

“None can use black magic without straining the soul to the uttermost—and staining it into the bargain. None can inflict suffering without enduring the same. None can send death by spells and sorcery without walking on the brink of death’s own abyss, aye, and dripping his own blood into it.”

- Fritz Leiber, “The Unholy Grail.” *Swords and Deviltry*

Somewhere in Talmussin a necromancer, the Moth, has a dark plan.

## History

This story, and the Moth’s plan, start with Tygla the Red. Tygla’s history is written in jagged marks across Talmussin. She was a terrible necromancer that was most famous for bleeding children to keep herself young. She claimed, to her acolytes, that she was the cause of the eclipse over Talmussin. This was all two-hundred years ago or so. Tygla and her most skilled apprentice was the only one that survived the Ekletheon Church’s purge of the dead in Talmussin.

Ashali was wealthy, the scion of the Vleda-Mehet family. The Mehets owed allegiance to the Vleda, and their star fell with them when the Veda family was displaced from the founding families of Talmussin. The Mehets grew tighter and more insular and began their own dreary collapse, sped along by the fact that Ashali’s siblings all died suspiciously. The last of their once-great wealth was absorbed by Ashali’s vanity project: the creation of four powerful magical items.

The Vleda family was one of the founding families of Talmussin that rebelled against the ancient empire that settled Sarandib. While they, too, were invaders, the founding families wanted to live freely in the city by the bridge rather than just be another outpost of a gigantic kingdom. The Vleda, like the other founding families, enjoyed power and prestige, but eventually fell to internal strife and external pressure. At the time and to this day rumors have persisted that the Vleda have the blood of fiends and practice dark magic.

These items became known among the darker occult circles as Ashali’s Relics, or Ashali’s Panoply. The collection includes a dagger known as an Athame, which inflicts wounds that don’t heal; a Chalice that can trap the souls of its victims indefinitely; a Wand that paralyzes enemies and turns them to stone; and an amulet bearing her Sigil that protects the dead both material and spectral.

### Lady Ashali’s Athame

*Weapon, rare (requires attunement)*

Hit points lost to this dagger’s damage can be regained only through a short or long rest, rather than by regeneration, magic, or any other means.

Once per turn, when you hit a creature with an attack using this magic weapon, you can wound the target. At the start of each of the wounded creature’s turns, it takes 1d4 necrotic damage for each time you’ve wounded it, and it can then make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, ending the effect of all such wounds on itself on a success. Alternatively, the wounded creature, or a creature within 5 feet of it, can use an action to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, ending the effect of such wounds on it on a success.

While wielding this dagger the wielder has blindsight out to 30 feet.

This item requires attunement. If the wielder is attuned to the Sigil, Wand, and Chalice of Lady Ashali they may also attune to the Athame regardless of the normal limitations of attunement.

Proficiency with a dagger allows you to add your proficiency bonus to the attack roll for any attack you make with it.

#### Lady Ashali's Chalice

*Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)*

To use this chalice you must get a drop of a target's blood (or saliva, a hair, or any other part of the target). When that is added to the chalice and stirred with wine, tea, or honeyed water the chalice attempts to trap the target.

If the target comes within 30 feet of the chalice when it becomes active it must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or be trapped, along with anything it is wearing or carrying, in the chalice's extradimensional cell. This saving throw is made with advantage if the creature knows the chalice's nature, and constructs succeed on the saving throw automatically.

An extradimensional cell is an infinite expanse filled with thick fog that reduces visibility to 10 feet. Creatures trapped in the chalice's cells don't age, and they don't need to eat, drink, or sleep. A creature trapped within a cell can escape using magic that permits planar travel. Otherwise, the creature is confined to the cell until freed.

If the chalice traps a creature but its cell is already occupied, the chalice frees its trapped creature to accommodate the new prisoner. A freed creature appears in an unoccupied space within 30 feet of the chalice. If the chalice is destroyed the trapped creature is freed.

While within 5 feet of the chalice, you can use an action to speak the name of the creature trapped in it. The creature named appears as an image on the surface of the chalice's contents. You and the creature can then communicate normally.

In a similar way, you can use an action to speak a second command word and free the creature trapped in the chalice. The freed creature appears, along with its possessions, in the unoccupied space nearest to the chalice.

This item requires attunement. If the wielder is attuned to the Sigil, Athame, and Wand of Lady Ashali they may also attune to the Chalice regardless of the normal limitations of attunement.

