



To Spurn the Churning Discord

XMH-4 Mark of Heroes Special

An Adventure for 10th-Level Characters (Scaled for 10th-12th Levels of Play)

A SPECIAL EVENT for the MARK OF HEROES™ Campaign

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Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

Sources: *Complete Psionic* (Bruce Cordell and Christopher Lindsay), *Eberron Campaign Setting* (Keith Baker), *EMH-1 Reflections of the Multiverse* (Stephen Radney-MacFarland), *EMH-2 Pirate's Bounty and the Isle of Fire* (Greg Marks), *EMH-3 No Ticket* (Stephen Radney-MacFarland), *EMH-9 Mote in the Eye of Chaos* (Stephen Radney-MacFarland), *Expanded Psionics Handbook* (Bruce Cordell), *Explorer's Handbook* (David Noonan, Rich Burlew, Frank Brunner), *Fiend Folio* (Eric Cagle, Jesse Decker, James Jacobs, Erik Mona, Matt Sernett, Chris Thomasson, James Wyatt), *Magic of Eberron* (Bruce R. Cordell, Stephen Schubert, Chris Thomasson), *Monster Manual III* (Rich Burlew, Eric Cagle, Jesse Decker, Andrew J. Finch, Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel, Rich Redman, Matthew Sernett, Chris Thomasson, P. Nathan Toomey), *Savage Species* (David Eckelberry, Rich Redman, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes)

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Adventure Background

In 998 YK, the Diggers' Union uncovered a group of extraplanar shapeshifters called the nerra, as they attempted to infiltrate Eberron. The Union defeated this attempt at the Crook Observatory and closed the portal to the Specurium, the origin of the nerra, though a handful of the nerra were able to escape into the Brelish countryside (*EMH-1 Reflections of the Multiverse*).

Shortly after, the Union discovered that one of these nerra had successfully replaced Heri ir'Vessen, a Karn noble, and several of the other escaped nerra had joined him in Northern Karnath (*EMH-3 No Ticket*). Research on these strange creatures using Belental Heirm's *Deviant Celestia*, suggested that Specurium was not its own plane, but rather a small part of the Churning Chaos, Kythri, where it existed as an area of calm from which the nerra were attempting to escape enslavement.

It turned out that centuries ago, githzerai of the Vendulzat Monastery had fled the illithids of Xoriat and came to Kythri. Here they encountered the nomadic nerra and enslaved them for unknown reasons. In recent years, the nerra began to formulate a rebellion and create a link between the Kythri mote (Specurium) and Eberron so that they might escape.

The Union foiled the nerra's second plan to create a connection to Wroat, but were unaware that at the same time, the nerra had created a passage between the mote and the village of Icenport in northern Karnath.

The githzerai were unwilling to lose their slaves easily, and laid siege to Specurium while the nerra worked to make it permanently part of Eberron and no longer a piece of Kythri. In order to combat the nerra from both sides, the githzerai sent a band of their warriors through to Eberron to close the Eberron-Specurium connection through any methods available. With their ability to appear as others, the nerra had convinced the populace of Icenport and nearby Vessen Keep that they were all loyal Karns, and so the Frost Brigade of Karn rode forward into a trap. The githzerai had brought a secret weapon that targeted the nerra who impersonated the Karn's leaders specifically, and used it to destroy the Karn defenses that were directed by nerra in disguise. The nerra retreated to Vessen Keep and prepared for the assault by the Vendulzat githzerai.

At that point, operatives of the Digger's Union arrived in Icenport (*EMH-9 Mote in the Eye of Chaos*). The Digger's adventurers discovered that Icenport had been decimated and later occupied by githzerai and slaad forces. The adventurers freed Icenport before sneaking into Vessen Keep and dislodging Specurium from its connection to Eberron, trapping the nerra as slaves to the githzerai.

Adventure Synopsis

The githzerai of the Vendulzat Monastery did not succumb to enslaving other sentient beings much like the mind flayers of Xoriat without help. This corruption at the heart of their society is none other than Khalecterios, an illithid who succeeded in infiltrating the group of escaping slaves with the intent of corrupting them and eventually bringing them back to Xoriat, and possibly aiding in the return of one of the Daelkyr lords imprisoned in Khyber.

It was Khalecterios who manipulated both the nerra into coming to Eberron and while there, he learned of both the Digger's Union and the Sarlonian Puzzle Orb (*EMH-2 Pirate's Bounty and the Isle of Fire*). Recognizing it as the focus of an *astral seed* for one of the powerful Quori of Dal Quor and possible part of that being's planar war against the waking world, Khalecterios arranged for it to fall into the Digger's hands so that it might be opened. The illithid hoped that the powerful Orb, with its ability to bypass the walls of space and time, might be twisted to freeing his dark Daelkyr master. When the nerra's first attempt to cross over into Eberron en masse failed, he hoped that they might be used to recover the Orb during their second attempt. It was during the arrival of the githzerai that he first found his way to Eberron himself and when the nerra failed to open a permanent gateway, it became clear that he would need new minions. The Digger's Union seemed to be present at each turn to thwart his plans, so perhaps they would be useful as his unknowing minions for this final attempt. The Digger's will open the Orb this time, and if it cannot be used to free one of the Daelkyr, then the Quori Tsekch'Skrakflekch, who created the Orb from the fevered dreams of the troubled genius Belental Heirm who wrote the *Deviant Celestia*, will be set free. Either way, it may spell the end of Khorvaire as the Digger's know it.

But the illithid is not the only one to have had his gaze drawn to the Diggers and the Puzzle Orb. One of the nerra still walks the lands of Khorvaire, and he has uncovered the plot. Vak'shiks hopes to twist the PCs to opening a gate neither to Xoriat nor Dal Quor, but once again to the mote of Specurium in Kythri where he might free his people from bondage.

At the same time, a group of Kalashtar hunters seek to stop the Diggers and acquire the Orb themselves, so that it can be hidden away in the mountains of Adar. Convinced that the Union has become a slave to darkness, they stop at nothing to defeat the Diggers and acquire the Orb.

Our adventure begins as the PCs meet with Matron Martra. The Diggers have discovered Sleeva Gotlug, an acclaimed savant and solver of puzzles is living in the wilds of the Eldeen Reaches. After exchanging correspondence with Sleeva, Martra has brokered a deal. The PCs are to take the Orb to this Gotlug and convince him to open it, so they can finally discover what is inside it.

Adventure Start: The PCs meet with Matron Martra in Grea Tower, where they are informed that the reclusive Sleeva Gotlug has agreed to open the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb for the Digger's Union. The PCs are to shepherd the Orb to Gotlug and deal with whatever might be inside.

Part One: The PCs begin the first leg of their journey on the lightning rail. Unfortunately, during one of the layovers, some unfriendly passengers come aboard, and shortly after leaving the station the team of Adaran kalashtar make their move against party. If the PCs capture at least one of the kalashtar, they may learn that the Orb is tied to the Dreaming Dark.

Part Two: The PCs travel via caravan from Passage to Varna and from there they are on their own to reach the area of the forest where they are to meet with Gotlug. The PCs have several options to speed or ease their journey while they are in Varna.

Part Three: The party eventually finds their way through the forest, travels to Wolf's Paw, and from there into the wood to their meeting place where they come across Vak'shiks posing as Gotlug. He tries to convince the PCs to give him the Orb, but if they delay sufficiently, the real Sleeva Gotlug interrupts them and a fight likely ensues.

Part Four: Sleeva leads the PCs to her home and after making them comfortable, attempts to open the Orb; with disastrous results.

Part Five: Sucked inside the pocket dimension of the Orb, the PCs have to find a way back to Eberron. However, they are not alone, Khaelesterios and his dolgaunts have followed them inside and seek to open the open the prisons of one of the Daelkyr lords. At the same time, the Quori who created the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb makes his presence felt.

Ending the Adventure: The PCs successfully open the gate and return to Eberron, possibly joining it to another of the planes in the process.

Troubleshooting

Who Carries the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb? During this adventure, it is critical to note which PC carries the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb, but if more than one PC should possess the story object, or none do, the DM must decide who carries it for the purpose of this story. One PC per table may carry the Orb. If no PC has the Story Object, Matron Martra will entrust it to them at the beginning of the adventure. If only one PC has the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb story object, they are the bearer of the Orb; but if more than one PC, or no PC, has the story object, the DM should follow the following criteria when making the decision (in order).

- 1) If two or more PCs at the table have the Orb, no PC without the Orb is a candidate.
- 2) If two or more PCs at the table have the Orb, the one that has failed the most Will saves is the bearer.
- 3) The PC with the lowest Will saving throw bonus.
- 4) The PC who is a kalashtar
- 5) Determine by a random roll.

The Sarlonan Puzzle Orb: In addition to the Will Save at the normal DC required at the very beginning of the adventure for a PC that already owns the Orb, the PC carrying the Orb must make a DC 25 Will saving throw at the start of each Part (1-5) of this adventure. A PC that has filled all of the check boxes on the story object, or fails any of the five required saving throws during the module is dead. DO NOT announce this; simply hand Player Handout #3 to the player of the affected PC and allow them to make the adjustments listed there. The PC's body is now host to a part of the Dreaming Dark and their new goals are listed on that sheet. You should familiarize yourself with the details listed there before running this adventure.

Adventure Start

The adventure begins on the second Zor of Olarune inside Grea Tower, the headquarters of the Digger's Union, in the city of Wroat, the capital of Breland. They have just been summoned from the dormitory to meet with Matron Martra. It is a cold winter morning.

In the early morning, you drug yourself from the dark and warm depths of depths of Grea Tower up here near the top, where the especially chilly Olarune day offers a blustery wind battering against the windows. The small fireplace struggles to hold back the cold as you sit in the company of several others around a large table. You have been summoned to meet with Matron Martra at eight bells in the Gerritta Room, one of the many meeting rooms in Grea Tower; this one named after Hansfor Gerritta a member of the Union lost twelve years ago in the jungles of Xen'drik. Waiting as patiently as possible on this unseasonably cold

morning, the frost inside the window has begun to melt, leaving a puddle on the floor. Clouds cover the sun, preventing the yellow tinted window from offering much light.

The PCs have an opportunity to introduce themselves and look about the room if they so choose. Large hangings depicting the heraldry of Breland and the Digger's Union cover the walls, with various minor honorary plaques studded between them. A large case filled with trophies from the Union's time as part of Morgrave University sits on the wall opposite the window. All of them are old, and none are especially noteworthy. Under a fine layer dust they are festooned with meaningless names from times long past. The narrow window does not open, and requires a DC 30 Escape Artist check for a small sized PC to fit through. Larger creatures cannot exit through the window. Once the PCs have had a chance to meet each other and examine the room, proceed with the entrance of Matron Matra.

The door opens on a stout, tanned woman who you have come to know as Matron Matra, the stern taskmaster who has become your patron in the Union. Matra carries a box full of files that sets upon the heavily table. An appraising eye wandering over those Diggers present, she heaves a sigh, "So it's to be you lot again, is it. I suppose you are most appropriate given the circumstances."

Matra settles into one of the large chairs that surround meeting table. "The Union has a mission for you, one not sponsored by any client. For sometime, we have been in possession of a strange artifact with no true knowledge of what it contains."

Marta gestures to the PC who carries the Orb, if a PC has the story object, otherwise she pulls out a lead box and opens it.

"Look closely Diggers," she says gesturing to the Orb. Gazing into the metal box, it is clear, the Orb is a beautiful, shining sphere with an entrancing blue radiance, seeming both substantial and something of the ether. Through the hypnotizing flashes, there is a sweet ringing... a soothing song.

"Don't stare at it for too long," Matra says forcefully, pulling you back to the present. "We've often thought that the Orb, a Sarlonan Puzzle Orb according to my old teacher Beltulmas, is dangerous; though we have no proof of that in all this time. Indeed the Orb is strangely resistant to any attempts to magically learn of it, and we don't even know if the Orb is psionically or magically powered; though it seems obviously psionic."

