, and then you can reach an arm into the now open mouth of the moon face to open the trellis gate. However, then the first puzzle is solved, you only have a minute to solve the second – otherwise the large stone block falls AND the Censor is released! If anyone looks around for traps near the puzzle, *difficulty 10 investigate* reveals that a fair bit of the ceiling above has a crack around it, as if it could come down.

If someone does serious violence to either tumblers or moon face, the stone block falls (see below).

The tumblers: There is a tumbler with eight moon phases and a tumbler with eight faces that show emotions. To begin with, there is a (waxing) half moon and a smiling face exhibited, and you can tell that there are more fields (eight of each). If the PC's start playing around, give them the handout on p 43 to make it easier for them to say what they want to do. The solution is full moon plus angry rat. When this combination is achieved, a click sounds and the mouth of the moon face opens. A deep rumbling sounds like a massive counterweight is armed, and a bit of dust falls from the ceiling. As seconds pass, a clicking sound comes from the mechanism – make it super menacing!

The mouth of the moon: The open mouth is a hole that is about a meter deep. At the bottom, you can reach up your fingers to reach a row of tumblers resembling what is inside a lock. There is no other way to solve it than to reach in your hand and try to use it as a key. From the mouth opens, you have about 55 seconds to solve the challenge (apply pressure, but you do not need to go fully real time). *Difficulty 15 Locks & Traps* opens the gate before the stone block trap is released. If you wait for a significant amount of time before beginning, you have disadvantage. If you have solved it once, you have advantage on future attempts. The mouth will not bite down on the hand, though it is a reasonable thing to worry about.

If you meet the challenge, the stone block in the ceiling is secured and the trellis gate opens. The gate stays open for about a minute before (slowly) closing again.

If you DO NOT meet the challenge, two things happen:

- **The stone block falls.** As it turns out, there are heavy chains attached to it, and (after a long time) they will pull it back up into place. *Difficulty 15 Dexterity saving throw* to avoid (disadvantage if your arm is in the hole). Damage 3d10 (and pushed aside if failed and not dead).
- **The Censor** emerges from its secret chamber and attacks. She appears to be a muscular, middle aged woman in a ragged tunic – with a rat's head. She generally does not pursue people into adjacent areas unless they try to bullshit game it. If she is killed, but it is not with silver (the key dagger or Ethan's silver bullet), she comes back to life after about 10 minutes.

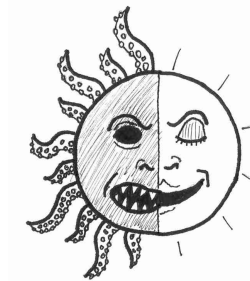
The Censor: Str +4, dex +1, con +2, int +1, wis +0, cha +3

AC 11 HP 24 (18 if only 3 players, and then the Censor is the second, missing character), fearless and merciless

Attacks: Crowbar and bite (two attacks) +6, damage 1d4+4

Takes half damage (rounded down) from weapons that are not silver, but double damage from silver weapons. Stays dead only for 10 min UNLESS the killing blow came from a silver weapon.

The Censor's chamber is dark and foul. There are several control panels, but it will take more time than the PC's have to figure out what they can do. The Censor lurks from here and maintains the traps.



Census, Trial (East)

Description in Points

- **Light** – solely what people bring with them.
- **Smell** – there is a smell of wild beast.
- **High-ceilinged** chamber.
- **Trellis gate** of dark, dull bronze between the two chambers. The gate is down.
- **Large rat face** in dark, dull bronze at the southern end of the chamber.
- Shiny silver panel with **keyhole** in the northwest wall.

Dangers

- **Trap door** in front of the keyhole in the east chamber. Set off if someone tries to pick the lock and fails. *Difficulty 13 Investigate, difficulty 20 L&T* to open. *Difficulty 15 Dexterity saving throw*, 1d6 damage from the fall (plus a snake). If you pick, or if you do not leave the key, it releases the Censor into the west chamber.
- **Trap door** in front of the rat face in the east chamber. *Difficulty 13 Investigate, difficulty 15 dexterity saving throw*, 1d6 damage plus a snake.

The eyes of the **rat face** are holes into the wall (there is a dark chamber behind it) if you study them closely. *Difficulty 11 Perception* reveals that the beastly smell comes from here. The metal face depicts a rat head but is the size of a human head.

There is a trap door in front of the face in the eastern chamber. If someone tries to examine the face, they must make a *difficulty 15 Dexterity saving throw* to avoid falling into the hole. The hole is 3 meters deep (1d6 damage) and there is a snake down there. *Difficulty 13 Investigate* reveals the trap, but only if you actively look.

The Eastern Puzzle – The Keyhole

In the northwest wall of the east chamber, about a meter above the floor, there is a silver panel with a keyhole. There is a trap door in front of the lock, and you must stand on it to work the lock. *Difficulty 13 Investigate* reveals the trap door if you search for traps.

The key dagger from the Hall of Stairs will fit in the lock. If you use the key and leave it in the lock, the trellis is raised and stays up. After about ten minutes, or after the PC's have left the area, the Censor will emerge from its chamber, take the key and let the gate descend (and on a later occasion, the Censor will put the key back in its place in the Hall of Stairs).

If you do not leave the lock in the key, or do not have it...

If you bring the key with you, the gate only stays up for about a minute AND the door to the Censor's chamber opens inside the west chamber. To avoid being surprised by the Censor requires *difficulty 11 Perception* from the first people that she attacks.

Picking the lock requires *difficulty 20 Locks & Traps*. If successful, it counts as having used the key but not left it. If unsuccessful, the trap door opens. The would-be lock-picker automatically falls in. Closely involved people must make a *difficulty 15 Dexterity saving*

throw to avoid it – with advantage if they knew the trap was there. The hole is three meters deep (1d6 damage) AND there is a snake down there that gets a free attack with advantage against one of the fallen. Getting out is *difficulty 14 Athletics*, with advantage if you have help from above. People above who shoot at the snake have disadvantage as it is under the fallen. **Snake:**

Str -4, dex +3, con +2, int -5, wis +0, cha -4

AC 13, HP 4, init 13, move 30

Bite +5, damage 1 +venom

Venom: *Constitution saving throw difficulty 12*. **Success:** 1d4 damage and no further effect. **Failure:** 1d6 damage and poisoned condition (disadvantage on attack and ability rolls, but not saving throws) – new saving throw at the end of your turn, with the same consequences as the first, including damage. If you are already poisoned and get even more poisoned, you automatically succeed on your saving throw against the new poison, ie you just take 1d4 damage.

As previously mentioned, there is a similar trap door in front of the rat face on the wall in the southern end of the east chamber. However, it simply opens if you step on it.

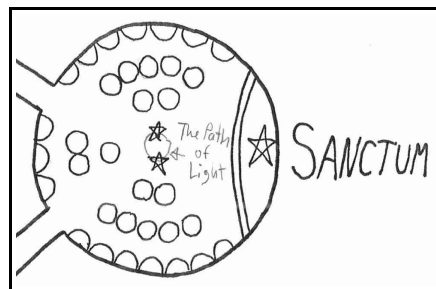
Runtbrough: *If they pass through here on the way back from the Hall of Stairs to the Sanctum, one of them who is closer to the Sanctum hears a scream from there – it is the priest being killed by the rebels. Preferably while the PC's are well and properly occupied dealing with traps. See Runtbrough, p 14.*



Sanctum

Is both earthly, trial and the true, proper Cage of Secrets.

A large, round hall, 15 meters wide, with a domed ceiling that rises to a shaft, fully 12 meters over the floor. This is the heart of the temple, and the place where you can move between the levels.



Sanctum, Earthly

Here, on such a night of the full moon, you will meet the first sign that the supernatural is real, in the form of the Path of Light.

