

Scenario 20

Return to Everway

"The Walker is coming!"

Summary

Visions

- The Edge of Light and Darkness, lit by a lightbeam.
- A glowing Pattern in a chamber with great blocks coming together overhead. At its centre, a throne with a figure, head bowed, tied to it.
- The Walker, advancing inexorably down Imperial Way, carrying the capstone over its head.

Characters

- Voulges
- King Horizon
- Belladonna Crookstaff
- The Walker
- Anubis

The Plot

Opening:

From the fortress, the heroes should have learnt:

- The Avatar of Stasis (the Walker) is coming back to Everway with the Capstone
- This will be bad
- The Avatar of Change is in the Pyramid, and needs to be freed
- This will require the Edge of Light and Darkness, the location of which is known to the Everway authorities
- The Walker could turn up at any time

The heroes arrive in Everway, most probably in the Cellars. They meet up with Voulges, who is now the de facto leader of Strangerside. He is not entirely delighted to see them. He has massively expanded the gang and set up a repressive state.

Interaction:

The heroes can catch up on the current situation by talking to gang members – two Kings, a besieging army, Crookstuffs and Keepers are decimated, general chaos. Horizon has made a deal with Freedom Crow, agreeing that the defence of Everway is now the top priority, and is supported by the Weavers, Mudbanks, Smiths, Crookstuffs and Stonebreakers, since he has promised reforms to extend the Great Council. He has taken up residence in Old Town, which is now heavily fortified. Tourmaline is supported by the Emeralds (majority), Moondancers, Plumes, Snakerings, Scratches, Mothers and Diggers. The other families are neutral.

Decision:

The heroes need to decide how to get hold of the Edge of Light and Darkness. It is in the Armoury below the (destroyed) Crookstaff Tower. Voulges can get them an audience with King Horizon – he is persona grata, having organised Horizon's rescue at the behest of Ruby Emerald. Horizon can tell them that they need Sacnoth and the location of the entrance to the

secret passage to the Armoury. Alternatively the heroes can figure out that Ulrich must have had a secret way in.

Progress:

The heroes can either attempt to get past all of Tourmaline's guards at the Palace, or sneak into Deadwalk Coven. The latter is by far the easiest option - Wishbone can interrogate any of the many dead things to find the location of Ulrich's secret workshop (or in fact Ulrich himself). The heroes may also consider unearthing the entrance in the Tower, but this is not a practical option: it would involve an (ongoing) fight with the Plume guards that are protecting it (including their erstwhile mentor Peacock Plume) and then several days of excavation work. Ulrich's workshop contains a copy of Sacnoth.

If the heroes opt to use the Palace entrance, they can make use of the knowledge gleaned from the soiree. They may also encounter and free Ruby Emerald and Horizon's children, who are being held hostage, who can show them where Sacnoth is kept.

Action:

The Armoury is a circular chamber built into the foundations of Crookstaff Tower. It is protected by powerful magicks. Redoak's staff and Sacnoth are needed to open the double lock - they need to be turned together. The Edge rests on a stand in the centre of the room. Flame and Fish Trader are drawn to it - one of them must learn to wield it. Removing the Edge triggers a magical alarm - the heroes may be harassed by guards from the Palace as they make their escape.

Rising Tension:

Once armed with the Edge, the heroes can head over to the Pyramid and attempt to cut their way in. Flame or Fish Trader needs to wield it and the Book and the Pearl will be needed. The Pearl fits in the socket in the Edge'sommel.

Necessary complication: Flame swings the Edge at one of the stones in the bottom layer of the Pyramid, expecting to cut a hole through the midianite to the interior, but it just skitters off. It seems you need the power of an Avatar to cut through midianite, even with the Edge.

Flame can intuit that the Edge needs a weakness, a crack to enlarge. Hopefully the heroes can figure out that such a weakness exists in the very top layer of the Pyramid where the capstone should go. They can enlarge the small hole between the stones on the top layer. Why can use a helicopter to get them up there, or the heroes can acquire ladders, or Walker can voluntarily turn into the Shifting Man who will grab the Edge, leap up the 7 layers and drive the Edge into the weakness, carving out a hole and revealing the Labyrinth glowing below with the chair and a seated figure at its centre. The rock from the hole drops onto the labyrinth and is torn apart into bright sparkles, giving a clue about what may happen if the heroes aren't careful about their approach.

Conflict:

The heroes need to figure out how to get into the pyramid without being fried by the Labyrinth's protective magicks. Assuming they are using a rope, they will need to swing so as to avoid touching the Labyrinth. Why could modify one of his spider robots to climb along the underside of the blocks and set up a rope slide.

As the heroes are about to enact their plan, there is a deafening crack of thunder and a black hole appears in the sky to the north of Everway about 100 feet up, silvery flames burning at its centre. A huge figure holding an even larger pyramidal stone above its head drops from it, hitting the earth with a crash that shakes Everway to its foundations. Several buildings collapse, including Hardhand Tower, the Arenas, and parts of the Palace. Screams and mass panic.

A few seconds later, a steady Boom!, Boom!, Boom! starts up, the ground shaking with each one. The Imperial Gate bursts apart with an enormous rending crash, revealing the Walker. It is perhaps smaller than might be expected, a mere 25' high, a blank-eyed stone creature that is something between a colossus, a golem and a mummy, holding the massive capstone (30'

across) above its head like a huge hat, but its approach is inexorable. Boom! Boom! Boom!

Rising Tension:

For Slight and Wishbone, the Labyrinth is immensely magical, more so than the Edge or the Pearl, and highly dangerous. The entrance is clearly visible to anyone with magical sight, an opening in an otherwise impenetrable wall of magical chaos. They can intuit the rules - once started on the path, it must be completed. Turning back, stopping for too long or stepping off the path is to invite a terrible death from the roiling powers that surround the labyrinth.

Decision:

In order to save Anubis, at least one hero must decide to walk the Labyrinth. This requires immense strength – it is like wearing lead boots – and an ability to intuit the twist and turns of the path, which become obscured by sparks. A combination of heroes will work best. The Book, Pearl and Edge will also prove useful – the Labyrinth's magic will counteract the deadening effect of the huge mass of midianite forming the Pyramid's walls.