"Well, the time has come to finally figure out what is inside it and deal with it whether it's dangerous or worth a fortune. You are going to take the Orb the Eldeen Reaches where there is a skilled solver of ancient puzzles living a hermit life. Sleevea Gotlug has agreed to solve the Puzzle Orb for the Union, but only if we bring it to him. You will be my couriers. Here is your itinerary, a map, and some money for bribes and equipment. Find Gotlug, and open the Orb. If there is trouble, deal with it. I want this creepy thing out of our hands and over with."

If no PC specifically has the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb story object, Matra designates one of the PCs as its bearer and protector at this time.

Matron Matra is a stern Q'barran native who is a large formidable woman that has been the PCs' matron since their first mission. A powerful enchanter and matron of the Digger's Union, she accepts no horseplay, expecting all present to be professionals and not behave like children.

Matra can offer the following details if the PCs ask additional questions:

- Beltulmas knows the Orb's name, what else does he know? *Beltulmas is gone; disappeared. His tower in Newthron was completely empty and strangely cold. We found his apprentice Jevigol wandering the halls of his master's home blind and insane mumbling the same thing over and over again: "I dream in darkness, and that's where I will always walk." The boy died seven days later. He refused to eat and vomited up all attempts to feed him forcibly.*
- What does Jevigol's ramblings mean? *Well, it might have something to do with the Dreaming Dark of Dal Quor, but we have no way to know. He might just have gone insane.*
- Why do you think the Orb is dangerous? *It bothers me. Every time you look at it, it offers such a sense of peace and serenity that you feel compelled to look closer and longer. No one is supposed to be that happy. It's not natural.*
- What do you know about Sleevea Gotlug? *Next to nothing. Gotlug is a hermit and has only corresponded with the Union through letters. We don't actually know Gotlug's race or sex, though popular belief is that Gotlug is male. He first became known for solving a series of puzzles published in the Korranberg Chronicle. Each supposedly an unsolvable puzzle developed in secret by the editors, the paper offered a substantial prize to any who could solve them. Gotlug provided answers via a House Sivas delivered message the day after each paper was published.*
- What did you give us to accomplish our mission? *You have all the appropriate traveling and identification papers in those leather folds. In addition I have provided a rough map of your route and the approximate place in the Reaches where Gotlug has agreed to meet you. There is 25 gp in*

that small pouch that you may spend as you see fit. You also have tickets to travel from Wroat to Passage on the Lightning Rail. From there you are scheduled to meet with a d'Orien caravan headed from Passage in Aundair to Varna in the Eldeen Reaches. They are expecting you. Varna there you must travel into the wilderness to this point here; about four days past Wolf's Paw. From there you may have to do some scouting to find Gotlug. You leave as soon as you recover your belongings from the dormitory.

- *How are we to know what to do with whatever is inside? You've been a Digger long enough to be allowed some measure of discretion. If its valuable or worth study, bring it back. If it's a dangerous creature, make friends with it or destroy it. We are not a charity organization. It isn't that complicated.*
- *What if we use magic to shorten the journey? That's fine, though I have no way to locate Gotlug before the meeting time we have arranged based on the time it would take for you to travel normally. If you wish you, you could arrive early and wait for Gotlug's appointed meeting time. Gotlug is a famous for desiring his privacy and we need him, so don't go trying to find him before the agreed upon time.*

Any PC who succeeds on a DC 15 Bardic Knowledge check recalls hearing the story of Sleeva Gotlug that Martra relates and knows that Sleeva is a famous recluse who has been sought after by nearly as many adventurers and inquisitives for hire as half the treasure of Xen'Drik. Once the PCs have finished their questions, proceed with the first leg of the trip.

Part One: On a Rail

This part of the adventure deals with the party's travel on the lightning rail from Wroat to Passage. The train they are booked to ride is known as the Fair Weather Express and is two-thirds full. If the PCs choose not to ride the lightning rail provided for them, skip ahead to the next portion of the adventure. They do not encounter the kalastar team.

Travel Times on the Fair Weather Express

Assuming normal travel times, the PCs itinerary and travel times look as follows. If the PCs wish to use this time, or want to have spells active at certain times, this should aid the DM in determining where the PCs are during the kalastars' attack.

Departing	Arrives	Travel Time
Wroat	Hatheril	1 day, 0.5 hours
Hatheril	Sword Keep	6.25 hours
Sword Keep	Marketplace	11 hours
Marketplace	Passage	10.75 hours

Battles aboard a Lightning Rail

When an encounter occurs aboard a moving lightning rail coach, the easiest way to handle it at the gaming table is to treat the coach as stationary, moving terrain as necessary. Usually, however, the specifics of the landscape won't matter directly, though the slope of the terrain does affect how the lightning rail moves.

Everyone has seen movie action sequences involving trains, and players will likely be eager to employ some similar tricks.

Climbing onto the Roof: Hatches and ladders are located at the forward end of each cart. Opening a roof hatch is a move action. With a DC 0 Climb check, it takes 40 feet of movement to get up a ladder; a DC 5 Climb check gets you up the ladder with only 20 feet of movement. Unless a character is unusually burdened, failure simply means no progress on the climb, not an actual fall. Keep track of which hatches are open, since they won't need to be opened again before other characters can ascend or descend.

Detach Carts: Pulling the pin that connects one cart to the next takes 3 full-round actions. The first 2 rounds are spent disconnecting heavy chains between the two carts (an automatic success, but time-consuming). On the third round, a DC 20 Strength check is needed to pull the pin between the two carts. The part of the lightning rail coach no longer connected to the crew cart decelerates by 10 feet per round until it comes to a stop.

Fall or Jump Off: Treat this as a normal fall, except that it deals 2d6 points of damage due to the coach's horizontal velocity. As with any other fall, you can reduce the damage by 1d6 points if you jump down intentionally and succeed on a DC 15 Jump check. You can also reduce the damage by 1d6 points if you succeed on a DC 15 Tumble check. A person who jumps intentionally from a lightning rail cart and succeeds on both checks takes no damage.

Push Someone Off: A normal bull rush attack is generally sufficient to push someone off the roof of a cart. Attempting to do so from the outer walkways along the carts is somewhat harder, with the rail giving the defender a +2 bonus on the opposed Strength check. With difficulty, you can even push someone off the train from the inside, but the window gives the defender a +5 bonus on the opposed Strength check and the railing beyond provides an additional +2. Lightning cart windows are either glass (for passenger carts with wooden walls and roofs) or just empty spaces (for cargo carts with canvas roofs or steerage-class passenger carts). A character pushed through a glass window takes 1d4 points of damage in addition to any damage for falling from the cart.

Grab at a Railing: If you're falling off a lightning rail for whatever reason, a DC 20 Climb check lets you grab onto a guardrail or similar protrusion. A move action and a DC 10 Climb check is sufficient to pull yourself back onto the lightning rail coach, but you're hanging by your fingertips until you do.

Get Back onto the Moving Lightning Rail: As long as the entire coach is of sufficient length, it is possible to fall off the front cart of the lightning rail, get back to your feet, and then grab onto a rear cart. You must take a move action and move at least 20 feet in the same direction as the lightning rail before trying to climb back on. A DC 15 Climb check and another move action gets you back on one of the cart's outer walkways. At the back of the coach, the rear crew cart has a low platform that requires only a DC 5 Climb check to negotiate.

Moving the Lightning Rail

Even treating the lightning rail coach as stationary, the terrain it moves across can have a wide variety of effects on combat in and around the coach.

The lightning rail moves twice in each round, once at initiative count 10 and once at initiative count 0. Because you're moving the terrain, not the coach, move anyone not on the coach straight toward the back of the train at those initiative counts. These "moves" happen simultaneously and don't provoke attacks of opportunity—they're just an abstraction to simulate the vehicle's movement.

How far the lightning rail coach moves at each initiative count depends on the surrounding terrain and how straight its path of *conductor stones* is.

Terrain Conditions	Lightning Rail Movement
Flat straightaway	125 ft.
Uphill straightaway	100 ft.
Downhill straightaway	150 ft.
Uphill or downhill curve	100 ft.
Tunnel	125 ft.
Bridge	125 ft.

Tunnel: Once per round at initiative count 0, any nonprone character on a cart's roof takes 15d6 points of damage and is knocked off when he slams into the rock wall above the tunnel.

Bridge: The *conductor stones* are set on a rail narrower than the carts themselves, so only flying characters can be next to a moving lightning rail cart when it is on a bridge.

Your trip from Wroat to Hatheril was a long ride through the Brelish countryside. Matron Marta did not think to purchase meals for you along with your tickets, so some of you have been forced to subsist off whatever rations you carried with you, while others have enjoyed the expense of the dining car. A day has passed by the time the coach pulls into the station for a brief layover. Entertainment is limited, and so watching new passengers board at Hatheril comes easily. Through the window a dwarven woman struggles to corral nearly a dozen children, several of which are crying, as they enter the steerage cart. An attractive human woman wearing more jewelry than one might expect for rail travel, heads towards first class, with a small boy carrying three rather large cases. A man and a woman, bundled up against the cold, heave a large crate into your cart. It does not seem heavy, only awkward. A porter rushes back and forth between the platform and the storage cart, off-loading luggage for those who are disembarking. In a few minutes, the coach will pull you out of the station and you will make for Sword Keep; so much for entertainment.

Allow the PCs a few moments to stretch their legs in the morning air or attempt to meet any of the new PCs. None are especially interested in the PCs, but the DM is welcome to elaborate on any vignettes as he or she sees fit. In particular, the man and woman, both kalashtar trying to look human, go out of their way to be polite and cordial. The box of course contains the shadesteel golem, as it hovers in midair inside the box, though they will claim that it contains a few important silks packed in too large a crate.

Once the players have lost interest with the scene outside their window, determine what each of the players is doing before continuing. One hour after the train has pulled out of Hatheril, and most people have moved to the dining car, the kalashtar will make their move.

Foes: The kalashtar know that one of the PCs possesses the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb and that the Digger's Union intends to open it. While the kalashtar do not know specifically which of the PCs carries the Orb, it seems likely that the majority, if not all, has succumbed to the Dreaming Dark. As such, they do not wish to tip their hand to their enemies and so try to maintain the illusion of human clothiers on their way to Fairhaven. They view all the PCs as expendable in order to defeat what they view as the ultimate evil. Oruntash and Ilshana are zealots for their cause, and not concerned about collateral damage that they might cause as they fight to save their race from genocide. They do not try to injure innocent bystanders, but they do not take much effort to avoid them either.

The attack will begin as follows. Oruntash will manifest *thicken skin* upon himself and Ilshana will manifest *psionic freedom of movement* upon herself and *stygian ward* upon both of them. Oruntash will then knock upon the door to the party's cabin in the riding cart and failing a response, in the sleeper car. The goal of the kalashtar is to separate the PCs and take them unaware. Assuming someone answers the door, he will claim that his wife is ill, perhaps seriously, and asks if any of the PCs are skilled in the healing arts and might be able to look at her. He is quite insistent should none of the PCs seem inclined to help. Assuming someone is willing to come with him, he leads them from their room to his and opens the door for them. When they do so, they see the following scene.

A woman cowers at the back of the cabin a great, cowed figure menaces her, her terror given over to histrionics. The creature's feet are not visible, even though the robe it wears does not reach the floor. At your approach the thing turns, and you can see within its dark hood, a dour, skull-shaped head surmounts its broad torso, which is crafted from, or covered in, a matte black metal that seems to absorb light. It moves toward you, reaching with its sharp skeletal claws.

The kalashtar hope to trick the PCs into focusing upon the largely resistant golem that they brought on board in the crate while they attack by surprise. If the actions of the PCs make this plan seem non-viable, the DM should adjust accordingly.

Shadesteel Golem: hp 119; See Combat Statistics.

Oruntash: Male kalashtar fighter 4/psychic warrior 3/ranger 2; hp 79; See Combat Statistics.