#### Lady Ashali's Sigil

*Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)*

This is a pendant of white jade, a disk almost five inches across suspended on a chain of iron. The front of it is scribed all over by a network of magical symbols.

The wearer of the Sigil acts as the center of an *antilife shell* and a *circle of power* both. These effects are continuous.

A casting of *dispel magic* can suppress the effects for 1d6 minutes if the caster succeeds at a caster level check against a DC of 15, or as long as the Sigil is in an *antimagic field* or similar.

This item requires attunement. If the wielder is attuned to the Wand, Athame, and Chalice of Lady Ashali they may also attune to the Sigil regardless of the normal limitations of attunement.

Lady Ashali's Wand

*Wand, rare (requires attunement)*

This wand has 7 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 of its charges to cause a thin blue ray to streak from the tip toward a creature you can see within 60 feet of you. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be **paralyzed** for 1 minute. At the end of each of the target's turns, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the target fails all of the saving throws throughout that minute the paralysis effect ends, but the target is also cursed. The curse reduces the target's Strength by 1d6+1, and can only be removed by casting *remove curse* or by breaking the wand that imposed the curse.

The wand regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the wand's last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the wand turns to a slender rod of black stone and is no longer magical.

This item requires attunement. If the wielder is attuned to the Sigil, Athame, and Chalice of Lady Ashali they may also attune to the Wand regardless of the normal limitations of attunement.

All throughout the collapse of the family Ashali stayed close to her mentor Tygla, and Tygla grew steadily in power, evading the Church and the Messengers of Jagus sometimes by inches. When Tygla became too powerful Vecna, the lich god, began to visit Ashali in her dreams. He cajoled and convinced and compelled Ashali to trap her mentor in the magic chalice she'd had made, sealing her away forever.

Vecna's secret priesthood then quietly ensured that Ashali was found by the Messengers of Jagus and, along with the last of the dead in Talmussin, swept up and buried in a vault that became known as the Crypta Infelix, or the Dead Pit by the locals. Ashali is presumed deceased, trapped in the Pit with the rest of the plague of the dead that once swarmed the streets of the city. The various parts of her panoply were scattered after her death.

A year ago, perhaps, the Moth received a vision from some terrible entity and followed it to the Chalice, buried under a collapsed building in the slums of Talmussin. Miraculously, Tygla's spirit was still trapped inside the Chalice. Together Tygla and the Moth devised a horrible ritual that, if executed, will result in the death of every person in Talmussin.

It's up to you to stop him.

Synopsis

This adventure begins with an unexplained leap in the frequency of hauntings in Talmussin, a theft, and a murder. When the players follow those threads they'll find more information about Ashali's Panoply

and, in time, follow those to the Chalice and the Moth. If they act quickly, they'll find him in time to prevent another plague of the dead in Talmussin.

### Scene One: Haunting

Hauntings have been occurring unusually often in Talmussin of late. For being so near Manifest, the City of the Dead, hauntings here are rare and almost always benign. However, one of the PCs will be visited by a very dark spirit: a victim of a fire that burned down the building across the street a week ago.

The PC is woken from sleep at midnight by a terrible heat. Flames crackle around the edges of the room, but the fire is pale. In the middle of the blaze a blackened and emaciated figure turns back and forth blindly. After a moment it turns toward the PC and lurches forward, the fire racing along behind it.

This encounter can be complicated by its details: the PC is just waking up from sleep, so starts combat prone (but not with a surprise round – the PC was woken by the heat). The ghost probably also caught the PC without armor or weapons, though we can assume the PC's primary weapons or tools are within a few feet of their bed. The room is on fire, with the flames advancing steadily throughout the encounter. Finally, the encounter only engages a single player character at the table; the others should be brought in as NPCs – guards or ghosts in equal measures.

The encounter starts with one PC versus the pyrogeist. Add a single town guard for the next PC (use the statistics of a veteran), then a ghost for the next PC, then another guard, and so forth until everyone at the table has a part to play. Ghosts past the first show up at the beginning of the second round, rolling initiative then. Guards roll initiative at the beginning of combat, but start combat outside and take a round to enter the home, drawn there by the ethereal fire flaring out of the windows. When the pyrogeist is slain the other ghosts fight for one round, then 'flee' by evaporating into the Ethereal plane.