The other heroes can act as moral support or try to delay the Walker's progress. Moondancers will try to stop them but they may get some support from members of the crowd, particularly if the heroes have done some public relations. But it makes very little difference. The Walker is surrounded by a stasis field that affects anyone and anything who gets close. Spears, arrows and ballistae slow down, stop, and fall out of the air. People approaching to melee will find themselves slowing down as if running into treacle and flung aside as the Walker passes, regardless of however many try this. The Walker is unstoppable.

Climax and Resolution:

Depending on how efficient the heroes have been in getting into the Pyramid and deciding what to do, and the Fortune cards of those walking the Labyrinth, the Walker may reach the Pyramid before they reach the centre. With a series of massive crashes it leaps from layer to layer of the Pyramid, finally arriving at the top. There it throws down the Capstone, sealing Anubis in forever. A wave of stasis ripples out across Everway and out into the Thousand Spheres. Heroes who did not enter the Pyramid are frozen. Inside, the small beam of light from the hole made by the Edge snuffs out.

Hopefully at least one hero manages to struggle through the final Veil and make it to the centre. Here they come face to face with the Avatar of Change. It sits quietly in the midianite chair, bound to it by stone bonds, a huge humanoid figure, blurry and changing, like a much larger version of the Shifting Man. The heroes' final task is to get it out of the chair, preferably without touching it – they may sprout tube-like growths or undergo other undesirable changes if they do. The Edge can be used to cut the bonds, which will be sufficient. Tipping the chair over should work as well.

The avatar stands and looks down at the heroes, its features unreadable. Slight or Wishbone, if present, will feel that it is issuing a command to the Labyrinth – something that they and all the others who reached the centre could do as well, if they wish. Assuming they do nothing, the heroes suddenly find themselves either back on top of the Pyramid, or on Imperial Way leading up to it. The Walker is directly in front of them – it turns to look at Change and starts to back away, but the Avatar moves forward swiftly and grabs it by the hand. The bodies of the Walker and the Avatar merge into each other in an explosion of white light. When it clears, only a single figure remains – an ebony jackal-headed humanoid with glowing red eyes, wearing an Egyptian-style skirt and with an ankh round its neck. It bows to the heroes, and again to Walker, who finally feels himself free of his curse. A voice echoes in their heads "I am Anubis. Thank you for restoring me. If it is in my power, I will grant you a Boon."

Hook – the Cellars

Note: It is quite possible that Slight will try to leave the party in order to bury his father in Woodhall. Kayte can offer to warp him over there.

If the heroes take up Kayte's offer, they find themselves tumbling out of the mirror over the

bed in what is now Voulges' room. Hopefully Voulges is not in it. The room has been redecorated somewhat – there is a large collection of weapons attached to the wall and banners with a stark design of a black dagger silhouetted against a red setting sun.

This motif is continued in the rest of the cellars, particularly the main chamber where larger versions of the banners hang on the walls and the refectory tables have tablecloths with the same design. Towershield's chair has been replaced by a black metal throne; Voulges is lounging on this, surrounded by sinister-looking black-clad ruffians. All are well-dressed and armed with long, wicked-looking stilletos. The heroes recognise some of them – Treb and Veil are there, along with Mattock, Scar, Byrnie, Dirk, Mangonel and various other surviving gang members – but others are new, and they don't look friendly

Voulges starts up when he sees Rathgard and comes towards him. He still looks about fifteen, but his face is lined and he is wearing an eyepatch. "So, you're back."

Voulges and the gang

- Voulges is a ball of simmering rage – "Get out! I don't want you here!"
- "You abandoned us! You said you were going away for a short time! Then the darkness came and you never came back! I lost my eye because of you!"

Rathgard will have to be diplomatic, particularly if he wants to take back control. A bad FC could be disastrous.

- Voulges has done his best to run the gang along the lines of "what would Rathgard do?"
 - When the refugees arrived in the city soon after the Darkfall, he organised shelter, accommodation and food for them as well as he was able. Fortunately it was just after the harvest and some of the farmers thought to bring carts of grain, but even so there were only a couple of weeks of supplies.
 - There were problems with looting, so he recruited everyone who looked tough to form a militia to enforce the peace in Strangerside. Fish Trader's Peacekeepers formed the basis.
 - He tried to get the Everway authorities to accept some of the refugees, but they refused.
 - Things got easier after Why and his automaton spiders arrived. They emerged out of the Mist about 10 days after the darkfall. Why explained that he had been employed by Freedom Crow and the Smiths to make an army that was not susceptible to the magical deadening effects of the Pyramid. Fortunately it turned out that they were not susceptible to the Mist either. Why was able to send out his spiders to collect food.
 - They also helped when **Tamarind Emerald** arrived, asking for the gang's help on behalf of his mistress **Ruby Emerald** to rescue her lover and father of her children, King Horizon. Tourmaline and the Mothers had claimed that Horizon's back was broken so he was unfit to be King, but this was not true. Horizon was being held in a secure tower in the Emerald compound – Voulges and Why hatched a daring plan to rescue him from under the noses of the guards, using the spiders to get gang members over the wall. There was a fight (in which Voulges was wounded, hence the eye patch), but the gang succeeded in getting Horizon out and back over the wall. They brought him back to the cellars where with Brother Valentine's help, the King was at last able to get up and walk, albeit with crutches. He has established his base in the Merchant's Council in Old Town, staying in the Tendwicks' fortified mansion. Valentine, Why and Voulges are all persona grata with him – he has promised that when he regains the throne, there will be a programme of public works to improve the lot of the citizens of Beggartown.
- Voulges is no longer enamoured with Rathgard - his hero worship is now focused on Prince Peridot, who has joined his uncle in Old Town, along with Belladonna Crookstaff (who arrives on a zephir monk carpet). The heroes will have to negotiate with him to get his cooperation. If things go badly, he may even chuck them out of the cellars.

Talking to the gang

Fortunately, other members of the gang are more pleased to see the heroes, and can fill in the other events of the past month.