Ilshana: Female kalashtar ardent 9; hp 65; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The golem blocks the doorway and makes liberal use of its negative wave pulse ability while slamming whomever it can reach. As soon as the PCs are focused on the golem, Ilshana will use her psionics from behind the golem, using *energy burst* or augmented *id insinuation* to the best effect. Oruntash has the most dangerous position, he attacks the rear of the party, in particular anyone trying to run away or any one trying to reinforce the PCs from the sleeper car. The kalashtar focus all of their efforts on the PC carrying the Puzzle Orb, if that PC is somehow made known to them (such as Oruntash sees a PC gazing at it when he knocks upon their cabin door). If they are able to get the Orb, they try to escape, leaving the golem behind.

Development (Guards): The Fair Weather Express, like most lightning rail trains, employs three guards (Deneith Defenders, human fighter 1). Two of them are in steerage and one is in the dining cart. These guards are likely to respond to any sounds of fighting, but are unlikely to have any measurable effect upon the combat. The DM may use them as he or she sees fit, perhaps dying horribly in a wash of negative energy. Assuming any guards or staff survive the fighting, the train staff checks everyone's travel papers and is willing to allow the PCs to maintain custody of the kalashtar or golem since they clearly were protecting the train rather than transport dangerous golems or starting fights, and the attack occurred with crossing a national boundary making the issue of jurisdiction complicated.

Development (Capturing the Kalashtar): If the PCs succeed in capturing either of the kalashtar, they resist interrogation to the best of their ability. They believe that all the PCs are minions of the Dreaming Dark, perhaps unwittingly, and any information they might give will only aid their enemies in opening the gate to Dal Quor and summoning an extremely powerful Quori to Eberron. They have seen many operatives of the Dreaming Dark who were unaware of their corruption, and so any deals or options the PCs might offer do not sway them. Death is preferable to corruption by the Dark.

This is not to say the PCs can gain no information from the kalashtar. They freely admit the PCs are all mind controlled by the Dreaming Dark and that anything they seek to do with the Orb is to the detriment of the waking and dreaming worlds. They are warriors of the Path of Light, willing to make any sacrifices necessary to defeat that greater evil.

Of course magical compulsions might also be used to greater effect. In this case, it can be learned that the kalashtar members of the Digger's Union passed along a description of the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb to Adar where it was recognized as a likely Quori artifact. Further exploration into the Diggers and their actions the last two years has lead the kalashtar to believe that many of them may be corrupt and the plan to open the Orb confirmed that. The pair was dispatched to recover the Orb at all costs before it could be opened.

Treasure: If the PCs are able to defeat the kalashtar and recover their bodies, whether conscious or not, they may claim their equipment. Of course, the kalashtar refuse to identify any of the items or how to use them, requiring the PCs to have some way to do so.

SHADESTEEL GOLEM CR 11

AL N Medium construct (Extraplanar)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light, Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Quor

AC 33, touch 13, flat-footed 30 (+3 Dex, +20 natural)

hp 119 (18 HD); **DR** 10/adamantine and magic

Immune Construct traits; immunity to magic

Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee 2 slams +20 (2d6+7 damage)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +20

Special Actions Negative wave pulse (12d6)

Abilities Str 24, Dex 16, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 7

SQ Shadow blend

Skills Hide +15, Move Silently +19

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A shadesteel golem is immune to any spell, supernatural ability, or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below. A magical effect that has the light descriptor (such as *continual flame*) causes the golem to speed up as if affected by the spell *haste* for 2d4 rounds. The golem is also hastened whenever it is subject to a positive energy effect, such as the turning attempt of a cleric. This might happen if the cleric has mistakenly identified the creature as a nightwalker or other undead, or if the golem is standing near undead. If a shadesteel golem is targeted by or within the area of a spell with the darkness or shadow descriptor, the golem is healed of 1 point of damage per level of the spell.

Negative Pulse Wave (Su): The shadesteel golem can radiate a burst of inky black negative energy as a free action every 1d4+1 rounds. The pulse wave drains life from all living creatures within 40 feet of the golem, dealing 12d6 points of negative energy damage. A DC 19 Fortitude save halves the damage; the save DC is Constitution-based. Undead creatures within the area are healed of 12d6 points of damage instead, and any turning effect they are under is broken. A *death ward* spell or similar effect protects a creature from a shadesteel golem's negative pulse wave.

Shadow Blend (Su): In any condition of illumination other than full daylight, a shadesteel golem can disappear into the shadows, giving it concealment. Artificial illumination, even a light or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, though a *daylight* spell does.

Hook *This 7-foot-tall shadowy automaton is crafted from a matte black metal that seems to absorb light. A mist fills the hollow spaces between its skeletal frame, and its two long arms end in sharp metal claws. A dour, skull-shaped head surmounts its broad torso, but the construct has no neck to speak of. It moves slowly but silently, hovering slightly above the ground and disturbing nothing as it passes.*

Oruntash CR 9

Male kalashtar fighter 4/psychic warrior 3/ranger 2

AL N Medium humanoid (kalashtar)

Init +2 (+4 within 60' of Ilshana); Senses Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common, Quor

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +5 armor, +2 deflection)

hp 79 (9 HD)

Immune dream and nightmare spells and other dream-reliant effects

Resist +2 on saves against mind-affecting spells and abilities, and against possession

Fort +13, **Ref** +11 (+13 within 60' of Ilshana), **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *shocking short sword* +11/+6 (1d6+4 plus 1d6 electrical/17-20) and +1 *silver short sword* +11 (1d6+3/17-20)

Ranged mighty composite longbow +11/+6 (1d8+3/x3)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11

Atk Options Favored enemy +2 (human)

Special Actions mindlink 1/day (ML 4th)

Power Points/Day: 13 (12 remaining); **Powers Known** (ML 12th):

1st (1 PP)—*burst* (swift action, +10 movement), *empty mind* (immediate action, +2 Will Saves for 1 rd), *thicken skin* (+1 AC for 10')[†]

[†]Already cast

Abilities Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 8

SQ wild empathy

Feats Deep Impact (expend focus to resolve an attack as a touch attack), Greater Psionic Weapon (expend focus to gain +4d6 damage on one melee attack), Improved Critical (short sword), Improved Toughness, Precise Swing, Psionic Meditation (regain focus as a move action w/DC 20 Conc. check), Psionic Weapon (expend focus to gain +2d6 damage on one melee attack), Track, Two-Weapon Fight, Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Specialization (short sword)

Skills Bluff +1, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +1, Disguise +1 (+3 to impersonate a human), Intimidate +9, Hide +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +6, Survival +6

Possessions mithral chain shirt, *ring of protection* +2, +1 *shocking short sword*, +1 *silver short sword*, masterwork short sword, dagger, mighty composite longbow [+3], 20 masterwork arrows, *cloak of resistance* +1, traveling papers

Hook “Whatever the Light requires; through any means necessary.”

Ilshana CR 9

Female kalashtar ardent 9

AL LN Medium humanoid (kalashtar)

Init +5 (+7 when focused); Senses Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages Common, Quor

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+9 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex, +2 shield)

hp 65 (9 HD)

Immune dream and nightmare spells and other dream-reliant effects

Resist +2 on saves against mind-affecting spells and abilities, and against possession

Fort +5, **Ref** +4 (+6 when focused), **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk morning star +6 (1d8-1)

Ranged light crossbow +8 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +5

Special Actions mindlink 1/day

Power Points/Day: 108 (85 remaining); **Powers Known** (ML 9th):

5th (9 PP)—*psionic freedom of movement* (90')[†]

4th (7 PP)—*intellect fortress* (immediate action, Ilshana and all allies within a 20' radius, all damage from powers and psi-like abilities are halved for 1 round, +1 PP/+1 round), ^{Life}*stygian ward* (death ward, touch, 9')^{††}

3rd (5 PP)—*energy burst* (40' range, 40'radius burst, Ref DC 18 halves, cold: +1 dam/die, save becomes Fort; electricity: +2 DC & +2 lvl to overcome SR; fire: +1 dam/die; sonic: -1 dam/die & ignores hardness; +1 PP/+1d6 and per +2d6 add +1 DC)

2nd (3 PP)—^{Life}*from the brink* (immediate action, stabilizes target, 45', +1 PP/cure +1 hp to target at max of 1 hp), *hustle* (swift action, gain a move action), *id insinuation* (confusion, 45', conc. +1 round, Will DC 17 negates, +2/extra target & +1 DC)

1st (1 PP)—*dimension hop* (swift action, move 10', +1 PP/+5'), *mind thrust* (1d10, 45', Will DC 16 negates, +1 PP = +1d10, per +2d10 add +1 DC), ^{Life}*touch of health* (cure 2 hp, +1 PP/2 hp)

[†]Already cast

Mantles: Energy, Freedom, Life, Mental Power

Abilities Str 9, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 20, Cha 10

SQ Mantle abilities

Feats Gestalt Anchor (Ilshana and kalashtar allies within 60' gain +2 Initiative and Reflex saves while focused), Improved Initiative, Improved Toughness, Psionic Meditation (regain focus as a move action w/DC 20 Conc. check)

<p>Skills Autohypnosis +17, Bluff +2, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +0 (+2 to impersonate a human), Intimidate +2</p> <p>Possessions combat gear plus +1 <i>full plate</i>, heavy steel shield, masterwork morning star, <i>cloak of resistance</i> +1, light crossbow, 20 masterwork bolts, <i>cognizance crystal</i> (3 PP), <i>periapt of wisdom</i> +2, <i>ring of protection</i> +1, traveling papers, papers detailing the PCs' travel plans</p>
<p>Energy Mantle Granted Ability Ilshana can expend her psionic focus to gain resistance 5 to one energy type for 7 rounds.</p> <p>Freedom Mantle Granted Ability While Ilshana is psionically focused she gains +10 speed. Ilshana can expend her focus to add +9 to avoid or escape a grapple.</p> <p>Life Mantle Granted Ability Ilshana can expend her focus as a swift action while manifesting a power from the Life mantle to raise her manifester level by one.</p>
<p>Hook <i>"The mind is more deadly than any blade."</i></p>

Scaling the Encounter

11th-Level Characters: No change.

12th-Level Characters: Add additional kalashtar named Irtash with the same statistics as Oruntash.

Part Two: On the Trail

This encounter covers the party's travel from the end of the lightning rail line in Passage to Varna via caravan and from there into the forests of the Reaches. Once the PCs arrive in Varna, they have the opportunity to learn more about the contact.

Compared to the excitement that plagued your lightning rail trip, your caravan trip from Passage across the border to Varna went quietly. The caravan master, a half-elf by the name of Bialus left each member of the caravan to his own devices. Most members of the caravan are transporting feed and training aids to the home of House Vadalis, with the intent to return with valuable magebred animals.

Arriving in Varna, the last large city before the wide expanse of green, animals surround you. The influence of the House of Handling is obvious. Ranches, stables, and training facilities are more easily encountered than inns or homes. As the various members of the caravan go their separate ways, it becomes clear that for the last leg of your journey, you are on your own.

It is up to the PCs to decide their next step. They can blindly head off into the wilderness following Martra's rough map, or they might attempt to Gather Information on their destination and target. Listed here are some of the possibilities, though with the wide variety of options, the DM may have to adjust to creative ideas.

In Varna, the PCs can also purchase cold weather gear, or minor magical items to protect themselves from the cold.

Acquiring Mounts

Given the location, some PCs might decide to purchase mounts or guard animals for the rest of their journey. The House will not rent animals to those leaving the city; so all attempts to gain additional animals will require a purchase in hard coin. The PCs may purchase any animal on the table below from a House Vadalis vendor with little trouble. Note that these prices include a discount for purchasing the animal and picking it up directly. All animals are average for their type.