The fire starts at the edges of the room, occupying no squares. Each round roll a d8, with 1 as North, 2 as Northeast, 3 as East, etc. The fire moves that direction, occupying a new five-foot-square extending that direction from one of the walls. Creatures that begin their turns in a square on fire or move into a square on fire take 1d6 fire damage. A character can put itself out by making a DC 10 Dexterity check as an action.

After the combat is done the spectral fire also dissipates, revealing that nothing in the bedroom burned. The only damage is from errant sword-swings and missed arrows. Keep track of damaging magic or attacks that the guards and PC use, and describe their effects on the surroundings.

### Scene Two: Recruitment

The theft of the "Blooming Lady," a statue that was commissioned by the Vlada-Mehet family many years ago. The statue was onyx, covered in a thin layer of white clay. The Pelte is concerned with this, while the Church is concerned about the attacks and the Lodge is concerned with the ghosts' presence.

PCs are roped in for varied reasons and asked to do a bit of metaphorical digging. Once they begin researching the scene of the crime there are clear signs that the undead have been there (scent by survival, some small bone fragments by medicine), a short trail to follow, information about the statue's history (history) or composition (dwarf or nature) or the significance of onyx (religion). Characters could

make investigation checks or survival checks to try and follow the trail, as well, though following a trail in a city is almost impossible.

The most valuable clue is a block away, in a refuse heap: Pilar Peach-pit, the halfling grocer that saw the Moth and his undead companions. The Church of Jagus has issued a one-time indulgence to cast *speak with dead* if any of the PCs know it. If they don't, the Lodge will provide a scroll (which a caster could copy into their book, if they chose). Pilar heard noises as he was walking home from the bar and went to investigate. There were five figures: four skeletons and the Moth. They were rocking the statue back and forth until it broke at the ankles, and then they went to carry it off. When Pilar came by the one in rags turned, saw him, and pointed. There was a green flash, and he doesn't remember anything else. He did see, though, that the guy was pale and wore funerary wrappings. He had a black gemstone on his forehead, and carried a massive book bound in lead and a broad pewter bowl. The bowl looked like a brazier supported by three skeletal figures kneeling, as though they were being crushed by the bowl's weight. Pilar noticed the bowl because he could hear someone speaking out of it.

The Pelte wants to find this guy, but has nothing to go on. Eventually a PC will ask about magic that could do it. A *locate object* spell will work, but needs a focus and has limited range. The Lodge can design a rangeless version, if the PCs can find something to focus it on.

Chasing the bone fragments will lead to where the Moth dumped his lackeys - a pile of loose flesh at the borders of the slums by the canal. The bodies were the corpses of minor nobility in the city: merchant sons and soldiers. The Necropolis has powerful protections around it that prevent the dead from leaving; some nobles prefer family tombs that are more elegant but less secure.

Once the PCs settle on the bowl as the only method to move forward they'll need to find out more.

### Scene Three: Research

The PCs can make a high check to recognize the bowl, or else the Lodge will offer their library of magical item research and history. If any of the PCs are connected to the Lodge of Dusk their contacts will recognize the spellcaster's description. A PC with the Sage background can conduct the research without a check, otherwise PCs can roll Arcana or History.

While here the PCs may pick up clues and hooks for other adventures linked to magical items or the city's history.

The most valuable information, though, is the records of Ashali's relics. The notes are from an historian of the Vladam house, and refer to the purchases of reagents and artificing tools by Ashlani and her house's crafters, and etc. They speculate on the natures of the panoply and have some record of where they went. SEE: those items, below.

### Scene Four: Recovery

Now the PCs have to decide whether to go for the Athame, the Sigil, or the Wand. In each case the NPCs around will each have their own recommendations:

The Pelte recommends going for the Athame. They don't know how long it will take to find Jikishi, and don't want to open the Dead Pit. As an added bonus, as the PCs find out more about Dakani, the Pelte gets to arrest a rogue.

The Lodge would like to retrieve the Sigil. Tangling with witches is foolish, and finding the knife involves too much guess-work. They know where the Sigil is: they have records of it. The only threat here is a mess of skeletons, hardly an issue.

The Church would like the PCs to retrieve the Wand. Trying to safely un-cap the Dead Pit is foolish and dangerous, and creates more work resealing it. There's no evidence that the remaining heir of the Vladam-Mehets is still in town, nor are they certain the heir knows where the Athame is, or would part with it. The witch Jikishi is a clear danger that the Church would like to eliminate, and there is evidence that she has the Wand.