The heroes can figure out what date it is. This will depend on how long they spend in Shadow's castle:

- Venus 20 Scorpion 2473 – fight with Shadow early am.
- Earth 21 Scorpion (most likely)
- Mars 22 Scorpion

They can also learn the major events of the last four weeks:

Week 1

- The full force of the Mist appeared on the day after the heroes left. It rolled over the Gatelands despite the Crookstuffs' best attempts to stop it. Many people fled to the south. Others flocked to the Pyramid, trusting it to protect them.
- The latter were right. The Mist could not get past the Pyramid's anti-magic shield and instead flowed around it, leaving a sphere just over 2 miles across encompassing Everway and a few hundred yards beyond.
- The Mist still came into Everway, however. Black smoke puffed out from the Houses of Dusk and several covens, and the tower of Crookstaff Plaza. The Tower of Roots was attacked by black lightning bolts and reduced to a charred husk.
- The Palace announced that **Prince Tourmaline** had assumed the duties of King. It did not say what had happened to King Horizon. Rumours swirled that he had been assassinated.
- An invading armada of Sea-Lords arrived a couple of days after Darkfall, led by a man on a dragon. They occupied the peninsula at the foot of Hardhand Tower. The ships had been badly damaged by the Mist. The Sea-Lords attacked Hardhand Tower with the dragon-man flying overhead, but he was hit by black lightning and the Keepers and Watchers fought them off. The Sea-Lords launched sporadic attacks every few days thereafter and prevented anyone from approaching Everway from the Fools', Dusk or Mercy bridges.

The Ritual

- In the Crookstaff Plaza, **Glimmer Moondance, Blemish Scratch and Necropolis Crookstaff** announced that they would perform a Ritual of Cleansing to rid Everway of the encroaching mist. They inscribed a triangle within a pentacle on the ground, got 5 coven leaders (**Scry Crookstaff, Souseeker Crookstaff, Mirage Crookstaff**, Herb Crookstaff and Firestorm Crookstaff) to stand in the five points, and started to chant. It went horribly wrong - mist emerged off the pentacle's lines and the whole thing rose into the air, taking the occupants with it, and starting to burn with black fire. A portal opened above it from which Black Mist billowed. Lightning bolts rained down on Crookstaff Tower, destroying it.
- The ritual was prevented from completing by the intervention (and self-sacrifice) of **Redoak Crookstaff**, who organised the Crookstaff mages to activate the protective circle inscribed into Crookstaff plaza and then stepped into the circle himself to guide the protective magicks at the forming portal. Horribly, the ritual "froze" at the point of disruption, leaving the black smoke column victims trapped until they died.

Week 2

- **Gleam Moondance** is announced as the new First Prime of the Moondancers. The Crookstuffs elect Redoak's replacement **Belladonna** as their leader.
- After some days, the Palace announced that the septs of Watchers, Crows and Keepers had been welded together into a single force to "fight the Mist". Quite how they would do this was not made clear; certainly, reports from the Arenas, where the new force was

training, suggested a lot of bickering. More cynical observers suggested that the actual aim was to see if the Gates can be reached safely and if so, which ones were most likely to offer an escape route for the royal family. At length an army of 500 or so soldiers formed of septes from all three families left through the Imperial Gate and marched into the Mist.

- The remnants returned a few hours later. Some had become enveloped in black fire and had turned on their companions. Others had fallen into a deep sleep from which they could not be woken. After this failure, Everway shut and barred its gates.
- Things went from bad to worse in the huge refugee camps set up in the mist-free region surrounding Everway's walls who were suffering from lack of food and firewood. Riots and fighting broke out regularly and had to be repressed with brutal force. Many lost their lives attempting to scale Everway's walls, only to be thrown bodily off it by Keeper, Crow and Watcher soldiers.
- **Why and the Automata** arrived on Marsday, appearing out of the Mist that covered southern Strangerside. He came to the cellars and asked to speak to Rathgard.
- **Tamarind Emerald** appeared on Joveday, having sneaked over the wall at the Ladyhorn Tower. Why and Voulges spent a day plotting and then launched the raid on Sunday 4 Scorpion. It was a messy, chaotic affair in which several gang members were killed, but they got the King out.

Week 3

- The King spent the early part of the week recovering in the Mercy Hospital. He made a personal appearance to thank the gang for their sacrifice, which impressed a lot of them. He promised that Beggartown would be transformed, and asked for the gang's help in getting the news of his recovery back into Everway.
- There was further good(?) news when another fleet appeared out of the Mist. They were Middleland ships, but they were flying tattered black flags bearing the symbol of a white scorpion. The Middlelanders charged into the Sea-Lord camp and there was a huge pitched battle in which both sides massacred each other. The dragon-lord escaped, flying over Everway and heading into the Mist towards the Gatelands. He has not been heard of since.
- Voulges and Why set up a system of town criers to announce the King's recovery and Why arranged for scrolls to be fired into Everway using specially modified arrows. Knowing that there might be reprisals, the King took over the Tendwicks' heavily fortified mansion in Old Town, using Voulges' gang to provide security. The King made a series of announcements declaring that once the current crisis was over, he would engage in a process of political reform with any families that wanted to work with him.
- A day or so later, it was announced that Prince Peridot had joined him. Voulges was often in attendance, and personally foiled an assassination attempt by the Snakerings.

Week 4

- About a week and a half ago, White Scorpion Warriors started showing up out of the Mist. At first they appeared as small raiding groups, but it became increasingly apparent that an entire army was assembling. By the end of the week there were thousands. Their commander was a small black-skinned woman with a personal bodyguard of reptilian bipeds. The rumour quickly spread that she was **Darga**, a Basahn.
- Back in Old Town, there was frantic political activity. The Crookstuffs, Weavers, Mudbanks, Stonebreakers and Smiths all declared for Horizon. Freedom Crow appeared on the wall of Everway and demanded to talk to Horizon. Later it was announced that they had come to an accord to defend Everway together, in defiance of Tourmaline's orders. Crow soldiers started fortifying Old Town.

Last few days

- Hordes of White Scorpion Warriors moved to besiege Everway, turfing out the refugees. Repeated attempts to scale the walls were rebuffed by the defenders, but it is clear that

there have been terrible casualties. Fortunately the invaders were focused on getting into Everway itself, but they prevented the collection of food, clearly intending to starve Everway out.

- Two days ago, the Mist finally dissipated, much to everyone's relief. The White Scorpion Warriors in Darga's army collapsed, but a core of (clearly Basahn) soldiers are left and are still fighting. The Gates of Everway are still closed.