- Magebred Guard Dog: 200 gp
- Magebred Riding Dog: 240 gp
- Magebred Donkey or Mule: 64 gp
- Magebred Heavy Horse: 320 gp
- Magebred Light Horse: 120 gp
- Magebred Pony: 48 gp
- Magebred Heavy Warhorse: 640 gp
- Magebred Light Warhouse: 240 gp
- Magebred Warpony: 160 gp
- Hippogriff: 3200 gp

Gathering Information

It is likely that given the limited information the PCs have at the start, it will be necessary to Gather Information. Feel free to role-play these brief encounters, or use the Gather Information skill as fits the temperament of the table. Those that role-play these encounters may receive any of the following information as the judge sees fit, based upon whom they speak with. For those rolling skill checks, PCs who seek out information among woodsmen or working class folk receive a +5 circumstance bonus to rolls made to find information concerning Wolf's Paw and the surrounding area. Members of House Vadalis receive an additional +5 circumstance bonus. The PCs should receive an additional +1 to their check for every extra 10 gp they spend (up to +5 for 50 gp spent). Assume rolling Gather Information costs the PC 2d4 gp in drinks and bribes and takes three hours. Depending on whom the PCs specifically approach, the DM may also allow Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks with certain NPCs. PCs receive all information for the DCs they beat or equal with their check.

There are several topics that the PCs may choose to Gather Information upon, but only two are provided here. Each check only covers one topic and requires an additional three hours. No information can be found on the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb.

Sleeva Gotlug

- DC 5: *"Sounds familiar, some kind of worm right?"*
- DC15: *"He's the guy that solved all those puzzles in the Chronicle right? Some folks say that he lives around here somewhere."*
- DC 20: *"Ya, I've heard of him. Folks around these parts say that he's a hermit because he enjoys the company of the animals of the wood better. Can't say I blame him. My dog don't complain near as much as my wife."*
- DC 30: *"I've actually met her one. Now I always assumed what with being so smart that she'd be a woman, but who would have thought that she'd be a goblin?"*

Wolf's Paw and the Area

- DC 5: *"It's a very small farming town somewhere to the west of here."*
- DC 10: *"You some sort of shifter, boy? My eyesight's not so good anymore. No one goes there but shifters. Wolf's Paw is for those folks that gots a feral bent to them, if you know what I mean."*
- DC 15: *"Wolf's Paw is just about the only permanent shifter community. It's to the northwest of here, and they deal mostly with farming, though a great many skins and sides of meat come here from Wolf's Paw. I think they have ties to the Wardens of the Wood."* [The PC gets detailed directions to Wolf's Paw.]
- DC 20: *"If your not a shifter, don't plan on staying there for long. They are an awfully closed group. Slara, they call her the Pack Leader, don't let no one hurt travelers that come through, but I'd guess they are hiding something. Prolly some animal thing."*

Getting Directions

Some PCs may wish seek a guide or a more accurate map of the area to which they are traveling. A map from one of the locals can easily be purchased for 2 gp. Details on the effects of a map are listed in the next encounter.

If the PCs seek out a guide, a few hours of searching locates Hindair (male, shifter [wildhunt], ranger 2) who has traveled several times to Wolf's Paw. Hindair is a boisterous man with a large dog-like nose, and is generally friendly, though quick to change moods; small things rile his bestial nature. Hindair has been to several Wolf's Paw several times and knows all the general information about that town provided in the Gather Information section listed above. He also knows that there are less than 100 folk living there and that the town's spiritual leader is a druid named Lorgan. While he has no reason to travel to Wolf's Paw, he is willing to guide the party that far for 5 gp. He isn't willing to go further than Wolf's Paw however, as he has to meet a caravan headed to Greenheart in a week and won't have time to be traipsing about the woods looking for one man. No amount of money will get him to change his mind, as he is as loyal as dog to a contract he's already agreed to.

Part Three: Wolf's Paw and Beyond

Once the PCs have left Varna, it is important to determine how they intend to find their destination. In addition, since combat in the woods is a possibility, they DM should also determine the party's marching and watch orders. Note that it is also winter in the northern woods. Those not wearing cold weather gear, under the effects of a *endure elements* or taking similar precautions may be suffer the effects of the cold weather

(DMG 302). The DM should also determine how much food the PCs have brought with them into the wilderness, or what alternate means the PCs plan to use to feed themselves.

Getting There

If the PCs are traveling towards Wolf's Paw and their eventual meeting with Gotlug beyond, they have several options to find their way.

On Their Own: The PCs can trust in the maps and descriptions given to them by Matron Martra. To find their way and avoid getting lost, they must succeed in a DC 15 Survival check. This check may be retried once each day, but if the PCs fail they suffer the consequences listed under "Getting Lost." If the PCs succeeded in getting directions to Wolf's Paw (a successful DC 15 Gather Information above) they receive a +2 circumstance bonus to this check. Remember that those with 5 ranks in Knowledge (geography) always receive a +2 synergy bonus to this check.

Follow the Map: If the PCs purchased a more detailed map in Varna, they follow the same mechanics as listed above under "On Their Own," except that in order to find their way, the DC is only 10. Those with 5 ranks in Knowledge (geography) receive a +4 synergy bonus to this check, instead of the normal +2.

Hindair: If the PCs have hired Hindair to be their guide, he successfully leads the way with no problems, and paints the trip with colorful stories of his travels throughout the Reaches and his conquests of various barmaids, ferocious beats, and vast pitchers of ale.

Getting Lost: If the PCs do become lost, they use up one day of rations. If they fail repeatedly and run out of food, the PCs begin to suffer the effects of starvation as detailed one page 304 of the DMG. In addition, the first time they become lost, the party encounters two dire bears that have just killed a large stag. Eager to defend their kill, the bears attack the party viciously. If either bear is reduced to 20 or less hps, it flees.

Hungry Dire Bear (2): hp 105; See MM 63.

Finding Sleevea Gotlug (EL 12)

Once the party has traveled as far as Wolf's Paw, they have to locate Sleevea Gotlug, with only a general meeting place designated in the woods.

Wolf's Paw was little more than a small thorp and the folk there were polite enough but there was clear relief when you took your leave. No one was able to give you any assistance in your efforts to locate Sleevea Gotlug and so you have headed into the wood, toward the meeting place designated on Martra's map. It is a fine day in the woods, though quite cold. A light snow and fallen leaves of an autumn past crunch loudly as you progress.

After two days of wandering the area, you come upon a simply dressed man, resting upon a large rock in a clearing. The man has long wild brown hair, with a matching curly beard and is dressed in warm clothes covered in a simple brown robe. A walking stick lies next to him. Seeing your approach, the man smiles. "Have you brought the puzzle? I should very much like to see it," he says extending a hand.

This is of course not Sleevea Gotlug, but rather Vak'shiks the nerra in the guise of a human. Not having been able to find any description of the famed hermit, Vak'shiks looks as many assume Sleevea to be. He wants the PCs to give him the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb as quickly as possible, but does not want to arouse any suspicion. If the PCs wish to question him, or confirm his identity, he claims to be Sleevea Gotlug and can elaborate on any of the common information that the PCs already know. He knows that the Digger's Union has contacted Sleevea but knows none of the details.

If the PCs refuse to trust them, he bids them safe travels on their way back to Wroat and moves to go into the woods, presumably home. He believes this bluff should be sufficient to convince the PCs to show him the Orb. If the PCs still refuse, or attack, the real Sleevea Gotlug appears and the nerra is forced to resort to combat.

At some point it is likely that the PCs will hand him the Orb so that he might attempt to solve the puzzle and open it. When this occurs, proceed with the following read allowed text. The text assumes Vak'shiks holds the Orb. The DM should adjust it if this is not the case.

Sleevea's face lights up as he examines the Orb. "Truly magnificent," he offers turning it over and over. "This may take me some time..."

Sleevea stops suddenly as the crunching of snow announces the approach of another. A bespectacled goblin woman, in robes walks somewhat surprised into your clearing, several scrolls bulging from her pack and another is in her ink-stained hand. She drops the piece of charcoal she was using to mark the page in surprise, and it bounces unceremoniously off the head of the small wolf at her side. "Oh my. I think I may be late. Is that the Orb Martra wrote to me about?" says the goblin woman as she wipes her hand on the outside of her ratty robe before offering it.

The man you thought was Sleeva looks quickly at each of you, before pushing the Orb into pocket and making for the edge of the woods. As he moves, his robes and skin become like that of a polished mirror. "What in the world is that?" the shocked goblin woman asks, her mouth agape.

When the PCs move to attack him, or because the real Sleeva Gotlug interrupts him, Vak'shiks realizes that his ruse is up. He moves to escape with the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb as quickly as possible. As combat begins, Vak'shiks has taken a single move away from the party (possibly provoking attacks of opportunity if any of the PCs have Combat Reflexes) towards a mirror he has hidden under the snow and brush two hundred and fifty feet away (Search DC 15 if the PCs are looking for it). The trees, undergrowth and snow prevent him (or anyone else) from running but otherwise do not affect combat. The charge action is allowed. The real Sleeva (female goblin bard 3/druid 1/expert 4) does not participate in the combat unless attacked.

Vak'shiks: male sillit nerra monk 6, hp 87; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics: Vak'shiks' primary goal is escape, so he moves toward the mirror taking double moves unless he is restrained. Once there he uses his *mirror jump* ability to escape. If the PCs are able to engage him in melee, he fights to the best of his ability, using his *shard spray* if advantageous and faced with several opponents. The Orb is the salvation of the nerra, and as such Vak'shiks stops at nothing to escape with it. If attacked by a PC with shining metal armor and the other PCs are closing in, Vak'shiks attempts a to mirror jump through the armor to the mirror he has hidden so he can use it to escape to another mirror one mile away.

Development (slow PCs): If all the PCs are truly slow and have no conceivable way to intercept Vak'shiks, the DM may choose to show mercy upon the PCs by having Sleeva casting an *entangle* spell placed in such a way to slow Vak'shiks but not pursuing PCs.

Development (Vak'shiks escapes): It is quite likely that Sleeva could escape from the PCs with the Puzzle Orb. If he does so, he exits a mirror one mile away, also hidden in the woods. He then adopts the guise of a dwarven trader and makes for Varna and from there to Marketplace where he boards an airship for Karn. Once there he uses the Orb to open a portal to Specurium. If the PCs are capable of tracking and following him, possibly through the use of *scrying* and *teleport* spells, the DM may adjudicate that chase. If the PCs do not stop him before he uses the Orb, the adventure is over.

Development (Vak'shiks captured alive): If the PCs succeed in capturing Vak'shiks, he is extremely hostile, given the Digger's Union's involvement in his peoples continued subjugation. He does his best to refuse them any aid, but he does know several things that the PCs would find helpful if they are able to get it out of him. Vak'shiks knows that the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb can be used to open stable portals to other planes, and that is why he wanted it. He also knows that he is not the only person trying to recover the Orb. There are a group of kalashtar who seek to carry it away to far away Adar and bury it so it can never be used. He doesn't know why. Also, someone else, possibly one of the githzerai of the Vendulzat Monastery that currently enslave his people, also seeks it; likely to stop Vak'shiks from getting it. He suspects that they seek to use the Orb to open a gateway to somewhere else. Unknown to Vak'shiks, this is actually Khalecterios the illithid who succeeded in infiltrating the githzerai.

Vak'shiks CR 12

Male nerra (sillit) monk 6

AL LN Medium outsider (extraplanar)

Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft., Listen +14, Spot +14

Languages Common, Goblinoid, Kythric, Orcish, Sylvan

AC 26, touch 17, flat-footed 19 (+3 armor, +4 Dex, +1 monk, +6 natural, +2 Wis)

hp 87 (13 HD)

Immune gaze attacks, natural diseases

Resist cold, electrical and fire resistance 15, evasion, +2 saves vs. enchantments; **SR** 19 (*reflective SR*)

Fort +12, **Ref** +14, **Will** +12

Weakness sonic vulnerability (+50% damage)

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee shard longsword +17/+12/+8 (1d8+4 plus 1 CON/19-20) OR

flurry of blows +16/+16/+11/+7 (1d8+2) OR

shard longsword +15/+10/+6 (1d8+4 plus 1 CON/19-20) AND

unarmed strike +14 (1d8+2)

Ranged javelin +15 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Ki strike (unarmed attacks consider magic)

Special Actions shard spray (3/day, 5d6)

Combat Gear *potion of aid*, tanglefoot bag

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th):

At will—*disguise self*, *false vision*, *mirror image*
3/day—*mislead* (DC 20)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 18

SQ mirror jump, outsider traits, slow fall 30 ft.