Description in Points

- **Light** – a beam of clear, cold moonlight falls vertically from the shaft at the top of the dome. The shaft is about a meter wide. The edges of the hall are in shadow.
- **Smell** – rain and fallen leaves. The air is fresh and cool.
- A few **fallen leaves** are scattered on the floor.
- **The doors** out are just doorframes. The southern doorway has remains of cracked horn in grooves where it was inlaid as decoration. The northern doorway has remains of ivory.
- A lot of **low, empty pedestals** rise about 30 centimeters over the floor.
- **Statues of a man and a woman** at the center of the room. They hold hands, with their arms over their heads, and are bathed in moonlight. You can stand between them.
- Two steps up to a **dais** along the east wall.

- **Three meters high statue of the Goddess** in bronze, oxidized almost black, with a few greyish-green rags of fabric from clothes she wore. The eyes are black holes.

Dangers – none inherent to the room itself (but see the run-through, pp 14-15).

The Path of Light is the only truly interesting thing about the earthly Sanctum. To begin with, the Path of Light leads between the earthly and trial levels of the Sanctum. This means that when you step between the two statues in the center, you disappear and appear in the corresponding place on the trial level. The Path of Light only exists on nights of the full moon (such as this one).

On the trial level of the Hall of Stairs, it is possible to change the Path of Light so that it connects the trial and Cage of Secrets levels of the Sanctum. If this happens, you **CANNOT** move between the earthly and trial levels via the Path of Light, unless you have attained Holy Insight by promising the Goddess your deep secret. See the runthrough, pp 14-15.

When First Someone Walks the Path of Light

Switch to describing to those left behind – the person simply disappears. Stay with those left behind, let them react and probably follow. Do take your time before switching back to the first person to pass through, meeting their lost friend, the priest. Then skip lightly over the others coming through, moving to when they have all passed through (if that otherwise makes sense).

Sanctum, Trial

Here they meet the priest, the missing, fifth character, who explains the rules of the place to them. See the section 'The Priest' below.

In an ordinary run, they will run into a bloody situation when they return here after facing the trials of this level.

Description in Points

- **Light** – a beam of clear, cold moonlight falls vertically from the shaft at the top of the dome. The shaft is about a meter wide. The edges of the hall are in shadow.
- **Smell** – rain and fallen leaves. The air is fresh and cool.
- A few **fallen leaves** are scattered on the floor.
- **The doors** are dark wood. The southern door and the frame around it are inlaid with horn, the northern with ivory.
- A lot of **low, empty pedestals** rise about 30 centimeters over the floor. However, it is like there is almost something on some of them.
- **Statues of a man and a woman** at the center of the room. They hold hands, with their arms over their heads, and are bathed in moonlight. You can stand between them.
- Two steps up to a **dais** along the east wall.
- **Three meters high statue of the Goddess** in dark bronze. She wears a dress of worn fabric, gray but stained green by the bronze. Her eyes are inlaid with glittering, white stones with a rainbow sheen (opals).
- **The priest** steps out of the shadows to welcome them.

Dangers – none inherent to the room itself. That is, aside from the plot (see Runthrough), or if someone tries to steal the eyes of the Goddess... If you attempt to remove the eyes of the statue, you fall unusually hard and take 2d6 damage. The statue is immovable and cannot be toppled.

The Priest

The priest is the missing, fifth character who was not chosen during the casting. A month ago, the priest entered the temple to find the secrets of the rebel leader, and now they are trapped in and part of the temple. However, the priest only exists on nights of the full moon – so for them, the last full moon was yesterday. See p 9 for a fuller explanation.

The players should have time to say, feel and think something, but do not let the scene run too long – push in character, through the priest. Let the character to become the priest give colour – Adelina and Darek will be very different priests!

The Priest's Talking Points

- Am I ever glad to see you!
- This place is really strange.
- I was caught by the dawn and only survived because a position was free so I could become a part of the place. The higher levels here only exist on nights of the full moon.
- There is a lot of rules and a lot of things I cannot tell you – if I break the rules, I die!
- Secrets are magical here – if you promise the Goddess your secrets, she will help you. You just have to think it for a second and it happens! *This is your chance to communicate the secrets mechanic in character – seize it!*

- Give the players the p 44 secrets handout.
- Please finish what I started, and stop the rebel leader by finding her secrets in the Cage!
- The way to the Cage is the Path of Light, by which you arrived here. But if you complete a special trial, it will make it so that the Path leads here from the Sanctum to the Cage instead of down to the earthly level.
- To change the Path of Light, you must make your way to the Hall of Stairs. There, you must *help the Light see the Dark*. Yes, it is a riddle. If I help you more than that, I die. OK?
- Then you can come back here and follow the Path of Light, to the inner, proper Cage where the secrets are.
- Hurry up, there is less time until dawn than you think!

A couple of things that the priest knows and can share, if they ask and it makes sense in the conversation:

- Both ways to the **Hall of Stairs** are tests of the worth of the seekers.
- The test in **Timor** is terrifying deception.
- The test in **Census** is merciless truth.
- **The Goddess** is, like, not really a *person*, but she is very, very real.

***Runtbrough:** First confrontation with the rebels. Unless the PC's deviate pretty strongly from the expected course, they will have their first clash with the rebels when they return to the Sanctum after having solved the puzzle in the Hall of Stairs. See Runtbrough, p 14.*

Sanctum, The Cage of Secrets

This is the heart of the temple where the secrets are manifest.

Description in Points

- **Light** – a beam of warm, white-gold moonlight falls vertically from the shaft at the top of the dome. The shaft is about a meter wide. The edges of the hall are in shadow.
- **Smell** – the air smells of lightning strike, and it is quite hot.
- A few **fallen leaves** are scattered on the floor.
- **The doors** out are made of horn (south) and ivory (north) respectively, but cannot be opened. They practically shine and hum with power.
- Most of the **pedestals** are adorned with horrifying **stone sculptures** depicting people's worst secrets. If someone has acquired **Holy Insight**, they clearly see the events behind the sculptures – and this makes the room overwhelmingly unpleasant.
- **Statues of a man and a woman** at the center of the room. They hold hands, with their arms over their heads, and are bathed in moonlight. You can stand between them.
- Two steps up to a **dais** along the east wall.
- **Three meters high statue of the Goddess** in shining, dark red bronze. She wears a dress of blindingly white fabric. Her eyes are human and follow the onlooker.

Dangers – none inherent to the room itself. But you can easily end up spending a lot of time here, and this is dangerous!

The Sculptures of Secrets

When they start studying sculptures, start with the statue of the Alderman Amatus, whose secret was revealed by the rebel leader Jasca and told at the beginning of the game (see p 12). Make sure to end with Jasca, for whom they are probably searching.

Someone most likely has *Holy Insight*. If yes, be generous with the secrets themselves – say them out loud, but direct the descriptions at those with insight. If no, limit yourself to describing the sculptures.

Alderman Amatus' secret: Amatus administers the Burial Fund for Poor Widows. He had widows exhumed in order to use the same grave again and again. He pocketed the money and disposed of the corpses in a latrine.

Amatus' sculpture: A small procession of poor mourners stand before a coffin. An oversized Amatus is sitting astride the open coffin with his robe around his hips, grinning at the mourners while shitting on the corpse. In his right hand he holds a large leaf (for toilet paper), in his left a bag of money.

Now move to the sculptures of the secrets of the PC's. Which they must describe, possibly with help from each other and from you.

The secret and sculpture of the priest. You, DM, must improvise it based on the them, and in doing so model for the players how it is done.

Revealed secrets – first run through the PC's whose deep secrets have been revealed and promised to the Goddess. They are in this room. Take the PC's one by one and dwell a little on each secret/sculpture.

- **Ask the player** to describe their sculpture.
- **Others can help**, possibly while the secret is re-described.
- **Ask** how you can see it if some significant aspect of the secret is not covered. See the summary of the PC's secrets on your aid sheet, p 38.

Non-revealed secrets – if someone is still keeping their secret, they find an empty pedestal that has a strange and unpleasant attraction for them. The air over the pedestal is heavy with almost-existence...