If the heroes haven't managed to square things with Voulges, one of the gang members (Treb by default) suggests that they talk to Brother Valentine. The Mercy Hospital is more crowded than ever but noticeably better supplied – there are even workpeople whitewashing the walls and cleaning tables, and a new wing is under construction. The heroes may be surprised/worried to see some Mothers working there. Valentine is as harrassed as ever but will agree to help the heroes see the King.

Where is the Edge?

The heroes need to learn where the Edge is.

A Flame divination will reveal some or all of the following:

- the Edge is in the Armoury
- The Armoury is "below the ruin of the wizards' tower" (bad – could be the Tower of Roots) " where the ritual happened" (good)
- The Edge is behind a door with two locks
- The heroes should "talk to the ones who know where it is" to reach it [I so hope they get this one]

The heroes should figure out that they need to talk to Horizon, Peridot, or possibly Belladonna, who are all in Old Town.

There is one other possibility that Wishbone will almost certainly think of: Ulrich. Questioning his shade will prove tricky as it has gone slightly crazed, but fragments can be teased out: "Ah yes, the Edge... secret... very secret... a secret way... you need the sword and the staff of course... I copied the sword, you know, and of course I always had the staff... where is the staff?... I had it a moment ago..."

This should be enough to give the heroes a clue that they need to find the new leader of the Crookstuffs. If any of the gang are around, they can tell the heroes that Belladonna often attends the King in Old Town.

Old Town

Getting into Old Town will be tricky if the heroes haven't managed to square things with Voulges. Streets have been blocked with hastily erected barricades and are patrolled by Crow soldiers. If the heroes think of it, they could climb up from the old smuggler entrance at the back of the cellars.

The Tendwick Mansion

- A high-spired town house with castle-like surrounding walls to which wooden spikes have been fixed to deter climbers. They are patrolled by Crow soldiers who stare down at you, crossbows in hand. Entry is through a pair of ornate wrought-iron gates.

Unless they are with Voulges or Brother Valentine, the heroes will be challenged and turned back. They will be asked to leave their weapons with the guards.

- Inside is a large courtyard with stables, warehouses and a quarters for ostlers, drivers and warehouse staff. Semi-circular steps lead up to a large front door that is guarded by half a dozen Crow soldiers and a couple of gang members. The most notable feature are the 20 or so spindly-legged automata parked against the outer wall. They are about 10' high and spider-shaped. Their backs are covered with the pyramidal red crystals denoting

them as Why's work. The many servants, administrators and soldiers passing through give them a wide berth.

Why's heavily-guarded workshop is elsewhere in Old Town.

- Inside is a grand entrance hall with an elaborate stone staircase leading to the other floors. Guarded doors to left and right lead to a reception room and a grand dining chamber respectively; the latter has been turned into the King's administrative centre, with dozens of robed accountants and bureaucrats seated at the long tables. The heroes are shown in the reception room which is full of members of the King's court and about an equal number of security staff – guards with a variety of weapons (including several bow-men and -women stationed in the minstrel's gallery) and Crookstaff mages.
- Horizon is sat in a large chair in front of a dining table with a map of Everway and its surroundings. A pair of crutches are resting on a large embroidered cushion on the floor beside him. He is a portly man in his 50s with a trimmed salt-and-pepper beard and deepset green eyes, dressed in fabulous emerald green robes with fine gold embroidery. Slight, Walker and Flame may recognise Peridot standing beside him on one side. On the other is a tall raven-haired woman in her early forties dressed in robes and carrying a particularly ancient and crooked staff (**Belladonna Crookstaff**).

Possible problem: Fish Trader may take the opportunity to transform and attack Horizon, trying to fulfil the remit of his people. Emphasise the security arrangements.

Negotiations with the King

Horizon will be initially reluctant to tell them anything about the Armoury since it is one of Everway's state secrets. He will need to be persuaded. There are three steps to this.

1. With Voulges or Valentine vouching for them, the heroes need to persuade Horizon of the urgency of their mission. They will need to recount the story of their adventures and provide evidence, in the form of papers from the Fortress of Shadow. Fortunately, one or two of the bureaucrats next door have a working knowledge of Cleacuun and can confirm that the papers say what they purport to.

The heroes will also be unexpectedly supported by **Belladonna Crookstaff** who says that the new leaders of Deepmind and Crystal Sphere covens, **Enigma** and **Prophet Crookstaff**, have been bending her ear for the past couple of days about a "disturbance in the aether" and an "imminent disaster".

2. The heroes will also need a good explanation of why they want to get into the Armoury. If they say they need the Edge to stop the Walker or to fight Darga, Horizon will check with Belladonna who will say that she does not have the skills to wield the Edge, but it is possible that these Outsiders do. If they say they need the Edge to get into the Pyramid, that would be bad – Horizon will ask that the Pyramid not be harmed as it is a sacred space to many Everwayans.
3. The heroes will need to satisfy him on the subject of shapechangers. Horizon explains that the Snakerings believe that there is a secret society of shapeshifters who are attempting to destroy Everway, and who may have access to Gate magic. The summoning ritual debacle may have been one of their plots. The heroes' actions at the Great Council suggest that they know something about this. Where did they get their information from?

The heroes will need a good lie. Carrot and Beam doped them in during their interrogation, telling the Snakerings about Rrau's list of names. They also said that Wishbone mentioned shapeshifter involvement in the death of Wall Emerald.

- The heroes can quiz him about the deaths of Beautiful Rice and Topaz and his intentions for Beggartown and Everway. Horizon knew about Tourmaline's indiscretions and disapproved of them since they brought the reputation of the family into disrepute. He had no idea about the Snakering involvement and blames his sister Golden Emerald for everything. His intentions to reform Beggartown and the Great Council appear sincere

(Rathgard's truthsense does not ping at any rate); having seen it first hand, he has been genuinely affected by the plight of the poor, and recognises that Everway must open up. He does not want the help of the heroes against Tourmaline or Darga, saying that they are his battles to fight.