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shard longsword), Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist (7/day, DC 18), Sun School (1: if you hit target with 2 unarmed strikes, you force them back 5 ft and you may follow without drawing an AoO; 2: if you stun target 2 rds in a row, they are confused for 1d4 rounds after), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (shard longsword)

Skills Bluff +14, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +16 (+18 acting), Escape Artist +17, Gather Information +14, Hide +14, Intimidation +16, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +14, Move Silently +14, Sense Motive +14, Spot +14, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks or on other planes); Tumble +20

Possessions combat gear plus *shard longsword*, 3 javelins, *bracers of armor* +3, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, disguise kit

Mirror Jump (Su) Vak'shiks can move through mirrored and reflective surfaces at will. This effect is similar to *shadow walk*, but the nerra travels along the Plane of Mirrors. As a standard action, the nerra must touch a mirror or other highly reflective surface. The nerra exits from another mirror that is no further than 1 mile away.

If a nerra touches a regular mirror, the mirror jump happens automatically. A nerra can also touch a highly reflective surface, such as a polished metal shield or armor. This surface must be clear glass, a still pool of water, or shiny metal. There is a 30% chance that the surface is reflective enough for the nerra to make the mirror jump. However, a nerra can only enter a nonmirrored surface—it can return only through a normal mirror.

If another mirror is not within the range of the mirror jump, the nerra must wander the Plane of Mirrors and exit through another random mirror portal.

Reflective Spell Resistance (Sp) Vak'shiks has a special type of spell resistance that causes any targeted spell it successfully resists to bounce off and reflect back at the caster. The caster becomes either the spell's target or the point of origin for the spell's effect, as appropriate. In addition, nerras are immune to gaze attacks, and such an effect is reflected back to its origin.

Shard Spray (Su) Three times per day, Vak'shiks can release a spray of mirror like shards from his hands that can flay flesh and cause massive lacerations. The spray is a 30-ft. cone and deals 5d6 points of damage. In addition, a wound resulting from Vak'shiks' shard spray attack bleeds for an additional 2 points of damage per round thereafter. Multiple wounds result in cumulative bleeding loss. The bleeding can be stopped only by a successful Heal check (DC 10) or the application of any *cure* spell or other healing spell (*heal*, *healing circle*, or the like).

Hook "You will see what you want to see."

Part Four: Doorways

Once the PCs have succeeded in recovering the Orb, or preventing its theft entirely, they are free to meet the actual Sleeva Gotlug.

"Well that was certainly something, now wasn't it?" the goblin says looking up at you wide-eyed. "Thank goodness you stopped that creature. Without you the puzzle would have been stolen away to who knows where," the goblin wipes her runny nose on the back of her dirty sleeve and then pets her oily pet with the same hand.

"Oh, forgive me. My name is Sleeva, Sleeva Gotlug. Let me invite you to my home so we can have a glass of tea and maybe get out of the cold."

Sleeva is extremely well educated for a goblin, and speaks with educated speech, though many of her mannerisms are those of goblin from the gutters of Sharn. Sleeva is willing to submit to any tests necessary to prove who she is, given the recent circumstances, before the PCs follow her to her home in the woods and hand over the Orb. She is aware that they are the Diggers from the Union and that she has been corresponding with one Matron Martra of said Union. Sleeva should pass any test set before her, as in addition to being extremely intelligent; she is actually the real Sleeva. If the players desire, allow the PCs a few moments to role-play with the humorous hermit before continuing on to her home.

Her wolf, Enigma, is very protective of her, and used to getting his way. He will be treated as an equal of the PCs when in her home, complete with having his own chair at the table and bowl of tea.

Sleevea leads you to a small picturesque cottage, well hidden in the deep woods. While a bit small for some of you, the insides are cozy and clean. Papers, puzzles, books, and games of strategy litter ever shelf and doily covered table. After finding a chair for each of you, and her wolf, Sleevea offers each of you a cup of fragrant tea in front of a pleasant fire. Settling into a well-worn cushioned chair, she examines the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb. "I've never seen anything like this," she whispers as the flickering light reflects off thick glasses that barely cover her great black eyes. Sleevea taps some of the colors and makes a strangled whistling noise. The Orb responds by changing its pattern and song. "Oh yes, that should do it." She taps the side again and while making a noise disturbingly like a duck being repeatedly stepped upon. The Orb flashes violently red and begins to vibrate. You vaguely recall hearing "Oh, that doesn't seem right," before the explosion.

Sleevea has inadvertently opened the Orb, sucking the PCs, Enigma, and much of the contents of Sleevea's front room inside. Sleevea herself remains in her now empty parlor. The explosion has momentarily blinded and stunned all of them. Place all of the PCs prone on the battle mat and proceed to Part Five.

Development: If the PCs refuse to allow Sleevea to handle the Orb due to the previous attempt to steal it, she attempts to guide one of the PCs in opening it. This only makes it more humorous when things go astray, as Sleevea will insist the PC must have done something slightly wrong to have gotten them into their current predicament.

Part Five: Through the Looking Glass

After the PCs regain their senses it is clear that they are no longer in the Eldeen Reaches; though it appears that Sleevea's living room and mangy pet have followed them to wherever they are now.

Clearing your head of the blinding light, you find yourself lying upon a floor of uneven crystal or glass. The shattered remnants of Sleevea's parlor are scattered around you and your prone companions. Enigma, the goblin's mangy wolf lies close at hand, whining quietly. Standing, it is clear you are somewhere else.

"Hello? Hello? Is anyone in there? Has anyone seen my wolf? Or my chair? Hello?" The goblin's voice echoes loudly off the walls.

Sleevea is not with the party, and while they can hear her voice echo inside the Orb, she cannot hear them. There is no way within the PCs power to communicate or leave the Puzzle Orb without further exploration. All summoning and extradimensional spaces work normally, however, those creatures that are summoned do not disappear if slain; their bodies stay behind. Planar travel abilities do not function with the Orb.

The party begins on DM's Map #2a, in room "1," at the position labeled "A." Please note the section Unexpected Guests that follows the room descriptions described in The Puzzle Orb. This second section details the arrival of Khalecterios and his dolgaunts into the Orb and the dangers they offer the PCs.

The Puzzle Orb

1. Entrance Cavern

The huge cavern of uneven and broken crystal is lit by flashing lights; similar to those you witnessed play across the surface Puzzle Orb. The lights seem to emanate from within the translucent walls, and move and dance of their own accord. Debris and odd formations are spread across the floor and a pool of sparkling gold water is too the south. Four portals exit the cavern and an area of strange smoky crystal is to the southeast.

This cave is particularly complex, and as such areas of individual interest have been further broken up. The entire area is considered lit. The walls, floor, and ceiling are made of a hard crystal, which does not seem to be found on Eberron (DC 15 Knowledge (nature) or (the planes)). Attempt to carve one's way out is fruitless. The crystal is effectively infinite. Both of the hallways that exit this room slope downward and lead to room 2.

- A. Entry Point:** This is the place where the PCs wake up. They are surrounded by debris from Sleevea's parlor. Broken furniture, books, and doilies are scatter about, some burning. Sleevea's wolf, Enigma (hp 13 (currently 6), MM 283), lies pinned under one of the many bookcases that once populated the parlor. General tame, if freed from the avalanche of books, Enigma will follow the party about through their travels, running from any combats. Consider Enigma as Indifferent should any PC with Wild Empathy attempt to befriend him. Enigma will survive all the traps and combats unless the actions of the PCs specifically change this outcome.

- B. Vault of the Sleepers:** Each of these transparent crystal caskets inters a withered husk dressed in strange clothing. A DC 15 Knowledge (history) suggests the styles of the clothing are all more than one hundreds years old. All appear to be in repose, sleeping on a small green or blue pillow. Removing a panel at the foot of the deceased can open each vault. Many of corpses are in an advanced state of decay, but perhaps most disturbing, those few that contain bodies that appear freshly deceased are oozing a sparkling gold liquid that looks similar to the pool to the southwest. None of the bodies respond to an *animate dead* or *speak with dead* spell. None can be awoken or communicated with.
- C. The Pool of Sleep:** This sparkling golden pool laps against the crystal shore with gentle waves, despite no source for a current and no breeze. Anyone touching the liquid will find it oily and warm, smelling slightly of fresh linens. Tasting the liquid finds it to be reminiscent of warm sweet rolls, but requires a DC 18 Will saving throw. Those that fail have a brief, but horrifying vision (a monster killing them, a loved one being unfaithful, a treasured possession falling to rot and decay, etc...) and suffer 1d10 points of damage. Those that succeed experience a pleasant vision (the embrace of a loved one, success and reward, praise for a job well-down, fame, a summer's meadow, all around joy, etc...) and are the target of an *aid* spell cast at 3rd-level. This is a mind-affecting magical ability. Kalashtar suffer a -4 racial penalty to their saving throw, but upon tasting the liquid will recognize it as the dream stuff of Dal Quor. Those kalashtar that fail their saving throw also have the distinct feeling that they are being watched by something horrible.
- D. Pillars of Melodic Composition:** Several dozen crystal pillars connect the floor to the ceiling here. Each glows with a slightly different color, covering a range of pastels. Touching one causes it to ring out with one of the soothing tones or songs that were heard by the PCs while examining the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb. It is clear the two are somehow related, but other than their strange otherworldliness and sounds there is no obvious connection for their use and they display no specific purpose.
- E. Window to Dal Quor:** Behind the smoky crystal, it is clear that something writhes and gibbers, a faint whisper is clear, though what it imparts cannot be determined. While watching or knocking on the glass, a giant eyeball opens and stares, blinking, at the nearest PC through the smoky glass, the rest of the creature's vast shape is unclear, but the eye follows them. If the PCs pound upon the glass, the creature's vast bulk pounds back, and the whole room shakes violently. No mere violent force however, can breach the planes. If watched for a prolong period of time (an hour or more) it seems likely that the image on the other side is becoming clearing, as if the barrier was becoming thinner or the creature was approaching nearer. This is the physical form of Tsekch'Skrakflekch, the quori lord who created the Puzzle Orb in hopes that it may someday be used as a gate to gain a permanent access to Ebberon and bring about the desires of the Dreaming Dark. If a PC now plays host to his consciousness, he will recognize himself.
- F. Choir of the Celestia:** Opening this door instantly subjects PC to loud noise and bright lights, almost more than they can bear. Inside, beautiful spheres of light dance about a mirrored room, each emanating a loud noise similar to a choir of ten thousand voices singing without words. The noise is both entrancing and deafening. Any humanoid that can see and hear the dancing orbs must succeed in a DC 12 Will save or walk into the room to witness their majesty for several minutes. Those who fall victim likely cry at the beauty if they are physically able to. Non-humanoids or humanoids with the extraplanar subtype are immune to this mind affecting, enchantment effect. Once in the room, anyone watching the ballet of light and noise must succeed in two DC 20 Fortitude saving throws or become permanently blind and deaf (one save for each). Those who witness the entire display (which restarts every five minutes) receive a +2 moral bonus on all attack rolls for the rest of the adventure.
- G. Hellfire:** A protrusion of burning brittle-looking rock extends into the center of this room. Glowing red hot, it offers no heat, and somehow emanates a sense of loss. Touching the rock causes 5d6 points of cold and 5d6 points of fire damage, but causes a piece of it to come away easily. Those who carry the rock receive a +2 moral bonus on all damage rolls for the rest of the adventure.

Helpful Sleeva

Despite not being able to converse with the PCs, Sleeva will occasional shout something into the orb, unable to hear a response. Below you will find a list of things she might say as the PCs progress. Also, the DM might use her to advise the PCs if they seem particularly lost or sedentary.

- "Do you see a lever? If you do, you probably should pull it; unless you think you shouldn't, in which case maybe you shouldn't, or maybe you should."
- "Have you seen my wolf?"
- "Hello? Anyone in there?"

- “Oh, I think I’ve got it. No wait, that won’t do at all. Did I make it any worse? If any of you have grown an extra limb I am very sorry. I do hope you are doing alright.”
- “This would certain be easier if all my furniture hadn’t disappeared.”