#### Scene Four, Option One: Jikishi the Witch

Jungle exploration starts with equipping for a three-day trip. PCs will have packs put together by the Church, and a guide that knows more or less where the witch is. Azasha will steer the PCs in the right direction, but a small Essence Storm will complicate things.

The Essence Storm will cause mirages and illusions. These will make the path there harder to find, and beyond that will start dredging up dreams to make real.

Start with an encounter of shapes coming out of the rain that slowly coalesce into water elementals shaped like liquid dragons (Eastern dragons, long serpents that curl and froth like waves). These elementals are as water elementals, with an equal number to the PCs present. When they reduce a PC to 0 hp the PC is instantly stabilized (the elementals are illusory, caused by the storm).

The next encounter should be a surprise: a death slaad. Jikishi holds its control gem. The slaad will use illusions and attack at night, hoping to disorient and surprise the visitors. It creates copies of itself that poof into mist when struck, bolstering the idea that it's an illusion. It's very, very real, though.

Finally, confront Jikishi. She's part of a coven: 1 annis hag, 1 night, 1 green hag. She'll attempt to bargain to sell the wand to the PCs rather than fight, but the prices will be terrible. If the PCs fight the coven will magically attack one at a time while the PCs fight her garden's terrible critters. They'll run before they're assaulted, leaving the wand behind (maybe cursed, as a "fuck you" to the adventurers).

Jikishi's Curse: When the PCs claim the Wand from Jikishi she leaves a powerful curse on it. Anybody there when it's picked up is affected. The curse is a kind of classic one: the PCs will be followed by a "cloud of misfortune" that manifests physically. A dark cloud will hover over the PCs, such that they never actually feel sunlight. They'll also be real obviously cursed, and average folk will shy from them. Additionally, the GM will be given three uses of 'misfortune' each session, which act like inspiration. NPCs or enemies will be able to gain advantage against the PCs. Could be social, in combat, whatever. This doesn't affect the players' rolls, just sucks.

They can break the curse by finding and killing Jikishi and her two coven-mates. If they've already done this make them go find the eggs of a naga and eat them whole, one each, or something.

*Remove curse* will also work, but only on a CL DC 20, with a chance to check again when they gain a level.

Illusory Water Elementals: 3 CR 5 creatures, 1800 XP each. Total XP 5400. This combat doesn't get a multiple enemy modifier because the enemies can't actually kill the PCs.

Death Slaad: CR 10, 5900 XP.

Coven: Jikishi (Annis Hag) CR 6, 2300 XP; Night Hag CR 7, 2900 XP; Green Hag CR 5, 1800 XP. Total 7000 XP.

All encounters: 18300 XP.

#### Scene Four, Option Two: The Dead Pit

If the PCs pursue the Sigil the Pelte will ask for a week to clear the streets surrounding the area. They can be haggled down to 3 days, no sooner. Then they'll set up a perimeter and a gang of oxen will drag the great seal off the Pit.

The PCs will then descend into the Pit. There's evidence of the undead all over, including bodies that have clearly been destroyed by other undead. The Pit is a section of the Warrens that was collapsed and sealed up, so there's a few large caverns and a few narrow tunnels. The encounters here will consist mainly of evading bands of restless skeletons while hoping to find the one Ashali is part of. There are ravenous ghouls, a few ghosts, a nearly limitless number of skeletons, and a few unusual examples, like flameskulls, an allip, that kind of thing. Maybe make a cadaver collector a set piece, or occasionally reveal bits of a corpse worm (a undead purple worm packed with ghouls and skeletons, slowly curling underneath the rest of the detritus and caverns).

Once the PCs find and assault Ashali it's a straight-up fuckfest: a dozen skeletons, a half a dozen ghouls, and assorted weirdos, as well as Ashali and the Sigil's aura powers.

As an option, use the mob fighting rules here, turning the mass of skeletons and shadows as a swarm that deals automatic damage in its space, with an action each turn to shove, trip, or do something weird (like a magical effect).

Once the PCs have the Sigil it's time to fuck off ASAP. The escape should be a tense moment as well - chase them with an armored undead atop a skeletal horse dragging itself along on bony stumps of legs, or something.

Welcoming Party: 12 skeletons CR 1/4, 50 XP each, 2 minotaur skeletons, CR 2, 700 XP each. Total XP 2000, x3 for massive fight modifier, 6000 XP.