If negotiations go well:

- The Armoury is under Crookstaff Tower. They will not be able to get in from above as the tower is ruined, but there is a passage from a cellar under the Palace that should still be accessible.
- The door to the Armoury has a lock that needs two items to open. One is Sacnoth, the sword that accompanies the King on ceremonial occasions. The other is the ceremonial crookstaff held by Belladonna. One of the King's conditions is that Belladonna accompany the heroes.
- Getting into the Palace will be challenging – Tourmaline is paranoid about assassinations and the place will be swarming with Snakerings and Plume guards. To make things worse, they will need to get into the throne room to locate Sacnoth, assuming that Tourmaline has not moved it. Horizon fears that his family – his lover Ruby and their children Crystal and Viridian – are being held hostage in the Palace against his good behaviour, so he urges the heroes to be discrete.
- If the heroes mention that Ulrich Crookstaff may have had access to the Edge on his own, implying that he had a secret way of getting hold of Sacnoth, Horizon will acknowledge the possibility. It seems very unlikely as he would have had to get past all the guards in the throne room without them being aware of him at all, but having read the report on the secret chamber found under Chamber Platinum a few weeks ago, and the deeply disturbing papers and magical working that were found there, it seems that Master Ulrich had secrets that he did not vouchsafe to anyone else.

Reminder:

The Snakering investigation: A secret group within Chamber Platinum was engaged in a well-meaning but misguided attempt to construct a secret Gate that could be used in the event of Everway being attacked. Enemies of Everway, including shapeshifters, somehow found out and succeeded in eliminating the group and stealing their research. **Someone may have access to Gate technology...**

Unfortunately, this conclusion implicates the heroes fairly heavily. Their relationship with Absinthe, their appearance at the Council showdown, and their interest in the murder of Pincenez Crookstaff all suggest that they know about the shapeshifters and who they are likely in league with. Finding that out is likely to be the Snakerings' top priority.

Luckily, Flame's words (to Goldring Digger) will confuse the issue. The Nippers will become the chief suspects - Snakerings will initially assume that the heroes are working for them. Hence, a raid.

Subsequently, further study of the Chamber Pasheen papers has painted that organisation in a more sinister light.

- As for the King's other condition: If Belladonna is to accompany the heroes, she will need personal protection. "Tamarind, ask Master Why to attend us if you would be so kind?"

If negotiations go badly:

- Either Peridot or Belladonna will stop the heroes on their way out.

Getting the Edge

The heroes can quiz Belladonna about Ulrich's access to the Edge. Belladonna concurs that Ulrich had access to the Edge – the marks on the summoning stone, as she calls it, were consistent with its use – and has found old papers in the Green Hand coven archives showing that he requisitioned a couple of summoned earth elementals for excavation works when he took control of Deadwalk Coven, shortly after the Earthshaker incident.

Belladonna also knows if the heroes lied about anything they said to Horizon, as she has inherited Ulrich's truth-sensing amulet. If they did, she admits that she deliberately did not tell Horizon as he would have used it as an excuse not to let them into the Armoury.

There is the slight problem of how to get into a fortified city that is under attack. Most of the action is happening near the Imperial Way gate, where waves of Basahn are attempting to scale the walls from their camps in the Gatelands. The southern edge of the city near Hardhand Tower is the best bet, but the wall is swarming with guards – a mix of Crows, Watchers, Keepers and even the occasional Plume. With Rathgard's help, Slight can use the Pearl to create the ultimate "don't notice me" spell which will last as long as the heroes don't go too close the Pyramid, and Why's robots can help with the wall climbing. OR they can simply hitch a ride on Belladonna's magic carpet, though it does mean standing uncomfortably close to a naked zephyr monk.

Conditions in Everway

Inside, it is clear that the city has suffered badly over the past month.

General

- The walls are blackened with soot and "Cleanse and burn" graffiti is still everywhere. Rubbish and rubble litter the streets.
- There are few people on the streets – those that are hurry along with their heads down, clutching whatever they are carrying close to their chests. They are dirty and their clothes are ragged.
- A small procession passes by carrying a corpse with a bloodstained shroud.
- Small groups of soldiers patrol regularly in an attempt to prevent rioting and looting. They are an odd mix of families - Watchers, Crows, Plumes.

West side

- An area of streets near the Court of Fools is blackened and ruined by a fire. Even Beggartown looks better. The survivors are camped out in the Court of Fools and in the Walker's Ark. They look starved and desperate.
- In the richer areas, metal gates and fences have been ripped up for forging into weapons. The Gold family house has been stripped of all its exterior metal.
- The Theatre of the Thousand Spheres and the Gaming Houses are boarded up. Armed troupes of Masks are patrolling the streets, protecting their property.
- The Smith forges are going full tilt, making weapons.
- The Arenas are busy, with tired-looking soldiers in mismatched armour being drilled by shouting sergeants.
- The Library of All Worlds seems relatively untouched, but Librarians Militant and sages can be seen carrying out books and scrolls. Some are crying as their life's work is taken away to be burnt.

East side

- A column of black smoke rises from the Houses of Dusk where bodies are being cremated, since there is no wood to make boats. It reminds you disturbingly of the Black Mist.
- The Temple of Mercy has not been repaired since Flame's and Walker's firebombing of it. The soot-blackened interior is lined with pallets of groaning soldiers. The Mothers gliding among them have dirty and stained robes and look exhausted.
- The fifty foot statue of the Nurturer in the Mother family houses is missing its head.
- The Tower of Roots is a blackened stump. The remains of the stem and the bulb-shaped living quarters are scattered around Star Square, along with the shattered remains of the houses they hit.
- Many of the statues on the Stonebreaker family house are missing arms, legs or heads.

The fountains in Stonebreaker Square are choked with rubble.

- The Council House is more or less intact. Officials hurry to and fro, besieged by desperate Everwayans.
- The trees in the Palace Gardens have been chopped down for firewood.

Option 1: Deadhand Coven

- Deadwalk Coven has been badly damaged – one corner of the gaunt four-storey building is missing (temporary wooden covers have been nailed in place) and large chunks of masonry litter the graveyard that surrounds it.
- Several of the gravestones have been knocked at crazy angles or are broken.
- The number of gargoyles has been significantly reduced.
- The whole place has an exhausted, listless feeling. The mummified beasts in the various alcoves still turn and watch as you pass, but they seem slower.

The heroes can come up with a plan to get inside (perhaps to see Necropolis' replacement, **Toad Crookstaff**). Belladonna Crookstaff can assist by demanding an inspection of the premises; she won't take part in any combat, but will keep Toad arguing while the heroes investigate. Or they can simply bust the door down, though the latter will cause the coven defences to activate. Belladonna will disapprove of this action but will accompany them.