2. Puzzle Entrance

A great translucent pillar that shimmers with a soft pink and blue light dominates the center of this room. To the south, there is raised dais, approachable by two sets of stairs. Raised unadorned stone blocks, who’s tops are not visible from your place on the floor, rest upon the raised platform. Further to the south, behind the platform is a blue-purple metal portcullis that appears to rise into the ceiling. Glowing white energy crackles between the bars. A hallway can be seen beyond, filled with a boiling green liquid, held back by glowing white force.

Three chairs flank stone bench covered in odd glyphs at the western end of the room. On the north side of the room, there is a small raised area, with a lever with crackling white energy. Nearby, there is a mechanical crank made of a blue-purple metal.

To progress further, the PCs must correctly interpret and solve the puzzles on the table flanked by the three chairs, and upon the raised platform, and open the portals leading to rooms 3 and 4.

- A. **Portcullis Crank:** This crank, made of byeshk (DC 15 Knowledge (dungeoneering) or (nature) or Craft (metalworking)), radiates strong abjuration and is in fact enchanted such that aberrations cannot grasp it. Turning the crank raises the byeshk portcullis blocking entrance to room 3 (similarly enchanted against aberrations). Once opened however, it cannot be closed again.
- B. **Glowing Lever:** If this lever is pulled, the *wall of force* blocking access to room 3, and holding back the thousands of gallons of acid, will be dispelled. See the description of room 3 for what happens is the lever is thrown before solving the puzzle described in 2C.
- C. **Acid Puzzle:** The puzzle does not become active until three living creatures are seated in the three chairs that surround the table. If there are less than three living creatures (of any kind) the glyphs are constantly changing and moving, and the puzzle cannot be solved. When three creatures are seated in each of the chairs, the glyphs become fixed. Give Player’s Handout #1 to the players. Four glyphs are displayed in order with space for a fifth. Four other glyphs float across the table surface around the sequence. Touching one of the floating glyphs causes it to appear in the box and complete the sequence. To solve the puzzle, one of the seated creatures must tap the correct glyph. The correct choice is #2, as the figure rotates 45° and the rectangles alternate between black and gray. The puzzle is not without risk however. When the PCs (or other creatures) sit down, add up their maximum hit points excluding temporary hit points. For each incorrect answer, or if one the creatures attempts to stand, all three take one third of that total number in negative energy damage as their life force is drained away. There is no saving throw for anyone seated in the chairs. A *death ward* or similar effect protects against this damage. If all three stand at one, the creatures only take the damage once and not for each being attempting to stand. Note that some creatures (animals) may not understand what is happening and might inadvertently attempt to run from the device when harmed, causing further damage to those still seated. In such a case, the DM should call for a DC 25 Handle Animal check to “push” the animal to stay where it does not want to. Solving this puzzle causes all of the acid in room 3 to drain away. This puzzle radiates strong evocation and necromantic magic.
- D. **Gate Puzzle:** This puzzle is not operative until the puzzle described in 2C is correctly solved. Until then, the surface of each stone blocks are blank. Once the acid puzzle is solved, symbols appear on the surface of the pedestals. Give Player’s Handout #2 to the players. This puzzle functions exactly the same as the previous puzzle and the correct choice is #6, as every figure series has 4,3,2 circles; 2,1,0 windows, and 3,2,1 vertical lines (though not always in order). Incorrect answers punish anyone standing on, or above the dais. A blinding flash of intense heat and light emanates upward, from the floor height of the dais (7-ft.) and outward, filling the room to the ceiling causing 6d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 25 halves). Solving this puzzle raises the wall at the southern edge of room 3, granting access to room 4. If the acid from room 3 has been released into room 2 before solving this puzzle, in addition to raising the wall to room 4, solving this puzzle also raises the central column six inches, revealing a large drain; allowing this room to be emptied. This puzzle radiates strong evocation magic.

3. Acidic Dreams (EL 6)

This room is entirely flooded with strong acid, and small holes carved in the walls in fact lead vast stores of even more acid. If the *wall of force* separating this room and room 2 is opened before correctly solving

puzzle 2C, the acid rapidly fills room 2. In the first round, each PC must succeed in a DC 20 Reflex saving throw or take 2d6 points of acid splash damage. During the second round, the acid rises to fill the entire floor, partially up the two hallways, and covers all but the raised dais of puzzle 2D. Anyone swimming through or immersed in the acid takes 10d6 points of acid damage per round.

Assuming this room is emptied of acid prior to transversing it, the room is completely harmless if a bit acrid smelling.

4. Portal Chamber

The walls of this chamber are mirrored, with their focus towards the recessed center of the room. A passage leads off to the west while a pillar of crystal rises to the east. Colored symbols migrate across the surface of the column in some arcane ballet.

The symbols that migrate across the column are arcane symbols represent the planes of existence. A DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check identifies the symbols as runes that represent the different planes. There are thirteen symbols (with no symbol for the astral, ethereal, prime material, or shadow planes). All of the symbols are currently blue except Dal Quor, which is a bright yellow. Any PC currently possessed by Tsekch'Skrakflekch automatically knows this. A complete description of the planes can be found starting on page 94 of the ECS. A DC 20 Knowledge (the planes) identifies the symbols as moving relative to each other in a manner similar to the planes of existence. A +5 circumstance bonus is applied to the second Knowledge check if the first is successful.

This chamber opens a passage to the plane highlighted on the column when the controls in room 6 are properly operated. If done so, a nimbus of energy forms in the center of the room, swirling and spinning until it fills the room. If the portal to Eberron is opened in room 7, it will explode outward forming a bridge between the planes through that portal. Stepping into the nimbus of energy instant transports the PC to a random place on that plane.

5. The Guardian

A fur of some unknown creature covers the floor before a great throne. Four braziers, two to either side, flicker with a black flame that offers no heat. Opposite the large chair is a pedestal upon which rests a glowing silver orb.

The orb upon the pedestal is the missing door key described in room 6. Also housed in this room, protecting the key is an automated guardian. The golem appears as a large collection arms and legs, with a single great eye at the center. It moves to attack anyone who enters the room. Note that excessive noise outside the room, such as excavation around the door protecting room 6, also draws its attention.

Clay Golem: hp 90; MM 134.

Tactics: The golem is straightforward. It attacks nearby targets using tactics appropriate for its type, regardless of who the target may be; it does not stop until everyone inside the Orb's chambers is dead. It chases enemies into other rooms if they flee from it.

Scaling the Encounter

11th-Level Characters: The guardian is a stone golem (MM 136).

12th-Level Characters: The guardian is an iron golem (MM 136).

6. Control Chamber

The door to this chamber is made of a silvery metal that crackles with energy. In the center of the door there is a hemispherical indentation. There is no apparent lock or handle.

The door to this room (Hardness 10, hp 200) is locked and pulses with crackling energy. If the orb (made from the same metal) from is placed within the indentation, it bonds with the door and the door opens. Opening the door in this manner causes no damage to the PC using the key.

The door can also be opened with a DC 25 Use Magic Device check; though doing so requires touching the door for one round and catastrophic failure causes the PC to automatically fail their Reflex saving throw against the discharge described below. There is no mechanical lock to pick using the Open Locks skill.

Anyone touching the door receives a substantial jolt for 6d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 20 for half damage). The charge is constant and affects everyone who touches the door directly or with a weapon, each time they touch the door. The type of damage varies each time the door is touched according to the chart below.

Roll 1d4	Type of Damage
1	Electrical
2	Cold
3	Fire
4	Negative

Once the PCs succeed in opening or bypassing the door, they are free to access the rest of the room.

Four wide but low pedestals are spread evenly in the room at the points of a compass. On the top of each of the pedestals are several tiles; all together, they are decorated with the same symbols as those found dancing across the crystal pillar in the mirrored room. It is clear that each tile can be depressed and rotated.

There are thirteen total tiles, with one for each of the symbols found on the crystal pillar in room 4. Currently the symbol for Dal Quor is depressed but not rotated. Depressing another symbol causes the currently depressed tile to rise. A DC 25 Knowledge (the planes) or suggests that whoever designed this device, it seems to be tied connecting to other planes.

Each tile can be rotated 90° in either direction. Rotating the depressed tile locks it into place and activates room 4, opening a portal to designated plane. If the portal to Eberron in room 7 is open, a bridge of energy forms between the two. Exiting the room places the PC into the funneling energy where they may choose a direction: the source plane chosen by counsels in this room or Eberron. Once in the energy stream, the PC cannot leave it.

Rotating the depressed tile back to its original position severs the connection. If the connection is severed while a PC stands within it, they are sucked into swirling vortex and from there, the source plane.

7. Destination Chamber

Twelve fluted pillars line a long hallway that ends a great golden archway large enough for a wagon team of horses to pass through. The arch however opens only onto the same crystal walls that you have seen throughout the rest of this place. There is an indentation on either side of the archway and at the base of the archway is basin filled with crystals the same size as the indentation.

The archway is a portal to Eberron that opens up on the prime material wherever the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb is located. It is currently inactive. When a crystal is placed in the indentation, magical force locks it into place, though they can be easily removed by hand.

In the small basin, there are several crystals: a piece of quartz, a Mabar crystal, a piece of the same crystal that makes up the walls of the Orb, a Khyber dragonshard, an Eberron dragonshard, and a Siberys dragonshard. A DC 10 Knowledge (dungeoneering) or (nature) or Craft (stoneworking) is required to identify each of the crystals. All of the crystals are the same size and shape. To correctly activate the portal, the PCs must place the Khyber and Siberys dragonshards in the indentations on either side of the archway thus placing the portal to Eberron in between Khyber and Siberys, as the order would be on the prime material. If the PCs are having trouble understanding this puzzle, a DC 25 Knowledge (the planes) suggests that Eberron is located between the depths of Khyber and the heights of Siberys.

Placing any of the other crystals into the either of the indentations can have painful consequences. If the piece of quartz is placed into the archway, a sonic wave rumbles through the room, causing 10d4 points of sonic damage (DC 23 Fortitude for half). If the Mabar crystal is placed into the archway, a wave of negative energy floods the room. Anyone caught by the wave suffers 1d4 negative levels. There is no saving throw to avoid gaining the negative levels, but 24 hours after gaining them, the subject must make a DC 23 Fortitude saving throw for each negative level. If the save succeeds, that negative level is removed. If it fails, the negative level also goes away, but one of the subject's character levels is permanently drained. If the crystal that makes up the walls is placed into the archway, a wave of prismatic energy floods the room and each PC in the room is subject to the effects of a *prismatic spray* (DC 23).

Unexpected Guests (EL 13)

Not long after the PCs enter the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb, Khalecterios and his minions arrive at Sleeva's home and force their way past the savant and into the Orb. This should happen about the time the PCs find their way into room 4.

Sleeva's voice echoes off the walls once again, but this times it appears she is speaking with someone other than you. "What the? You can't come in here! Who are you? By the Host, no, not... Oh my..." A horrible gurgling scream bounces off the crystal walls of your mysterious prison.

Khalecterios consumes Sleevea's brain and learns how to activate the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb. After activating the powers listed as cast in his Combat Statistics block, he and his dolgaunt enforcers follow the PCs into the Orb, arriving in room 1.

Foes: The aberrations spend two minutes searching for foes and exploring the area before they come upon the PCs. This should give the PCs time to explore rooms 5 and 7. At that point, they attack to make certain they possess full control of the Orb. Khalecterios is floating fifteen feet in the air when the group finds the PCs, being pulled along by one of the dolguants.

Khalecterios: male mind flayer telepath 3/illithid savant 1, hp 120; See Combat Statistics.

Dolgaunt Enforcer (2): dolgaunt fighter 2/monk 4, hp 47; See Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The dolgaunt enforcers attempt to keep enemies from Khalecterios whenever possible. The dolguants make use of their flurry of blows, leading off with a Weakening Touch, and following up with a grapple attempt. Grappled foes rapidly lose Constitution, especially if both dolgaunts can join the grapple. The dolguants fight to the bitter end unless directed otherwise by Khalecterios.