Jasca's secrets: Jasca is a descendant of the last king and plans to use the uprising of the lesser guilds to have herself crowned queen. She made her starting funds for the rebellion as the leader of a gang of kidnappers for ransom who sent ears and fingers to the families to make them pay.

Jasca's sculpture: A middle aged woman holds a crown behind her back. Around her neck is a necklace of fingers and ears. In one hand she holds a tiny girl who is reaching for her family. The family are imploring her, holding out money. On the other side of Jasca, armed people in dockworkers' caps look at her with admiration.

If none of them have *Holy Insight*, you can point out the possibility of getting it from the Goddess in order to read Jasca's secret. If EVERYONE has already sold their secrets for *Holy Strength*, they can get nothing but a hint of Jasca's story. Then their mission is failed.

Special PC Equipment

Adelina

Grimoire: Dark stuff, incoherent and with unhinged notes in the margins. Once in the game, the player can use the book to get a solid hint regarding what something holy or magical means.

Venom for knife: Must be applied to the blade first, works for one successful attack. *Difficulty 12 Constitution saving throw.* **Made:** 1d4 extra damage. **Failed:** 1d6 damage and poisoned (disadvantage on attacks and ability checks), can save again at the end of each turn, with the same consequences. Burns like the pox!

Sleeping draught: Must be drunk. Takes effect after a minute. *Difficulty 14 Constitution saving throw.* **Made:** Poisoned, can save again at the end of every turn to break free. **Failed:** Out of it for an hour, cannot really be wakened to coherence.

Healing potion: Must obviously be drunk. One minute later, it heals 2d4 hit points. Tastes of bitter herbs.

Clementius

Wand stiletto: Appears to be a wand of bone, the sides can fall away from the blade at a push of a hidden button, surprise attack with advantage if you can make a *difficulty 12 Sleight of Hand*.

Smoke bomb: With fire, action to light and throw. A 6 meter diameter cloud is totally obscured for a couple of rounds, then disadvantage to sight and attacks for a couple more.

Screamer: Large firecracker that screams for a handful of seconds instead of exploding. In a metal flute for extra volume. Can be frightening and distracting if used cleverly.

Ghost torch: A torch, but it burns with a pale, green glow and smokes a lot. Burns for only ten minutes.

Marked playing cards: Advantage on Sleight of Hand checks to do card tricks (or cheat).

Ethan

The amazing hand cannon: A matchlock hand cannon. Note that the rules for it are both more restrictive and distinctly more powerful than the standard rules for D&D firearms. It is a heavy, ranged weapon with a base damage of 2d10. Also, attacks with it have advantage if the target is within 30 feet and in bright light.

The drawback is that it must have a burning match (slow fuse) attached to be able to shoot. Lighting the match is an action and it burns for five minutes. It takes a full minute (10 rounds) to safely load the hand cannon if it has not been cleaned since the last shot.

Without cleaning or changing matches: Improvise, but it should be dangerous.

Powder horn: There is enough gunpowder in it to make a flash and some smoke, but not enough for an effective bomb.

The silver bullet: I wonder if there is someone or something in the scenario against which an enchanted silver bullet would have a spectacular effect?

DM's Aid Sheet

Time

Casting begins: _____

Dungeon should begin (+1 hour) _____

Dungeon actually begins _____

Dawn (+3 hours) _____ (give warning 15 minutes before)

Budget of Opponents

Five named NPC's (stats pp 15-18, look to the right on this page)

Seven unnamed rebels (stats p 15, only three if three players)

Censor, giant rats and venomous snakes are bound to locations.

Named NPC's & Secrets

A NPC: Ferman, bodyguard and father figure.

A secret: Murdered sex worker to summon demon, with F. Did not work (or so she thinks).

B NPC: Ginette, girlfriend (potter).

B secret: Murdered G's old friend **Linda** and beat G. B thinks G does not know.

C NPC: 'Jackdaw', hired killer.

C secret: Hired '**J**' to murder his pregnant wife **Hermine**. Not carried out.

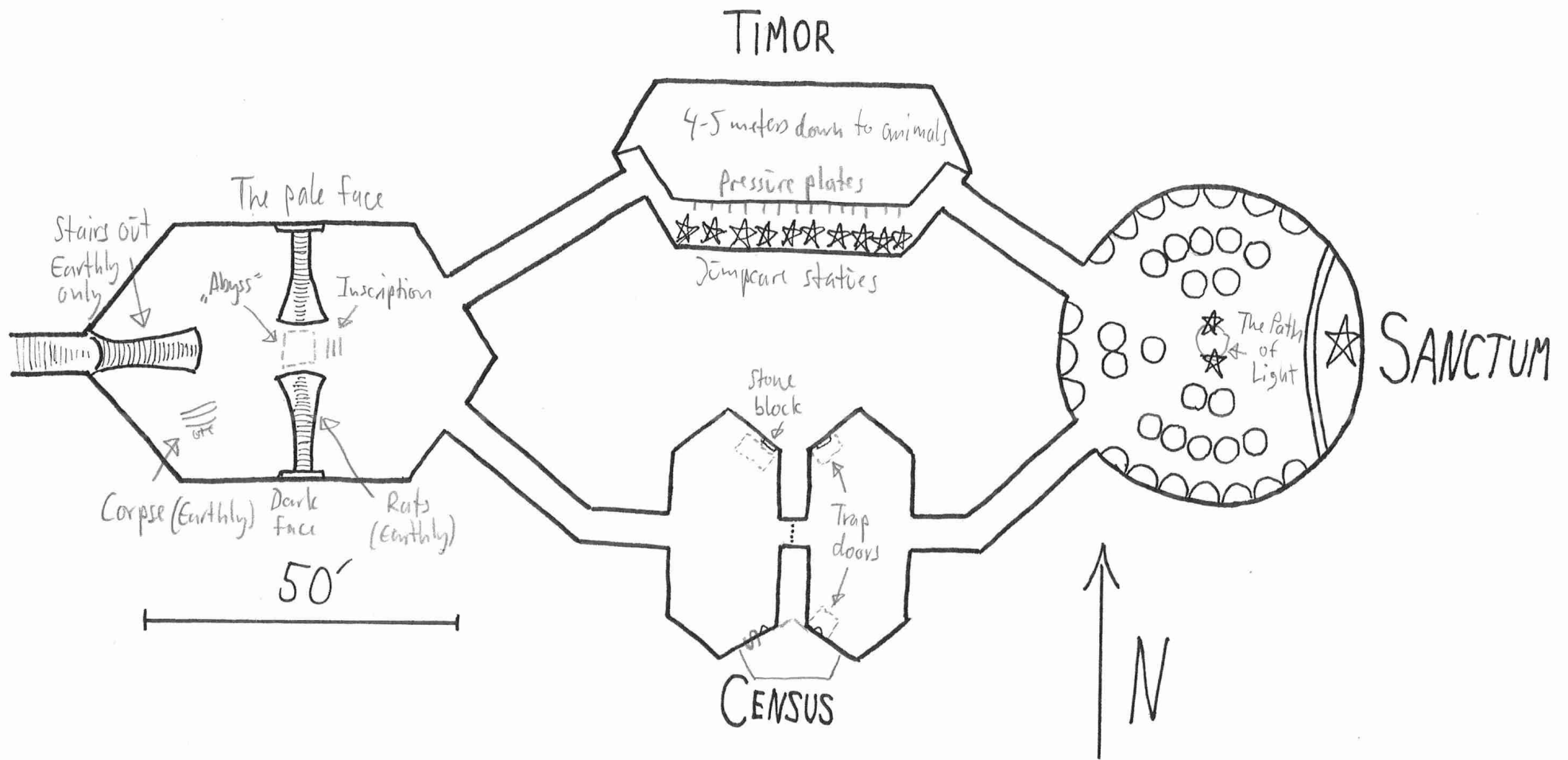
D NPC: Ivo, servant and half brother.

D secret: Strangled a 12-year-old boy to prove his "true grit" to mercenaries. Has told I.