The Basement

- Ulrich's secret workshop is in the basement, a maze-like space which is full of tanks of pickled things, discarded necromantic experiments (some of which are still twitching) and mummy cases containing human and animal corpses awaiting animation. Wishbone can use Ulrich's spirit to guide them in the right direction.
- If the defences have been activated, there are a couple of guardian mummies (A1 (horrifying groan), E4, F5, W2), but Flame can easily set them on fire (and possibly the entire coven – yes, the preservative fluid is highly flammable).
- The workshop is off the pickling room where corpses are prepared for their life of undeath. Saws, hooks, spikes and bloody funeral shrouds are very much in evidence.
- The access point is a mummy case at the end of a short corridor. Inserting Belladonna's staff into its eye causes it to swing open.
- The room beyond is neat and surprisingly bare. There is the remains of a pentagram in the centre of the floor where Ulrich clearly bound his zombies to him, a research bench with a few dusty reagents, and a cupboard with changes of clothes.
- Access to the secret passage to the Armoury is via another mummy case which stands against the far wall and is opened in the same way. Just inside the passageway is an alcove that has an ornate black sword propped in it. Belladonna can confirm that this is a copy of the legendary sword Sacnoth.
- The passage runs for around 100 yards and ends in a concealed door that opens onto the passage from the palace. The Armoury is just around a corner to the left.

Option 2: The Palace

AKA hard mode.

If the heroes opt to use the Palace entrance, they can make use of the knowledge gleaned from the soiree. The side entrance they used before is the best bet, but it there are 4 guards.

If the heroes are organised and manage to defeat the guards without them sounding the alarm, the heroes can use an undetectability glamour to sneak through the Palace. They will

need to dodge into side chambers to avoid patrols from time to time.

Unfortunately the maze-like interior makes finding the throne room challenging. The heroes can find their way to the marble staircase where they met Ruby, Crystal and Viridian – going up it and taking out the guards standing in front of one of the doors will give them access to the children, who can guide them through the Palace.

The throne room is guarded by 8 guards. The sword Sacnoth is lying on a cushion in a display case next to the throne. It is 5' long, katana-like, and completely black. The blade is made of obsidian honed to a fine edge, with mystical sigils along its length.

The secret passageway to the Armoury

The door to the Armoury is an unassuming stone affair in the Palace basement that can easily be detected by the powerful protective spells that have been cast on it. Inserting Sacnoth into a small crack in the wall will open the passage.

Emerald guards:

A2 (Work as one)

E3 (Turn the blade)

F4 (Protect the seniors)

W2 (Identify assassins)

Emerald wizards:

A5

E2

F2

W4

Powers: Green Healing 4, Force wall 4, Nullify magic 4

The Armoury

The Armoury is a circular chamber built into the foundations of Crookstaff Tower. There are no guards here, but Slight and Wishbone can detect that it is protected by powerful magicks.

The entrance is a heavy stone double door with a stout centrally placed lock with two holes, one circular, the other a thin slit. The small chamber in front of it has a staircase upwards which is blocked by large boulders from the ruined tower above. The occasional creak and groan from the ceiling suggests that the area is not stable.

Belladonna's staff and Sacnoth (or Ulrich's copy) are needed to open the double lock - they need to be turned together.
Any attempt to blast a way in is likely to cause a catastrophic rockfall.

- The door open onto a 30' dome-shaped room. Dotted around it are stands, tables and alcoves on which are objects with small handwritten notes, like museum exhibits. The items are all magical and some of them are very nasty indeed.
- The most prominent from the heroes' point of view is a large stand, lit by a ray of sunshine from the cracked roof above, on which rests the Edge of Light and Darkness. It is a long sword with a black pommel and a preternaturally shiny and thin blade. The end of the pommel has a large circular socket. The whole thing radiates power and the magic has the alien quality of the Pearl and the Book. Both Flame and Fish Trader are drawn to it. The sign on it says "Edge of Light and Darkness, 2401. Fabricated by Ulrich Crookstaff."
- The heroes may also be interested in some of the magical artefacts, though Belladonna will try to stop them taking any.

- A sealed-off alcove marked "Books of the Nine Leper Kings". It is empty – someone clearly removed them recently.
- A frame with what is clearly flayed human skin. It is tattooed with a mesmerising swirling pattern – even looking at it is painful. The sign reads "Tattoo of Tourmaline Mudbank, 2043."
- Several Spheres of Pure Flame. The sign reads "Sphere of Pure Flame. Product of the Phoenix Caves, 2249. Highly explosive."
- A set of boxes containing a torso, limbs and head made of old, yellowed ivory and bone. Splintered ends and stump suggest that the limbs and head were torn off the torso. Sign reads "Remains of the Bloodless Monarch, 658."
- A small vial is sealed away beneath thick glass. A sign reads "Cockatrice poison. Healer rebellion, 1658"
- Another sealed vial of red liquid. "Blood of Libram Scratch, 1805. Warning – Blood Plague infection"
- A sheet of paper covered with alchemical symbols. "White fire recipe, 2149. Aric Whiteoar. Spreads and burns on contact."

Each case and alcove has a discrete hole into which Belladonna's staff can be inserted. Slight or Wishbone can spot this on a lucky FC if they specifically say they are looking for traps. Belladonna knows about this.

Removing the Edge or any other artefact from its resting place without doing this triggers a magical alarm. The doors slam shut and six figures wearing armour covered with glowing magical runes burst out of concealed panels in the walls. They are in fact Deadwalk Coven mummies, but nastier. However they are not immune to the powers of the Edge.

6 Armoured Mummies (A2 (horrifying groan), E6, F5, W3).

Special power: Fire resistance – even Flame will take 2 rounds to burn them up.

Special power: Shocking touch. The runes discharge on contact, doing 2E damage.

The alarm will also summon a dozen guards from the Palace who may harrass the heroes as they make their escape. Bringing the tunnel down behind them will be an effective tactic.

The Pyramid

Depending on how chaotic events in the Armoury become, the heroes may have to make a dash for the Pyramid or they may get a chance for a brief rest.

Slight can cast a non-detection glamour with the Pearl, but it will fade as they get closer. Fish Trader's power will also fade, revealing his cat form. Wishbone will lose contact with Hawk. Walker's cloak and Flame's coins stop working. The only forms of magic that are powerful enough to work near the Pyramid are the Book, Pearl and Edge. Why's automata and his ovicopter are of course fine.