Khalecterios, already floating in the air, tries to eliminate as many foes as possible by using his *mind blast* and a Quickened *id insinuation* using his move action to recover his focus. After that, he manifests *schism* as quickly as it seems prudent, and is willing to use as many PPs as necessary to defeat the PCs making liberal use of *energy burst* and *psionic disintegrate*. A typical round should involve him manifesting a power, a Quickened or immediate power, a power from his *schism*, and a move action (usually to recover his focus). Khalecterios focuses on those PCs who are directly dangerous to him. The dolguants are expendable.

Development: Should the PCs beg for mercy, he grants it to them. If it seems very likely that he will win, he also offers them mercy. They may take their friends, and any bodies, all with brains intact, through the portal to Eberron. Of course, shortly after that, he uses the controls to open a planar bridge between his master's Xoriat tainted prison in Khyber and Eberron. Unspeakable horrors stream into the world and the future of sentient sane life is in doubt.

Khalecterios CR 12

Male mind flayer telepath 3/illithid savant 1

LE Medium aberration (psionic)

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +12, **Spot** +12

Languages Common, Daelkyr, Kythric, Quori, Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 28, touch 16, flat-footed 22 (+9 armor, +2 Dex, +4 insight, +3 natural)

hp 120 (12 HD)

SR 25

Fort +10, **Ref** +11, **Will** +20

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); levitating

Melee 4 tentacles +9 melee (1d4+1)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +8

Atk Options extract, improved grab

Special Actions *mind blast*

Power Points/Day: 156 (124 remaining); **Powers Known** (ML 12th):

6th (11 PP)—*psionic contingency* (*psionic dimension door* if grappled)[†], *psionic disintegration* (DC 21; +2d6 on failed save/+1 PP)

5th (9 PP)—*mind probe* (read mind, DC 20), *psionic plane shift*

4th (7 PP)—*intellect fortress* (immediate action, Khalecterios and all allies within a 20' radius, all damage from powers and psi-like abilities are halved for 1 round, +1 PP/+1 round), *psionic dimension door* (+6 PP makes this a move action), *psionic dominate* (DC 19; +2 PP animal, fey, giant, magical beast, or monstrous humanoid, +4 PP aberration, dragon, elemental, outsider, +2 PP/extra target, AND for every extra 2 PP = +1 DC), *schism* (12 rds, extra mental standard action/rd as a 6th-lvl manifester)

3rd (5 PP)—*body adjustment* (1 round, self only, cure 1d12; +1d12/+2 PP), *dispel psionics*, *energy burst* (40' range, 40' radius burst, Ref DC 18 halves, cold: +1 dam/die, save becomes Fort; electricity: +2 DC & +2 lvl to overcome SR; fire: +1 dam/die; sonic: -1 dam/die & ignores hardness; +1 PP/+1d6 and per +2d6 add +1 DC), *mental barrier* (immediate action, 1 rd, +4 deflection; +1 defelection/+4 PP, +1 rd/+1 PP)

2nd (3 PP)—*body equilibrium* (walk on any surface), *ego whip* (220', 1d4 CHA & dazed, DC 17 halves; +1d4 CHA & +2 DC/+4 PP), *id insinuation* (confusion, 55', conc. +1 round, Will DC 17 negates, +2/extra target & +1 DC), *psionic levitate*[†], *psionic suggestion* (DC 16), *read thoughts* (as *detect thoughts*, DC 17)

1st (1 PP)—*defensive precognition* (12 min., +1 insight bonus to AC & saves when not flat-footed, +1 bonus/+3 PP, swift action/+6 PP)[†], *detect psionics* (60', 12 min.), *inertial armor* (12 hrs, +4 AC; +1 AC/+2 PP)[†], *mind thrust* (1d10, 55', Will DC 16 negates, +1 PP = +1d10, per +2d10 add +1 DC), *psionic charm* (DC 16), *vigor* (12 min., 5 temp hp; +5 hp/+1 PP)[†]

[†]Already cast (with augments)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 17, Cha 17

SQ acquire skill 1 (permanently gains all ranks in one skill from any brain he eats); lore (+6, 2/day, as bardic knowledge)

Feats Combat Manifestation, Empower Power (+2 PP and expend focus, as Empower Spell), Improved Initiative, Psionic Meditation (regain focus as a move action w/DC 20 Conc. check), Quicken Power (+6 PP and expend focus, as Quicken Spell), Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +13, Concentration +16, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Hide +10, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (psionics) +13, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Psicraft +8, Sense Motive +7, Spot +12, Use Psionic Device +7

Possessions *cloak of resistance* +2, *cognizance crystal* (3 PP, used), *cognizance crystal* (11 PP, used), *boots of landing* (-2 dice from falling, 1/day), dagger, jeweled ring, spell component pouch (for show)

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a mind flayer must hit a Small, Medium, or Large creature with its tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and attaches the tentacle to the opponent's head. A mind flayer can grab a Huge or larger creature, but only if it can somehow reach the foe's head. If a mind flayer begins its turn with at least one tentacle attached, it can try to attach its remaining tentacles with a single grapple check. The opponent can escape with a single successful grapple check or an Escape Artist check, but the mind flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle that was attached at the beginning of the opponent's turn.

Extract (Ex): A mind flayer that begins its turn with all four tentacles attached and that makes a successful grapple check automatically extracts the opponent's brain, instantly killing that creature. This power is useless against constructs, elementals, oozes, plants and undead. It is not instantly fatal to foes with multiple heads, such as ettins and hydras.

Hook "I will dine on your brain, and your hard earned skills will be mine that my master will be freed."

Dolgaunt Enforcer CR 8

Dolgaunt fighter 2/monk 4

LE Medium Aberration

Init +4; Senses Listen +7, Spot +7; Blindsight 360 ft.

Languages Common, Undercommon; Dolgaunt hand signaling 30 ft.

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 15 (+2 armor, +4 Dex, +2 Wis, +3 natural)

hp 47 (8 HD); **DR** 5/byteshk or magic

Resist evasion; still mind (+2 to resist enchantment spells)

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee 2 tentacles +9 (1d3+3) or unarmed strike +10/+5 melee (1d8+3) or flurry of blows +8/+8/+3 melee (1d8+3)

Space 5ft.; **Reach** 5ft. (10 ft. with tentacles)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Trip, Stunning Fist (5/day, DC 16), Weakening Touch

Special Actions Ki strike (unarmed attacks consider magic), vitality drain

Abilities Str 16, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 11

SQ slow fall 20 ft.

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Trip, Snatch Arrows, Stunning Fist, Weakening Touch (use one stunning fist, normal attack does no damage, target takes noncumulative -6 penalty to Strength for 1'), Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +9, Jump +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Spot +7, Tumble +10

Possessions combat gear plus *bracers of armor* +2, *gauntlets of ogre power*

Vitality Drain (Ex): If a dolgaunt gets hold of an opponent, it can burrow into the flesh of its victim and draw out vital fluids using the tendrils that cover its skin. On a successful grapple check, the dolgaunt deals 1 point of Constitution damage in addition to normal damage. An injured dolgaunt recovers 2 hit points every time it successfully uses this ability.

Scaling the Encounter

11th-Level Characters: Add an additional Dolgaunt Enforcer, as well as an athach (MM 21)

12th-Level Characters: Add five additional Dolgaunt Enforcers, as well as an athach (MM 21)

Ending the Adventure

The adventure ends when the party successfully navigates the Orb and exits back to the Prime Material. However, the repercussions of their actions while within the Orb have significant impact upon the Eberron of the Mark of Heroes campaign. Read the read aloud text appropriate to the outcome of the event. The DM may have to adjust if the PCs did something unexpected.

Regardless of the outcome in the Orb, Sleevea is dead; a victim of the mind flayer. Enigma whines pitifully, but can do nothing. The PCs are welcome to take the wolf with them, as he seems inclined to follow them as they leave anyway.

The PCs get home and no other planes were bridged to Eberron

Returning to Sleevea's parlor, it is clear the explosion devastated her cottage, but it the effect of her meeting with the mind flayer is all to clear. Her brainless body lies in a puddle of blood on the floor next to the Orb. Dealing with her remains and claiming the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb yet again, you return to report to Martron Martra for another time.

It seems clear that the Orb was designed as a bridge between the planes, and the number of factions, both on this plane and on others, trying to claim it in order to gain entrance to Eberron is frightening. The otherworldly horrors will no doubt try again to access the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb, and so the Digger's Union orders the Orb destroyed. How that is to be done, you are never told. All references to the event are covered up and the Digger's Union disavows any knowledge of Orb or any of the events or deaths associated with it.

Each of the survivors is given a modest home in Sharn along with a substantial pension. Ostensibly it is a gift for your years of hard work, but you suspect that it is an attempt to buy your silence, not that anyone would believe you.

The PCs get home and Xoriat was bridged to Eberron

Returning to Sleevea's parlor, it is clear the explosion devastated her cottage, but it the effect of her meeting with the mind flayer is all to clear. Her brainless body lies in a puddle of blood on the floor next to the Orb. Dealing with her remains and claiming the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb yet again, you return to report to Martron Martra for another time.

It seems clear that the Orb was designed as a bridge between the planes, and the number of factions, both on this plane and on others, trying to claim it in order to gain entrance to Eberron is frightening. The otherworldly horrors will no doubt try again to access the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb, and so the Digger's Union orders the Orb destroyed. The events that followed are not clear, but shortly after the Orb was brought to Grea tower, a portal to Xoriat opened and something came through. What it was is not entirely clear, but it lead an army of unspeakable things of tentacles, eyes, slime, and gnashing teeth, and Wroat was destroyed in a matter of hours while Breland was overrun in days.

Knowing that your actions were tied to what occurred, you march off to the greatest battle of your lifetime. You and a handful a Digger's who managed to get across the border into Zilargo before the destruction now prepare a desperate mission back into Breland to close the planar breach. It may well be your last.

The PCs get home and Dal Quor was bridged to Eberron

Returning to Sleevea's parlor, it is clear the explosion devastated her cottage, but it the effect of her meeting with the mind flayer is all to clear. Her brainless body lies in a puddle of blood on the floor next to the Orb. Dealing with her remains and claiming the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb yet again, you return to report to Martron Martra for another time.

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otherworldly horrors will no doubt try again to access the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb, and so the Digger's Union orders the Orb destroyed. The events that followed are not clear, but shortly after the Orb was brought to Grea tower, a portal to Dla Quor opened and nightmares became real. All non-kalashtar in Wroat died that night while Breland was overrun by strange creatures born of the Dreaming Dark within days.

Knowing that your actions were tied to what occurred, you march off to the greatest battle of your lifetime. You and a handful a Digger's who managed to get across the border into Zilargo before the destruction now prepare a desperate mission back into Breland to close the planar breach. It may well be your last.

The PCs fail, the Orb was lost to the Kalashtar

You return to report to Martron Martra for another time, not really knowing what happened or why. Martra is unhappy with you, but seems strange satisfied that at least nothing was destroyed or possessed as a result of your actions. The Orb, whatever it is, is never heard from again and since you found no pile of riches at the end of this adventure, it looks like you will continue to be someone else's hired minion for at least the foreseeable future.

The PCs fail, the Orb was lost to the Nerra

You return to report to Martron Martra for another time, not really knowing what happened or why, but suspecting that nerra may finally have the means to enter Eberron for good. Martra is unhappy with you, but seems strange satisfied that at least nothing was destroyed or possessed as a result of your actions. The Orb, whatever it is, is never heard from again and since you found no pile of riches at the end of this adventure, it looks like you will continue to be someone else's hired minion for at least the foreseeable future.

Rumors of world leaders behaving oddly surface not long after return, and none more odd than the King of your very own Breland. You receive an invitation to come to the palace immediately and meet with the king. Somehow, the large soldiers escorting you don't seem very inclined to pleasant conversation. As the large iron doors close behind you, you realize the stairs go down toward the dungeons and not up to the throne room.

What did you ever do to aggravate the King? Assuming it still is the King...