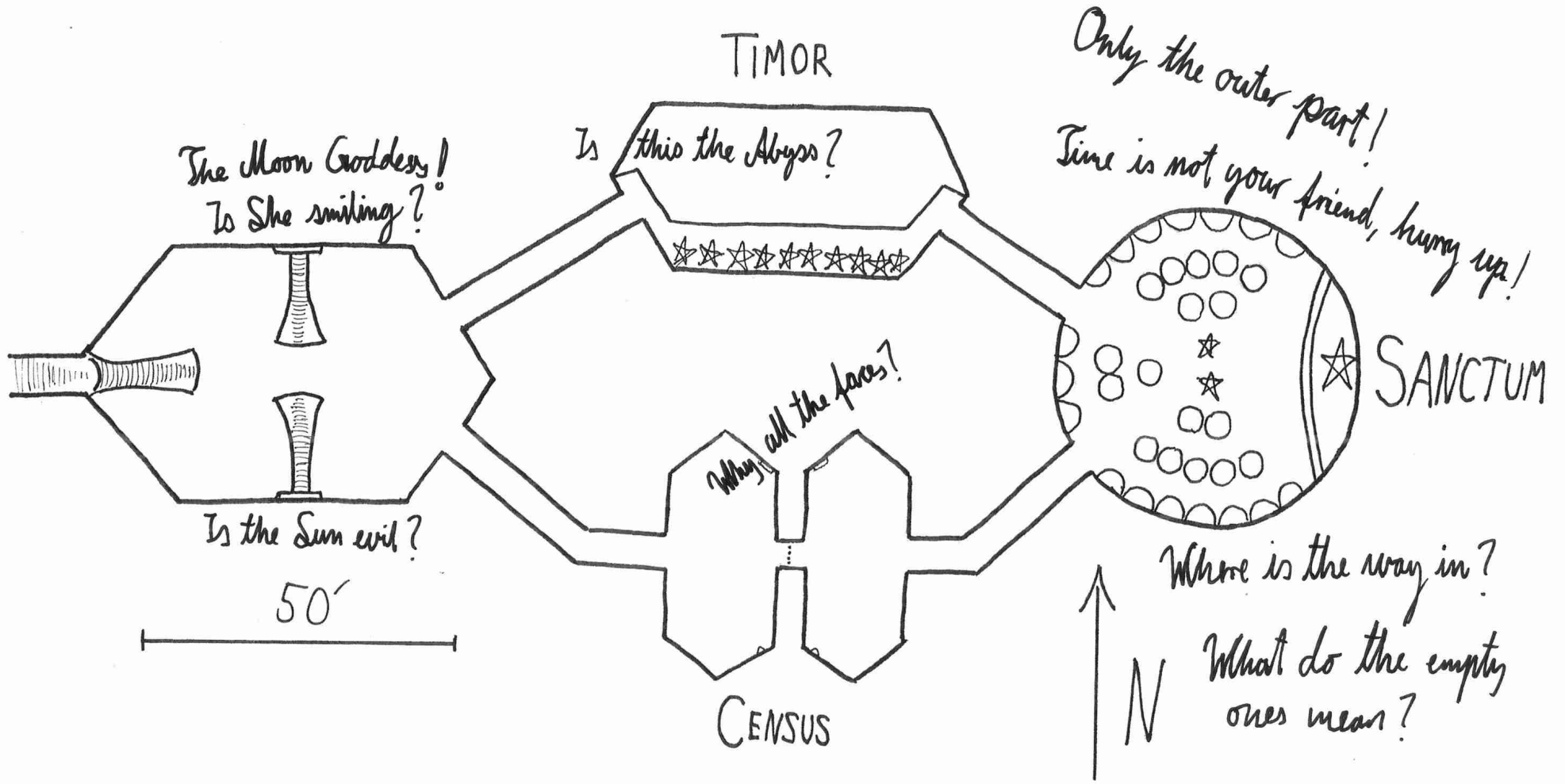
E NPC: Katya, assistant.

E secret: **K** is the real talent, E takes credit. Has kidnapped niece to blackmail her into staying.

THE CAGE OF THE DUNGEON MASTER



THE CAGE OF SECRETS



Inscription

When.th...Dark.per.....ist.....o.the.Light

The.L.....ee.th.....ark

The....he.Aby.....betw.....them

The.Path.of.L.....ll.....d.t....he.C.....crets

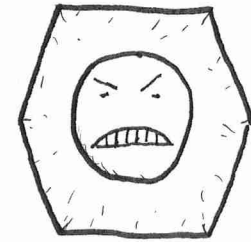
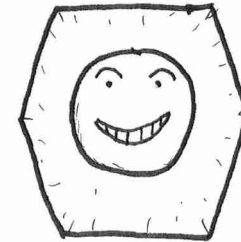
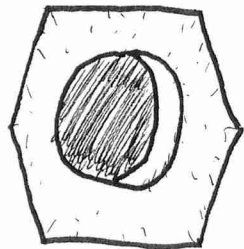
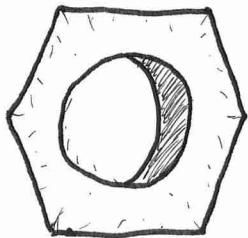
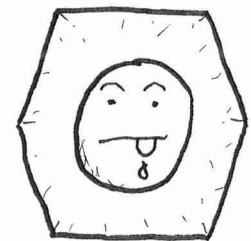
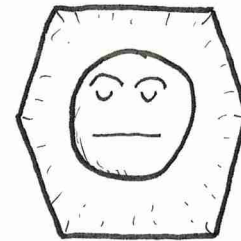
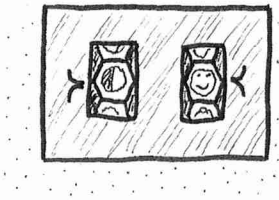
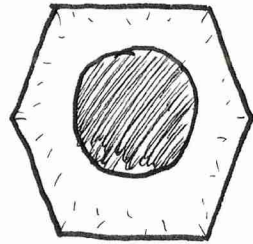
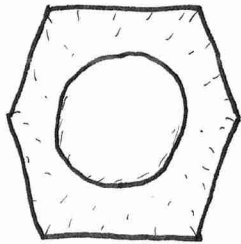
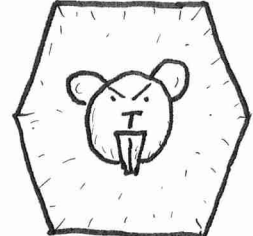
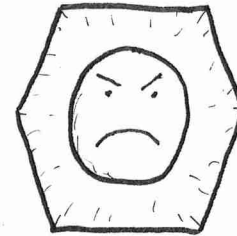
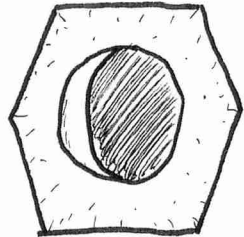
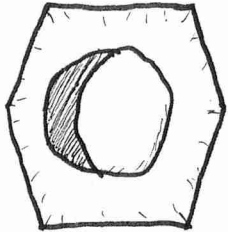
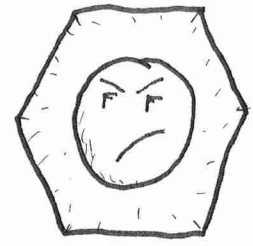
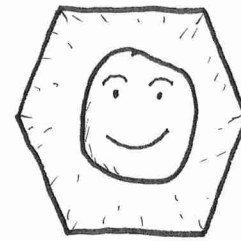
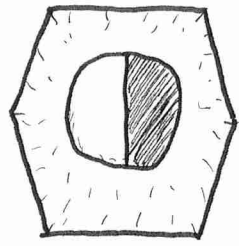
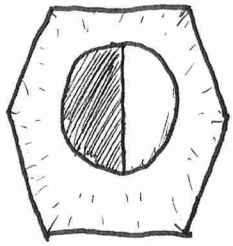
Inscription

When.the.Dark.perceives.the.distance.to.the.Light

The.Light.will.see.the.Dark

Then.the.Abyss.will.open.between.them

The.Path.of.Light.will.lead.to.the.Cage.of.Secrets



Secrets Have Power

In the Cage of Secrets, revealing your secrets is a magical act. When, in your mind, you promise the Goddess one of your secrets, she will help you. SAY IT when you use these mechanics so the DM does not have to guess.