As the heroes approach...

The massive squat form of the Pyramid looms over you. The seven 40' high layers are made of great slabs of honey-coloured rock that have been unweathered in 2500 years. They are perfectly smooth and show no signs of chiselling. The cracks between the slabs are barely visible. A number of worshippers are praying at its base.

Base size: 280'

Height: 240'

(For comparison – stepped pyramid of Djoser has height 205', base 358').

Bottom layer has 32 blocks per side: Each is 8.75' wide by 40' high by 40' depth.

This close to the Pyramid, Walker can sense the last dregs of the Avatar of Change's powers churning within him. He can turn into the Shifting Man if he wishes.

Getting in

Flame, if in control of the Edge, will most likely take the direct approach. She swings the Edge at one of the stones in the bottom layer of the Pyramid, expecting to cut a hole through the midianite to the interior, but it just skitters off – she cannot get purchase. Even socketing the Pearl and reading from the Book will not work.

It seems that you need the power of an Avatar to cut through midianite, even with the Edge. To make things worse, Flame's assault on the Pyramid will cause shouts of alarm from the worshippers, and dozens of red-robed Moondancers will boil out of the Moondancer family house nearby, ready to defend the Pyramid.

Moondancer cultists: **A3 E2 F3 W4**

Flame can intuit that the Edge needs a crack to enlarge. Hopefully the heroes can figure out that such a weakness exists in the very top layer of the Pyramid where the capstone should go. Wishbone can follow the line of Walker's connection to the Avatar of Change, as she did before, to work this out.

Getting to the top could be a problem, particularly if the heroes are under attack from Moondancers.

- Flame can just climb up the sheer wall, as can Fish Trader.
- Walker can turn into the Shifting Man and jump up.
- Why can use his automata to give the remaining heroes a lift.
- Or the heroes can use rope. They are assumed to have 50' each.

At the top

The flat surface of the top-most layer is 70' wide. It gives an excellent view of Everway, Strangerside, and the lands beyond. The waters of Shimmermoon Bay stretch into the distance.

Right at the centre of the layer is a small hole where four slabs meet. Driving the Edge into it causes the rock around the hole to crumble. Flame or Fish Trader can quickly carve out a hole large enough for a human or an automaton, revealing, for the first time in almost 2500 years, the interior of the Pyramid.

It's very dark, but there is one obvious thing. A glowing red path has been incised into the rock. It twists and turns in an elegant set of loops about the centre of the chamber below you, forming a labyrinth about 100' across.

The shapes formed by the path look very like the ones that Flame scribes when she does a divination.

At the Labyrinth's very centre, directly below you, is what looks like a throne with a humanoid figure seated in it, head bowed. The figure is hard to see as it is constantly shifting and changing. A chunk of midianite from the edge of the hole drops towards the labyrinth below. About 10' above the floor, it is torn apart into bright sparkles.

For Slight and Wishbone, the Labyrinth is immensely magical, more so even than the Edge or the Pearl, and highly dangerous. It is a seething mass of barely contained magical chaos, twisted into strange shapes and configurations that make no sense. If you had to guess, you would say that you are looking at the frozen mind of a genius, or a mad person. There is an opening in the chaos right at the edge of the Labyrinth where the path begins. Clearly you are intended to follow the path from the edge to the centre, though it looks horribly difficult and dangerous to do so. There are barriers – veils, if you like – across the path that would have to be negotiated.

Getting in

Experiments with coins etc. will reveal that the Labyrinth destroys anything dropped on it from above, but the edges are safe. The heroes will have to figure out how to reach the edge

without using magic and without being immolated. Complications: The maximum size of the entry hole is 20' across.

Options:

- A 80-100' wooden bridge lowered on rope. Needs over 500' of rope and a lot of preparation time. Two ship masts lashed together would do for the bridge.
- Climbing down the inner walls. Next to impossible – each layer of the pyramid has a 20' wide underhang which not even Flame or Fish Trader can negotiate. Why's spider automatons can do it by leaping from the edge of an underhang to the sheer wall below, but it's highly risky. Fortune Cards to determine how many spiders he loses to the labyrinth.
- Securing a line by firing an arrow attached to a rope would be good, but there's nothing for the arrow to stick into. Why can invent a sticky glue on the spot. The top of the rope will also need to be secured.
- Walker could climb down, swing out and jump using his cloak. This will in fact work – the Labyrinth's magic negates to the nullifying power of the Pyramid – but it's a 30-40' drop. Alternatively, one of Why's spiders should survive the landing.

The Finale

The Walker's return

- As the heroes are about to enact their plan, there is a deafening crack of thunder and a black hole appears in the sky to the north of Everway about 100 feet up, silvery flames burning at its centre.
- A huge figure holding a pyramidal stone above its head drops from it, hitting the earth with a crash that shakes Everway to its foundations.
- Several buildings collapse, including the Arenas, Deadwalk Coven, two of the Gaming Houses, and one of the wings of the Palace. Part of the Everway city wall near the Dusk Bridge slides into the river. Screams and mass panic.
- A few seconds later, a steady Boom!, Boom!, Boom! starts up, the ground shaking with each one.

The heroes must decide quickly who will enter the Pyramid and who will try to stop the oncoming Walker. If Flame thinks that she can cut the Walker in two with the Edge or cut away the ground beneath its feet, remind her that she couldn't get through the midianite of the Pyramid so this isn't a safe option.

If Wishbone gets to a far enough distance from the Pyramid that she can use Hawk, she can monitor the Walker's approach. Beneath the portal, which is not closing up, there is a large impact crater around which are littered the bodies of Returner Basahn. The Basahn that were attacking the walls have turned away and are attempting to impede the Walker's progress, without much effect. Wishbone sees the effect of the stasis field.

At an appropriately dramatic moment:

- The Imperial Gate bursts apart with an enormous rending crash, revealing the Walker. It is perhaps smaller than might be expected, a mere 25' high, a blank-eyed stone creature that is something between a colossus, a golem and a mummy, holding the massive capstone (30' across) above its head like a huge hat, but its approach is inexorable. Boom! Boom! Boom!

Fighting the Walker

The heroes who elect to fight the Walker will first have to find a way off the top of the Pyramid if they are on it.