Adventure Questions

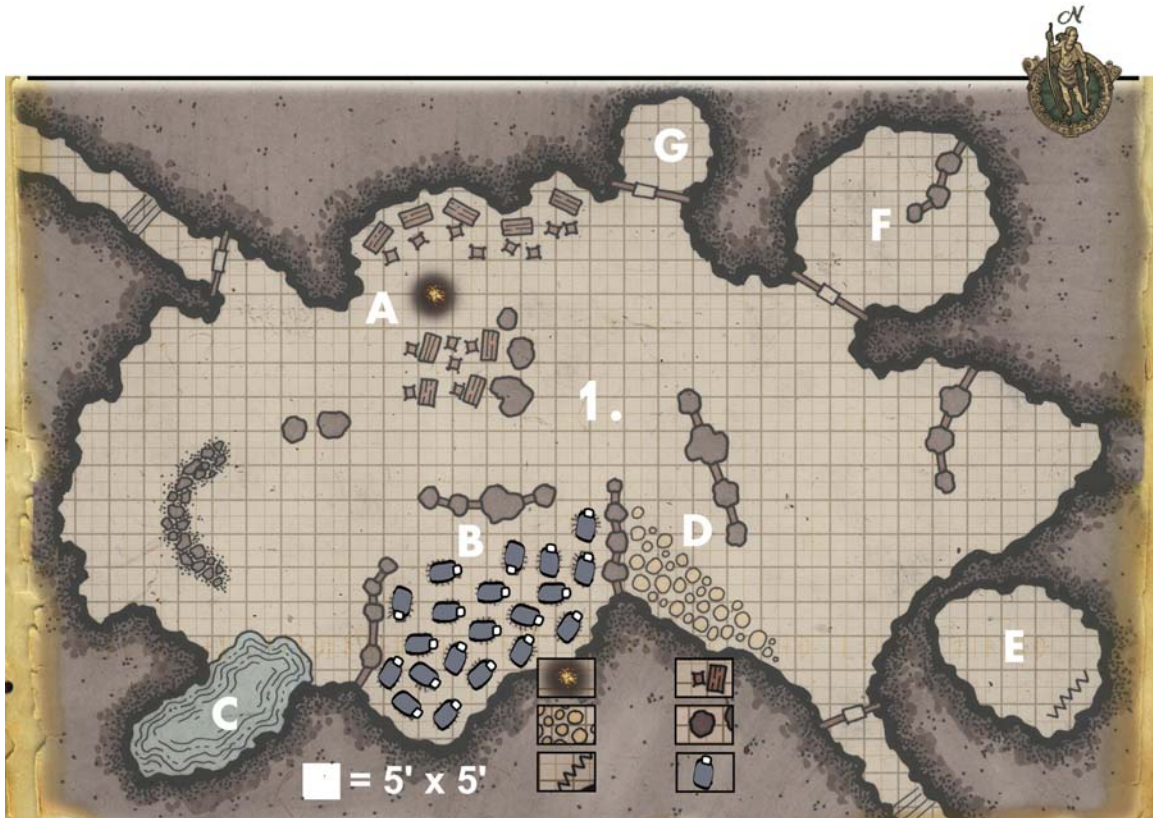
As this is the last event in the Mark of Heroes campaign, there are no adventure questions.

DM Map #1: The Lightning Rail

1. Helm Chamber
2. Crew Chamber
3. Crew Cargo
4. First-Class Cart
5. Galley Cart
6. Dining Cart
7. Standard Passenger Cart (* = PCs; K = kalashtar)
8. Sleeper Cart (The two slightly larger rooms are washrooms)
9. Steerage Cart
10. Cargo Cart



DM Map #2a: Inside the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb



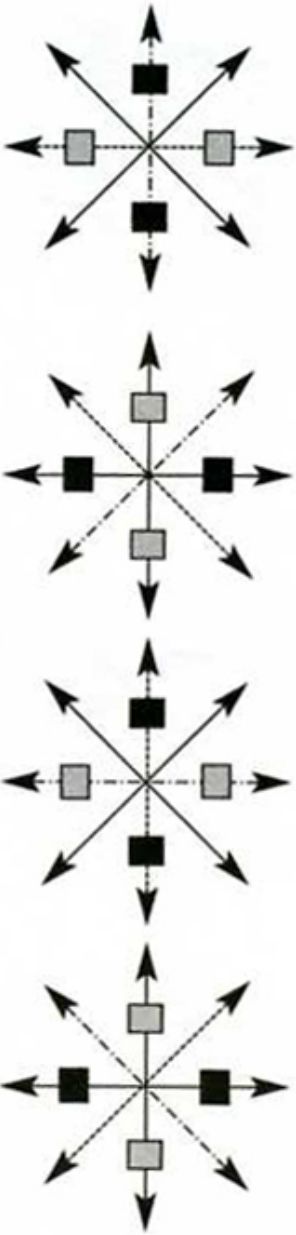
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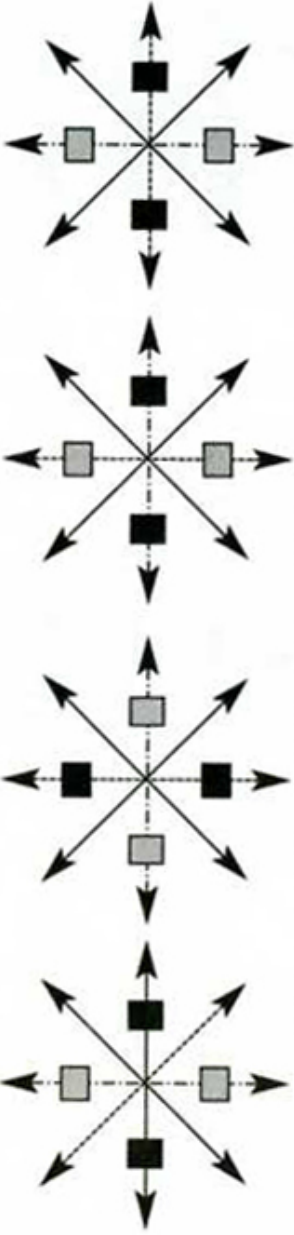


Player's Handout #1

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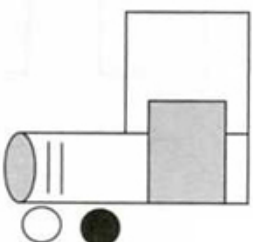
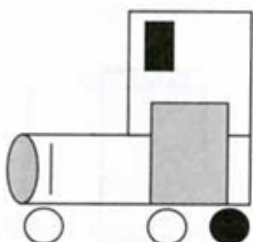
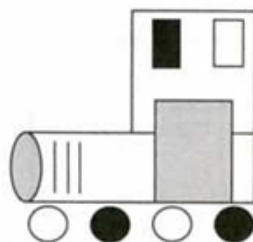


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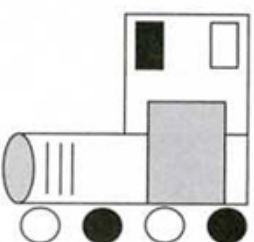
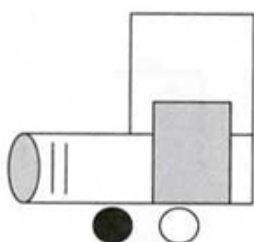
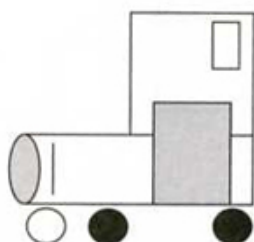


Player's Handout #2

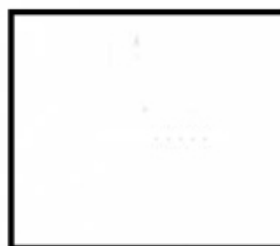
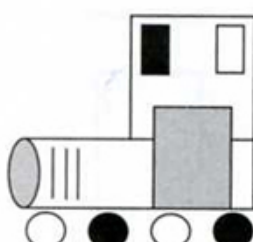
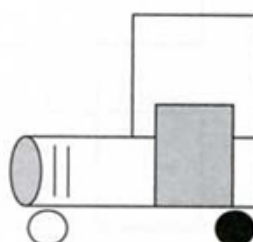
Pedestal #1



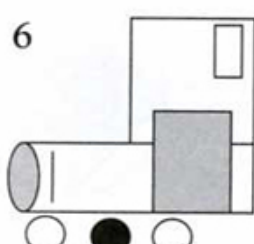
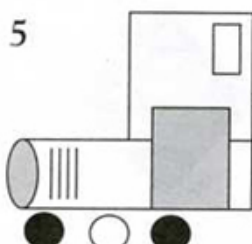
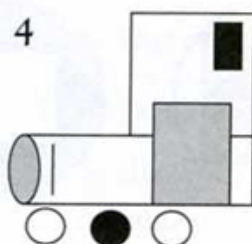
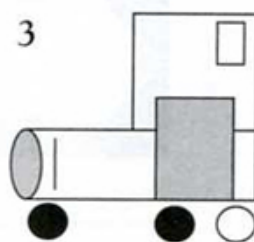
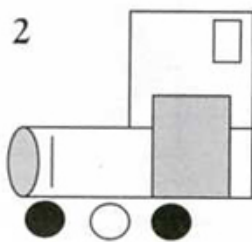
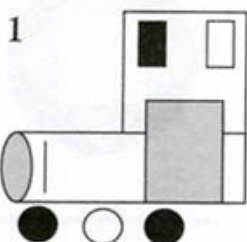
Pedestal #2



Pedestal #3



Pedestal #4



Player Handout #3: Host of the Orb

Background: In one brief moment of horror and realization, your consciousness was entirely snuffed out and your PC has been irrevocably slain. Your body is now host to a piece of the Dreaming Dark who refers to itself as Tsekch'Skrakflekch. You are the quori lord who created the Puzzle Orb from the fevered dreams of the troubled genius Belental Heirm who wrote the *Deviant Celestia*. You hope that it may someday be used as a gate to gain a permanent access to Ebberon and bring about the desires of the Dreaming Dark. That day is at hand! Sadly, you can see but through a small window into the Orb, and the rest of it, scooped from Heirm's dreams remains relatively unknown to you. Fortunately, the host body that you now inhabit and your unknowing allies will almost certainly complete your goal.

Mechanical Changes: Apply the following changes to your PC:

- Add the Extraplanar and Psionic subtypes to your PC.
- Your alignment is LE. This does not affect any spell-casting or alignment based abilities you previously possessed. The Realm of Dreams has the ability to replicate any ability you used to possess.
- You use the Quori's mental statistics unless yours are higher: Int 22, Wis 19, Cha 19.
- Gain 15 ranks in the following skills (in addition to any skill ranks you already have): Autohypnosis, Bluff, Concentration, Decipher Script, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Listen, Knowledge (psionics), Knowledge (the planes), Move Silently, Psicraft, Search, Sense Motive, Spot.
- Reduced sleep: You only need four hours of sleep per night, unless you normally require less.
- You have the following psi-like abilities: At will—*induce awe** (DC 16), *detect hostile intent*, *mind thrust* (DC 15), *mindlink*; 3/day—*mind probe* (DC 19); 1/day—*hostile empathic transfer* (DC 17), *inflict pain* (DC 16), *mindwipe* (DC 18), *project quori spirit**, *schism*. Manifest level 12th. These saves are Charisma-based. *Magic of Eberron.
- You gain the Greater Psionic Endowment feat that allows you to expend your psionic focus to raise the DC of any of your psionic powers or psi-like abilities by 2.
- You cannot be possessed, nor can the Quori in your PC's body be removed. Your PC is dead. You are Tsekch'Skrakflekch wearing your PC's meaty shell.

Goal: You seek to create a bridge between the planes of Dal Quor and Eberron so that you can lead an army at the behest of the Dreaming Dark to conquer the Prime Material where all can be nightmares for eternity. You know the Sarlonan Puzzle Orb is a planar bridge capable of bringing both planes together, though you do not know exactly how.

Tip: You will likely need the aid of the other PCs, so it is to your advantage to hide your true nature from the rest of the party until your final goal is reached, or it looks like the party will prevent your goal from being realized.