Revealing your public secret – only once, and not in combat. If you talk about it (ie say it out loud, as player), you and the other character involved in your secret each regain 1d6 lost hit points. If you are unhurt, you get nothing out of it.

Revealing your deep secret – only once, so you can only choose one of the options below. You CAN do it in an emergency, but then you must tell your secret to another living person as soon as possible. Here are the two different forms of help that you can get:

Healing: You regain all lost hit points, escape if you are bound or pinned, and remove all conditions.

Inspiration: You can change a failed d20 roll into a 20 immediately after the fact. Also, you regain 1d8 lost hit points.

A divine gift – when you have revealed your deep secret, the Goddess will let you pick one out of two gifts: **Holy Insight** or **Holy Strength**. These will be permanent abilities.

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Holy Insight

On the plus side:

- You understand the story behind a secret that you find manifested in physical form here in the Cage.
- You can see certain hidden paths, follow them and take others with you.

On the minus side:

- Strong stress makes you uncontrollably shout secrets unless you make a *difficulty 8 Wisdom saving throw*. Doing so is an action in every round. If you fail your save, you can try again at the end of each of your turns.

Holy Strength

On the plus side:

- In combat, you can reveal your beastly side and turn into a rat person.
- If you attack as a rat person, you can bite people with your wickedly sharp front teeth. This is an extra attack, with the same stats as a knife attack, that you get when you use your regular action to attack in melee.
- When you are a rat person, you only take half damage from weapons that are not silver.

On the minus side:

- When you are a rat person, you take double damage from weapons of silver.
- Strong stress makes it difficult NOT to turn into a rat person – you must make a *difficulty 8 Wisdom saving throw* to resist.

The Player Characters of Secrets



Adelina, Cleric



Belladonna, Bard



Clementius, Wizard



Darek, Fighter



Ethan, Artificer

The Player Characters of Secrets



Adelina, Cleric



Belladonna, Bard



Clementius, Wizard



Darek, Fighter



Ethan, Artificer

Adelina 1/2 – Cleric

Adelina is 19 years old and the daughter of some of the leading merchants of the City. In practice, this makes her nobility. Right now that is not so great, as the City is on the verge of insurrection, spurred by the mysterious rebel, Jasca, who has been revealing embarrassing secrets about leading merchants.

Merchant or Cleric?

Adelina was born into a powerful merchant family, but though she has more than enough wits to keep accounts and persuade customers, she cannot be bothered with trading. It is simply unbearably boring! However, these days, you do not really have to trade in order to be a merchant, as long as you have the right blood.

Instead, Adelina is educating and initiating herself to be a priest of the Mysteries, the modern, dominant religion that promises salvation after death. Not that Adelina believes a word of all the grand promises about how the humble will be rewarded in the afterlife, but as a way to power, it is far more to her liking! She finds the rules and loopholes amusing, and though most people find old chronicles and forgotten cults to be as boring as any account ledger, Adelina is fascinated! The education also covers medicine, recreative drugs and poisons, and all of that is really useful. And genealogy, the study of family trees – SO useful AND a lot of fun.

It is only quite recently that Adelina has learned that magic that isn't just bullshit even exists. This is also very exciting, but it comes less naturally to her than spiritual rules-lawyering.

Ferman, the Loyal Bodyguard

Adelina really does not have a close relationship with her parents and siblings – they give her money and protection, but not much love. However, she has a father figure of sorts in her bodyguard, Ferman. Sometimes even a hard, sharp girl like Adelina needs a shoulder to cry on, or someone to complain to about how unbearably stupid people are. Ferman has been keeping her safe since she was seven years old, an old warrior of few words who does not judge her and who is not trying to use her. Her parents are threatening to fire him because he is over fifty and not as strong as he once was, but Adelina will not have it. Both because he knows too many of her secrets and because he is the closest thing to someone that she loves.

The Friends

Adelina also has a handful of friends – young "merchants" her own age with whom she parties and has fun. Not QUITE people to share her hopes and dreams with, but they have a community that is less cold than her family.

A Public Secret

The rules of the Mysteries say that if you are related within six degrees, marriage would be incestuous and invalid, and children would be shameful bastards, not heirs. Six degrees is a lot!

Adelina has a rare talent for diving deep into the archives, finding papers to say that people are, or are not, distantly related. She makes good money to supplement her allowance by blackmailing some rich people from lesser guilds with "proof" that their marriages are invalid. In one of the cases, it is even true...

Adelina 2/2 – Stats

Level 2 human rogue

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Strength | 8 -1 | Armor Class: 12 |
| Dexterity | 14 +2 (save +4) | Initiative: +2 |
| Constitution | 12 +1 | Hit Points: 15 |
| Intelligence | 17 +3 (save +5) | |
| Wisdom | 15 +2 | |
| Charisma | 14 +2 | |

Skills

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Athletics -1 | Perception +4 | Stealth +2 |
| History +7 | Investigate +5 | Locks & Traps +5 |
| Intimidate +2 | Deception +4 | Perform +4 |
| Sleight of Hand +2 | Medicine +6 | |

(Expertise in History and Medicine are included)

Rogue Abilities

Sneak Attack: Once per turn, you can do +1d6 damage if you have advantage on your attack, OR if you have an ally in melee with the target of your attack, and you do not have disadvantage.

Cunning Action: You can *Hide*, *Disengage* or *Dash* as a bonus action (instead of as a regular action).

Expertise: Extra good at two skills.

Equipment

Two daggers, thieves' tools, bottle of wine, cup, tinderbox, lantern, bottle of olive oil, a pair of nose-riding eyeglasses

Special Equipment

Grimoire (book of magic, get a hint from the DM once)

Poison (for dagger)

Sleeping draught (works after a minute)

Healing potion (works after a minute)

Actions

Regular: Attack, Help, Dodge (Dash, Disengage, Hide)

Bonus: Off-hand Attack, Hide, Disengage, Dash

Move: 30 feet (getting up costs 15 feet of movement)

Reaction: Opportunity Attack

Attacks

Dagger +4, damage 1d4+2 (+1d6 if sneak attack)

thrown range 20/60

(offhand only 1d4+0 damage)

Belladonna 1/2 – Bard

Belladonna is 19 years old and the daughter of some of the leading merchants of the City. In practice, this makes her nobility. Right now that is not so great, as the City is on the verge of insurrection, spurred by the mysterious rebel, Jasca, who has been revealing embarrassing secrets about leading merchants.

Merchant or Bard?

Belladonna was born into a powerful merchant family, but she UTTERLY and completely lacks the patience to handle accounts and negotiations! In the old days she would have had to learn or leave the merchants' guild, but these days "merchant" just means you are in charge. Not that she cares much for politics either.

Belladonna cares for partying, fun and games. She has a fair singing voice and is quite decent on the lute. Often, she sneaks into town to party in the taverns and the streets. Playing dancing tunes for sailors, seamstresses and mercenaries is SO much more fun than having to dance in ridiculous dresses at boring balls with thrice-damned string quartets!

Sometimes there is a bit of trouble, but trouble is all right! She is quite handy with her rapier, and is a strong runner if all else fails! No excitement without a bit of trouble. Her parents are a bit worried about the future, but until recently, Belladonna just laughed it off.

Ginette, the Girlfriend

Belladonna has a playmate, Ginette, a young potter. The two girls are a familiar sight in the taverns, with lute and tambourine. Ginette is Belladonna's good luck charm, and kisses better than any boy. She is less strong and aggressive than Belladonna, but Belladonna can fight for two. The families do not take it seriously, but it is true love! They do not understand.