Some things they can try:

- Rallying the crowd against the Walker (the Rathgard solution). The success of this

approach depends on who is doing it and whether they made any preparations. Moondance cultists will oppose any attempt to stop the Walker entering the city, but the majority of people will be confused and can be persuaded, particularly with arguments along the lines of "This is not the Walker, it's an imposter!" or "This is a Basahn trick!"

- Attacking the Walker with missiles. This is when they learn that the Walker and the Capstone emit a stasis field that stops anything thrown at it. Spears, arrows and ballistae slow down, stop, and fall out of the air.
- Attacking the Walker with melee weapons. Again, no dice. People approaching to melee will find themselves slowing down as if running into treacle and flung aside as the Walker passes, even if an entire army attempts to attack at once.
- Try to trip the Walker up. Rope just snaps.
- Using Flame's coins or the Edge to bring a building down in its path. The Walker stops, gathers itself, and leaps onto the rubble.
- Try to repeat Ulrich Crookstaff's trick and cut the ground out from under the Walker's feet with the Edge. Flame or Fish Trader will have to get a lucky FC for this to work at all. If it succeeds, a crack in reality opens that expands out towards the Walker. Unfortunately when the crack reaches the Walker's stasis field, it bifurcates and goes off at approximately 90 degrees, passing through buildings on either side which collapse into it. The Walker jumps over the crack and continues. Flame or Fish Trader can try again (making a real mess of Everway's centre), but it's exhausting and doesn't stop the Walker.

The crack in reality leaks yellow flames that give off no heat.

Regardless of what the heroes and their allies do, the Walker eventually reaches the base of the Pyramid. With a series of massive crashes it leaps from layer to layer of the Pyramid, finally arriving at the top. There it throws down the Capstone, sealing Anubis in forever. A wave of stasis ripples out across Everway and out into the Thousand Spheres. Heroes who did not enter the Pyramid are frozen. Inside, the small beam of light from the hole made by the Edge snuffs out.

The Labyrinth

In order to save Anubis, at least one hero must decide to walk the Labyrinth.

- This requires immense strength – it is like wearing lead boots – and an ability to intuit the twist and turns of the path, which become obscured by sparks. A combination of heroes who help each other will work best.
 - Those with high Earth or Fire can push forward, helping others as needed.
 - Those with high Water or Air can intuit where the path goes even when it is not visible.
- There are three Veils – barriers across the path - and a Grand Curve, which is relatively easy to traverse.
 - Each Veil requires a Good FC to push through. On a bad FC, the hero loses 1 E. If they reach 0 E, they can't continue.
 - On the Grand Curve and the final approach to the centre, the hero's passage becomes obscured by crackling sparks that flare up from their feet to waist height. They need another FC to avoid stepping off the path. On a bad one, a cloud of chaos energy starts forming above their head and they lose one E. They need a good FC to find the path again.
- The Book, Pearl and Edge will also prove useful – the Labyrinth's magic will counteract the deadening effect of the huge mass of midianite forming the Pyramid's walls.
 - The Edge can be used to cut through the Veil barriers, temporarily disabling them.
 - The Pearl will temporarily clear the obscuring sparks from the hero's feet.

- The Book can enhance the effects of the other two.

Freeing the Avatar of Change

Hopefully at least one hero manages to struggle through the final Veil and make it to the centre. Here they come face to face with the Avatar of Change. It sits quietly in the midianite chair, bound to it by stone bonds, a huge humanoid figure, blurry and changing, like a much larger version of the Shifting Man.

- The heroes' final task is to get it out of the chair, preferably without touching it – they may sprout tube-like growths or undergo other undesirable changes if they do.
- The Edge can be used to cut the bonds, which will be sufficient. The bonds are made of midianite and can be smashed.
- Tipping the chair over should work as well.

The avatar stands and looks down at the heroes, its features unreadable.

- Slight or Wishbone, if present, will feel that it is issuing a command to the Labyrinth – something that they and all the others who reached the centre could do as well, if they wish.
- Assuming they do nothing, all the heroes suddenly find themselves either back on top of the Pyramid, or on Imperial Way leading up to it.
- The Walker is directly in front of them – it turns to look at Change and starts to back away, but the Avatar moves forward swiftly and grabs it by the hand. The bodies of the Walker and the Avatar merge into each other in an explosion of white light, in the same way that the Awakener and his Bride were joined in Stonedeep.
- When it clears, only a single figure remains – an ebony jackal-headed humanoid with glowing red eyes, wearing an Egyptian-style skirt and with an ankh round its neck. It bows to the heroes, and again to Walker, who finally feels himself free of his curse. A voice echoes in their heads "I am Anubis. Thank you for restoring me. If it is in my power, I will grant you all a Boon."

Rewards and Consequences

- Anubis can take the heroes wherever they want to go in the Thousand Spheres. Rathgard can return to Rath, Gecko and Wishbone to Shifting Sands, Fish Trader to the Peaceful Kingdom, Why to Man-sun.
- Or the heroes can remain in Everway and reorganise it to their liking. The Returner Basahn will have to be dealt with, but as General Darga was one of those killed when the Walker landed, the fight has gone out of them and they will be ready to sue for peace.
- The heroes can decide the fate of Tourmaline. He could have been killed in the Palace collapse, or the heroes can arrange with Anubis for an – accident – to happen to him. Or Horizon could simply be welcomed back by popular acclaim.
- Horizon will be true to his word, organising a "Council for the Rebuilding of Greater Everway" which includes all the Everway families and representatives of Strangerside.
- Depending on the heroes' actions (or how they tell the tale subsequently), they may be feted by the people as saviours of Everway. A new public holiday will be created in their honour. Several families will offer honorary membership or marriage. If Flame and Walker want to start their own Everway Family, they can. (Wishbone too, if she wants to.)
- The heroes will have to decide what to do with the Pearl, the Edge and the Book. Belladonna will politely ask for them back, but the heroes can also opt to keep them or give them to Urumora, who may eventually work out how to use them. If the capstone was placed on the Pyramid, the Labyrinth is no longer accessible, but the heroes could initiate a plan to break back in. It will take years, however.

- More adventurous heroes may perhaps want to explore outside the Thousand Spheres. Anubis can take them to Kayte, who can show them mind-expanding wonders. Eventually they may learn to shadow-walk.

THE END

08/05/2023