The Friends

Adelina also has a handful of friends – young "merchants" her own age with whom she parties and has fun. Not QUITE people to share her hopes and dreams with, but they have a community that is less cold than her family.

A Public Secret

Belladonna is a mediocre but not useless musician. However, she has a pastime that she cares about far more passionately AND is far worse at – gambling for money with cards and dice. Sometimes she just throws away large sums, and then she can find some money at home, but sometimes pride gets the better of her, and then she cheats. She is not really GOOD at cheating, and often the people that she cheats kind of know. But they also know that her parents are so rich and powerful that protesting too loudly would be dangerous. It is kind of a public secret that Belladonna gambles and cheats.

Belladonna 2/2 – Stats

Level 2 human rogue

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Strength | 15 +2 | Armor Class: 14 |
| Dexterity | 17 +3 (save +5) | Initiative: +3 |
| Constitution | 14 +2 | Hit Points: 17 |
| Intelligence | 13 +1 (save +3) | |
| Wisdom | 8 -1 | |
| Charisma | 14 +2 | |

Skills

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Athletics +6 | Perception +1 | Stealth +7 |
| History +1 | Investigate +3 | Locks & Traps +3 |
| Intimidate +4 | Deception +2 | Perform +4 |
| Sleight of Hand +3 | | |

(Expertise in Athletics and Stealth are included)

Equipment

Rapier, dagger, posh leather armour, torch, tinderbox, thieves' tools, bottle of wine, lute

Rogue Abilities

Sneak Attack: Once per turn, you can do +1d6 damage if you have advantage on your attack, OR if you have an ally in melee with the target of your attack, and you do not have disadvantage.

Cunning Action: You can *Hide*, *Disengage* or *Dash* as a bonus action (instead of as a regular action).

Expertise: Extra good at two skills.

Actions

Regular: Attack, Help, Dodge (Dash, Disengage, Hide)

Bonus: Hide, Disengage, Dash (Off-hand Attack)

Move: 30 feet (getting up costs 15 feet of movement)

Reaction: Opportunity Attack

Attacks

Rapier +5, damage 1d8+3 (+1d6 if sneak attack)

Dagger +5, damage 1d4+3 (+1d6 if sneak attack)
thrown range 20/60

Clementius 1/2 – Wizard

Clementius is 19 years old and the son of some of the leading merchants of the City. In practice, this makes him nobility. Right now that is not so great, as the City is on the verge of insurrection, spurred by the mysterious rebel, Jasca, who has been revealing embarrassing secrets about leading merchants.

Merchant or Wizard?

Clementius was born into a powerful merchant family, but though he has a good head and is well spoken, he absolutely cannot be bothered with accounting and contract negotiations. However, these days, you do not really have to trade in order to be a merchant, as long as you have the right blood.

His interest is in beguiling illusions and transformations. Magic! Done with sleight of hand, misdirection and showmanship, rather than with real occult knowledge. But when the eyes of the audience shine with wonder and delight, is it not magic? Until quite recently, Clementius was convinced that all magic was clever deception, and he still does not quite know what to do with the existence of magic that is only partially trickery.

Of course, magic is neither respectable nor particularly profitable. Sure, he IS pretty good at cheating at playing cards, but there is no joy in it, and next to the money that the power of the merchants' guild can rake in, it is inconsequential.

Hermine, the Master Brewer's Daughter

Clementius' family has fallen on hard times, money-wise. REALLY hard. So, he has been ordered to make himself useful in the most embarrassing way – last year, he was married to an unbearable creature, Hermine. Daughter of a master brewer, and as such a match far beneath Clementius – but Hermine's father is truly rich, and Clementius' family is busy spending his money. Clementius and Hermine are forced to actually live together, though, otherwise daddy cuts off the money. SO embarrassing! The two have nothing in common. Clementius' father has papers handy to "prove" that Clementius and Hermine are distantly related and so, the marriage must be annulled – when all the money is spent, of course. But now, Father is saying that the political situation makes this impractical to go through with, and there is no end to the torment.

The Friends

Clementius also has a handful of friends – young "merchants" his own age with whom he parties and has fun. Not QUITE people to share his hopes and dreams with, but they have a community that is less cold than his family.

A Public Secret

Transformation! Now that is magic! To really have fun, Clementius uses makeup and clothes to turn into Cleo, a young lady magician. Cleo can get away with performing in far more dowdy and exciting places than Clementius, and sleep with people that Clementius would not dignify with a glance. It is scandalous and, like, semi-secret. Cleo is fundamentally a much nicer person than Clementius, and being her feels better. Women are no angels, but men are pigs.

Clementius 2/2 – Stats

Level 2 human rogue

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Strength | 9 -1 | Armor Class: 13 |
| Dexterity | 16 +3 (save +5) | Initiative: +3 |
| Constitution | 12 +1 | Hit Points: 15 |
| Intelligence | 15 +2 (save +4) | |
| Wisdom | 11 - | |
| Charisma | 16 +3 | |

Skills

| | | |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| Athletics -1 | Perception +2 | Stealth +5 |
| History +2 | Investigate +4 | Locks & Traps +4 |
| Intimidate +3 | Deception +5 | Perform +7 |

Sleight of Hand +7

(Expertise in Perform and Sleight of Hand are included)

Equipment

Dagger, hand crossbow, six crossbow bolts, thieves' tools, tinderbox, lantern, jar of olive oil, belt bag

Special Equipment

Appears to be a wand of bone, the sides can fall away from the blade at a push of a hidden button, surprise attack with advantage if you can make a *difficulty 12 Sleight of Hand*

Smoke bomb, screamer (non-exploding firecracker in a metal flute), green ghost torch, marked playing cards (extra aces up the sleeve)

Rogue Abilities

Sneak Attack: Once per turn, you can do +1d6 damage if you have advantage on your attack, OR if you have an ally in melee with the target of your attack, and you do not have disadvantage.

Cunning Action: You can *Hide*, *Disengage* or *Dash* as a bonus action (instead of as a regular action).

Expertise: Extra good at two skills.

Actions

Regular: Attack, Help, Dodge (Dash, Disengage, Hide)

Bonus: Hide, Disengage, Dash (Off-hand Attack)

Move: 30 feet (getting up costs 15 feet of movement)

Reaction: Opportunity Attack

Attacks

Dagger +5, damage 1d4+3 (+1d6 if sneak attack)
thrown range 20/60

Hand Crossbow +5, damage 1d6+3 (+1d6 if sneak attack)
range 30/120

Darek 1/2 – Fighter

Darek is 19 years old and the son of some of the leading merchants of the City. In practice, this makes him nobility. Right now that is not so great, as the City is on the verge of insurrection, spurred by the mysterious rebel, Jasca, who has been revealing embarrassing secrets about leading merchants.

Merchant or Fighter?

Darek was born into a powerful merchant family, but he does not have the head for handling accounts and negotiations. In the old days, merchants led caravans through the wilds, sword in hand, and there, Darek could have been of use, but that is not how it is these days. Now, on the other hand, a merchant does not have to be useful as long as he has the right blood.

Darek is strong, fast and physically brave, and pretty good with a pair of shortswords. It is almost embarrassing for the family that he cares about fighting skills, but he trains stubbornly. Both because he is convinced that it will be useful and because it is something that he actually isn't bad at.

Ivo, the Servant

Ivo is a year younger than Darek and has been Darek's servant since they were little. They might also be half brothers – Darek's father might have put Ivo in a maidservant. Ivo is much more than just a servant! He is also sparring partner, faithful companion and the only one that Darek dares tell almost anything. Sometimes,

rarely, Darek takes out a few frustrations on Ivo with bruises and harsh words (being Darek is often frustrating), but Darek always says sorry. And Darek often gives Ivo a bit of extra coin so his mother and siblings won't starve.

The Friends

Darek also has a handful of friends – young "merchants" his own age with whom he parties and has fun. Not QUITE people to share his hopes and dreams with, but they have a community that is less cold than his family.

A Public Secret

Through the last year, Darek has been fighting for real. In the shadows, with the mercenaries and other rough types that the merchants have hired to crack down on troublemakers. He has scars from people actually trying to kill him, and he has dealt out beatings and worse to the enemy. Sure, it's scandalous for someone from a fine merchant family to risk their life in dirty back alleys, but it has made Darek feel that he has worth, that he belongs, and before, he never felt that.

The flip side is that he understands HOW fragile the merchants' grip on power has become. How dependent on people whose loyalty is so much lesser and poorer than Darek's. He is well aware that his friends are all smarter than him, but they still don't get how bad things are. If the merchant's guild had three hundred that were strong AND loyal like Darek, the situation would be completely different, but there are few like him.

Darek 2/2 – Stats

Level 2 human rogue

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Strength | 17 +3 | Armor Class: 14 |
| Dexterity | 14 +2 (save +4) | Initiative: +2 |
| Constitution | 16 +1 | Hit Points: 19 |
| Intelligence | 8 -1 (save +1) | |
| Wisdom | 13 +1 | |
| Charisma | 11 - | |

Skills

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Athletics +5 | Perception +5 | Stealth +4 |
| History +1 | Investigate +1 | Locks & Traps +1 |
| Intimidate +4 | Deception +0 | Perform +0 |
| Sleight of Hand +2 | | |

(Expertise in Perception and Intimidate are included)

Equipment

Two shortswords, two daggers, studded leather armor, crowbar, 15 meters of rope, grappling hook, belt bag with a jar of wine and a small wooden box of sweet crackers.

Rogue Abilities

Sneak Attack: Once per turn, you can do +1d6 damage if you have advantage on your attack, OR if you have an ally in melee with the target of your attack, and you do not have disadvantage.

Cunning Action: You can *Hide*, *Disengage* or *Dash* as a bonus action (instead of as a regular action).

Expertise: Extra good at two skills.

Actions

Regular: Attack, Help, Dodge (Dash, Disengage, Hide)

Bonus: Off-hand Attack, Hide, Disengage, Dash

Move: 30 feet (getting up costs 15 feet of movement)

Reaction: Opportunity Attack

Angreb

Shortsword +5, damage 1d6+3 (+1d6 if sneak attack)

Off-hand shortsword damage 1d6+0

Dagger +5, damage 1d4+3 (+1d6 if sneak attack)
thrown range 20/60

Ethan 1/2 – Artificer

Ethan is 19 years old and the son of some of the leading merchants of the City. In practice, this makes him nobility. Right now that is not so great, as the City is on the verge of insurrection, spurred by the mysterious rebel, Jasca, who has been revealing embarrassing secrets about leading merchants.

Merchant or Artificer?

Ethan easily has the wits to learn bookkeeping, but it is simply too boring. And these days, you do not have to master trading to be a merchant, you just have to be born into the right family.

Ethan has a completely different passion, inventions. And his family's money makes him able to do experiments and take chances on things that only *might* work. He is a lot better at spending money than at making it, but maybe he can come up with a game changer that can give the troubled merchant's guild a shot at rising to new greatness, if only it can make it through the current crisis.

Billowing smoke! Clockwork making weird noises! The thunderclap and the terror it provokes! Now *that* is life!

Katya, the Assistant

Political considerations might require Ethan to marry one day (if the merchants' guild does not fall), but he already has an intimate partner. Not that they talk about feelings or rub genitals! Ethan's assistant, the clockmaker's daughter Katya, is incredibly, matchlessly intelligent, and her hands can put together things in the most

amazing ways. Nothing beats the incandescent intensity of working together into the night, bent over sketches, over a piece of mechanism that they struggle to bring to life, or in a laboratory where the scents of chemicals are far more enticing than any perfume. The dance of heated arguments and disagreements turning into agreement and the joy of creation.

Seriously, people talk SO much about sex, but that is just because they do not know how to invent and build things. Of course, Ethan is the one to take credit, and ultimately the one in charge, but he is also the one who brings the money to the table. Katya *gets* Ethan in a far more profound way than the over-decorated young ladies that his parents present to him at various fancy parties.

The Friends

Ethan also has a handful of friends – young "merchants" his own age with whom he parties and has fun. Not QUITE people to share his hopes and dreams with, but they have a community that is less cold than his family.

A Public Secret

Ethan has a habit of using things like fireworks and clockwork to make practical jokes at wedding processions and other solemn occasions for people from lesser guilds who put on airs above their stations. Sure it has happened that a panicking horse or two has broken a leg, and some unimportant people have been hurt a bit, but with nothing at stake, a joke is no fun. Right?

Ethan 2/2 – Stats

Level 2 human rogue

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Strength | 13 +1 | Armor Class: 13 |
| Dexterity | 14 +2 (save +4) | Initiative: +2 |
| Constitution | 14 +2 | Hit Points: 17 |
| Intelligence | 15 +2 (save +4) | |
| Wisdom | 10 – | |
| Charisma | 9 –1 | |

Skills

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Athletics +1 | Perception +2 | Stealth +4 |
| History +4 | Investigate +6 | Locks & Traps +6 |
| Intimidate +1 | Deception +1 | Perform –1 |
| Sleight of Hand +2 | | |

(Expertise in Investigate and Locks & Traps is included)

Equipment

Dagger, leather armour, tinderbox, torch, lantern, jar of olive oil, jar of 50% alcohol, jar of water, manacles + key, crowbar, toolbox (includes thieves' tools and 3 iron spikes), backpack, pocket watch

Special Equipment

The amazing **hand cannon** – a heavy matchlock pistol

3 lead bullets, 1 enchanted silver bullet, ramrod, Horn with gun-

powder for four shots (enough for a flash and smoke, but not a bomb), 4 fuses (matches) and uncut fuse for 5 more.

It takes a minute to clean and load the hand cannon and an action to light the match. A slow fuse burns for up to 5 min.

Rogue Abilities

Sneak Attack: Once per turn, you can do +1d6 damage if you have advantage on your attack, OR if you have an ally in melee with the target of your attack, and you do not have disadvantage.

Cunning Action: You can *Hide*, *Disengage* or *Dash* as a bonus action (instead of as a regular action).

Expertise: Extra good at two skills.

Actions

Regular: Attack, Help, Dodge, Light Fuse (Dash, Disengage, Hide)

Bonus: Hide, Disengage, Dash

Move: 30 feet (getting up costs 15 feet of movement)

Reaction: Opportunity Attack

Special: Load the **hand cannon**, 1 minute (10 rounds)

Attacks

Dagger +4, damage 1d4+2 (+1d6 if sneak attack)
thrown range 20/60

Hand Cannon +4 AND advantage if target is within 30 feet and in bright light, damage 2d10+2 (+1d6 if sneak attack)
Heavy (two-handed), range 30/90

Adelina 3/3 – The Secret

Adelina has a real secret as well. It is not just scandalous, it also whispers things to her about who she is that she really does not feel like listening to.

A couple of years ago, Adelina started realizing how fragile the power of the merchants' guild really has become. About the same time, she stumbled upon an old grimoire (book of magic). At first, she read for fun, but it was exciting! It was difficult and subtle, but some of the rituals seemed to work – divinations, little curses, things like that. Fun, but not powerful.

Half a year ago, she found another book, one that described a way to achieve power, *true* power, by making a pact with a demon. The initial exercises seemed promising, and the dreams were *so* lifelike! But really getting into it required a blood sacrifice, not just a black chicken like she had sacrificed earlier, a *real* one. It was a difficult decision, but two months ago, she tried to go through with it.

She had Ferman, her bodyguard, help her secretly kidnap a prostitute that noone would miss. In a grand ritual in the family wine cellar, Adelina sacrificed the woman's heart's blood to the demon – and then nothing happened. Not a thing. Nothing aside from the dreams turning into nightmares after that.

Adelina feels so foolish. So fooled. She has no doubt that magic exists, she only doubts whether the second grimoire was real or bullshit. It is not like Adelina to mess up like that, and honestly she feels bad thinking about the woman's eyes as she realized she was going to die, even though the whore was unimportant.

Ferman has never judged her, and he hasn't *said* anything. But there is something different about how he looks at her now, how he smiles at her. She fears that his loyalty has been compromised by the ritual, and it cuts her heart to have to doubt even her most reliable supporter.



Moon Cult Facts

The worshippers of the Moon Goddess did not believe in salvation in the afterlife, unlike the modern religion, the Mysteries, in which Adelina is a priestess. They sought advantages in life before death.

Also, the moon cultists believed that you can cause outward transformations by revealing inner truths that were hidden until now. Werewolf stories are examples of this, or a metaphor for it. It is not completely clear how literally they meant it.

Belladonna 3/3 – The Secret

Belladonna has a real secret as well. It is not just scandalous, it also whispers things to her about who she is that she really does not feel like listening to.

Belladonna is jealous around her girlfriend, Ginette. Like, really jealous. Ginette can dance with others, or even kiss them, but only if Belladonna is running the show. The thought of Ginette having *feelings*-feelings for others fills Belladonna with a mix of rage and horror. The thought of losing Ginette is simply unbearable. About a month ago, Belladonna's feelings had bloody consequences.

Ginette had a childhood friend named Linda, a potter like Ginette. A couple of months ago, Linda started turning up in some of the taverns and beer halls where Belladonna and Ginette entertained, and Belladonna noted both how Linda had grown up in a pretty wild way, and that Linda had her eye on Belladonna, and very much on Ginette. Not that Ginette returned those looks, but Belladonna still got suspicious.

One night, Belladonna discreetly followed Ginette home and spied on Linda and Ginette whispering to each other in a dark alley. Belladonna could not overhear everything, but it was something about Linda trying to talk Ginette into leaving Belladonna! They might have kissed too, Belladonna is not quite sure. Eventually, she could no longer hold still, and before she had really thought through what she was doing, she had stabbed Linda to death and knocked down Ginette. And kicked her three or four times. Maybe five. Then Belladonna ran.

Ginette cannot have seen who it was – it was dark after all. She was very upset, but Belladonna has done everything she could to comfort her, with caresses, gifts and brandy. Belladonna loves Ginette with more painful intensity than ever, but it is like something is broken. Maybe with time it will heal?



Moon Cult Rumour

Belladonna's girlfriend Ginette has learned an old song from her silly grandmother, who said it was something to do with the lady in the moon. It is something about how the same place can be more than one place. There was also a line about swallowing your eye to see the abyss open up. Totally wacky, haha!

Clementius 3/3 – The Secret

Clementius has a real secret as well. It is not just scandalous, it also whispers things to him about who he is that he really does not feel like listening to.

Really, the marriage to Hermine was supposed to be brief, an excuse to get Hermine's father to pick up some major expenses and give a couple of big gifts, and then, a couple of months later – oops, it turns out we were too closely related, the marriage must be annulled. Sorry! But political circumstances made it impossible to dissolve the marriage as planned, and Hermine's father has kept a frustratingly tight grasp on the gold. Most of all, he has demanded that Clementius and Hermine actually live as husband and wife. Under the same roof, in the same bed. They HAD to have sex! Not like all the time, but it has been the subject of recurring, ugly fights between spouses and parents on both sides. SO UTTERLY FUCKING EMBARRASSING!

Being temporarily married was bad enough, but some time ago, Clementius learned that Hermine is pregnant. That thought is completely unbearable, being father in an unwanted marriage that it proves to be impossible to escape. The thought fills him with disgust, panic, it takes away his breath. To have to declare your child an invalid whore-whelp (if the marriage is dissolved) or be forever bound to the sticky, whiny woman. A woman who throws him looks full of tears on the verge of dropping, unless it is one of the times where she tries to stuff him with sticky-sweet cakes to win his love and make him just as fat and icky as her and her whole, awful family. No, no, NO!

A week ago, Clementius was tipsy but not drunk, and had an idea and acted on it. In the most suspect tavern in town, he sought out a notorious killer for hire, "Jackdaw", gave her a nice advance and promised her a solid reward for murdering Hermine in a way that would make it look like the rebels did it.

Half the time, Clementius can simply not WAIT for it to be done so he can be free again, the other half he is tormented with regret and wants nothing more than to call off the contract. But he cannot get in touch with the murderer (he tried in a moment of regret) – she has disappeared from the face of the Earth. It is too much to take.



Moon Cult Rumour

The moon cultists thought you could steal people's luck. Or, others thought the moon cultists were stealing their luck when things went wrong for them.

Darek 3/3 – The Secret

Darek has a real secret as well. It's not just scandalous, it also whispers things to him about who he is that he really doesn't feel like listening to.

The bits about street fighting against rebels is not just about taking daring action against murderers, arsonists and troublemakers, it is also pure horror. The combat group that Darek is in has done truly terrible things trying to break the will of the pernicious upstarts. The others in the combat group, the hardened, brutal mercenaries, have demanded that Darek to do bad, bad things to prove that he is not just some rich tourist playing at being a street tough for the excitement. And Darek has done really bad things.

There ARE real fights, real danger. But much of it is also mind-numbingly boring waiting, lying in ambush. And sickening brutality while taking out your frustrations on the enemy. Or on the family and friends of the enemy. Or on people who might or might not be the enemy.

Two months ago, they caught a couple of boys making anti-merchants' guild graffiti. The veterans said that Darek had not yet proved that he had "true grit". A bit unfair, considering that he had both bled and killed. But true grit is not about what you do in the heat of the fight. True grit is very important. True grit is being able to strangle a tied-up twelve-years-old boy with your hands. Darek has true grit. The veterans were very proud of him and bought him beer at the tavern afterward. Before, it was always Darek buying beer, being a merchant and all.

Darek finds it a bit difficult, true grit. In a way, he IS proud, but he has been having some pretty nasty nightmares. Though he is proud, he hasn't told anyone other than his servant Ivo, and only because he would explode if he didn't tell SOMEONE outside the combat group.



Moon Cult Rumour

Some of the old royals that the guilds cast down were moon cultists. In the time before the rebellion, the moon cultists committed a series of spectacular murders as a part of failed, political intrigues, and the cult disappeared after the fall of the kings.

Ethan 3/3 – The Secret

Ethan has a real secret as well. It is not just scandalous, it also whispers things to him about who he is that he really does not feel like listening to.

The truth about the relationship between Ethan and Katya is that Katya is the genius. Ethan is a fine craftsman, and he has an eye for potential, but the spark that makes the impossible possible, that is Katya's. Without her, Ethan would be nothing special.

But Ethan is the one who pays, it is Ethan's whose name is out there. That is how it has to be. He thought she understood and accepted it, and appreciated the resources and possibilities that she got from their relationship. She is not badly paid, and her family isn't starving! As conditions in The City have become more uneasy, Katya has also become more dissatisfied. She wants glory, she wants money, she wants to call the shots! What happened to 'we'? They have had a couple of shouting matches, but he has never hit her. He would never do that – he loves her, with a platonic but passionate love.

It was so clear that their relationship was threatened, and Ethan is proud of his ability to think outside the box. So, he had some of his mother's servants kidnap Katya's 9-years-old niece and spirit her off to one of the family's country estates where she will be fine as long as Katya does not do anything stupid like helping the rebels or leaving Ethan.

But Katya is quietly furious. So furious that Ethan is actually afraid that she might let niece be niece and turn rebel anyway. He feels bad about the hostage taking, but done is done, and hopefully the two can learn to work together again. The loving intensity that they had until recently is not there right now, alas.



Moon Cult Rumour

The moon cult was known for intricate deathtraps, and accorded them spiritual value as tests of personal worth (and punishment of the unworthy). Many of the best designs of the trapmakers' guild are derived from the traps of the moon cultists.