Shadow Swarm: Treat as ten shadows together, essentially a swarm. It takes up a 20 ft square and makes attacks against all targets it shares a space with, and has 200 hp. CR 7, 2900 XP.

Ashali's Entourage: Ashali, CR 7, 2900 XP; intangible deathlock wight CR 4, 1100 XP; phantom warrior CR 3, 700 XP. Total encounter XP 4700, x 1.5 for numbers, total 7050 XP.

The Chase: Centaur mummy CR 6, 2300 XP; dread warrior CR 1, 200 XP. Total encounter XP 2500.

All encounters: 18400 XP.

Sigil's curse: doors confuse you. Every doorway you go through (windows and caves and holes in walls are exempt, but cellar doors, grand entryways, and shop doors all prompt it) has a 10% (5%?) chance to bring you to an endless field of darkness in which a malevolent figure waits. You can't see it, but you can feel it, and sometimes hear it speaking to you. When you leave (the bright doorway is right behind you) you are exhausted.

The malevolent force is a death knight doing its level best to ride Caliban straight into the center of a large city and start a war on the living. SEE: Jagus Goes to War.

This curse can be broken by slaying the death knight (good luck), avoiding doors (hilarious), or by drinking from a chalice blessed by Jagus directly. Make it a quest of service to the Church or something. *Remove curse* could also work, but needs a CL DC 20, which can be re-checked every time the PCs gain a level.

#### Scene Four, Option Three: Dakari Mehet

Tracking down Ashali's heir will be a challenge. There's genealogical research to do in the libraries of the Universities, but when House Vladam was 'demoted' and the Vladam-Mehet family collapsed, the records became muddled. The remaining Mehet family doesn't use the name, with the exception of Dakari.

Dakari has, for the last few years, been living a life of luxury in ill-gotten gains, plying his enchantments on behalf of a gang of bored nobles. They steal, squat, and run scams across the city, but are currently holed up in the ancestral home of a minor noble family. That family is gone, alas: impoverished and off to the Giant's Head, they left a steward at the home, who has since abandoned it.

The PCs can find Dakari by asking around town (insight) for a Mehet, or by researching the geneology (history), or can attempt to find places that the Athame has been seen (Wis check, proficiency for those w/ martial weapons proficiency). Once they locate a rumor about Dakari they'll likely have to find his "home base" by going through one or more of the young gangsters he rolls with.

This can be accomplished by skullduggery (kidnap and threats), or by social means. If the PCs choose social use the expanded social combat rules and have them defeat two out of three members of whatever brat pack they find.

Add in an additional encounter with a cursed book in the library, perhaps, that acts as a *bestow curse* on everyone within 30 feet but also alerts a powerful demon to your location and allows them to *scry* on you as though they knew you personally. The demon will initially send after you a construct. Animated out of the stone walls of the library a stone golem (CR 10 5900 XP) will emerge and start thrashing around. This golem doesn't have the usual magic resistance a golem would, has resistance to nonmagic weapons rather than immunity, and instead of *slow* on recharge has *stinking cloud*, as the noxious fumes of the Abyss surround it. It also has what is clearly a hellish fire burning in its eyes and mouth, and will ignite any flammable material it holds for more than a round. This includes PCs it grapples or that

grapple it (1d6 fire, action for DC 10 Dex check to put it out). These effects bring its CR back up to 10, as it will be encountered in a library full of valuable materials.

This curse - really a demon's attention - brings this set of encounters back in line with the other two, which also feature curses (Jikishi has cursed the Wand, and touching Ashali's Sigil prompts a radius curse like this one).

The curse of the demon is a curse of stone: the PCs won't discover it until they're in the right circumstance. They'll be unable to float in water, or fly. If they cast a spell like *fly* or have a fly speed of any kind they'll move at half speed. When they go swimming they'll sink (swim speeds are halved, Str checks to swim have disadvantage). They'll have disadvantage when rolling to be flexible, jump or tumble, to climb, whatever. Their limbs feel heavy, gravity pulls too hard.

If that doesn't spook them start turning them to stone at the next full moon. First a finger, then a toe, a patch of skin, whatever. Put them on a schedule to be permanently disadvantaged in six months, totally petrified in a year (13 moons).

Break this curse by finding the demon's name and summoning that bastard, then compelling him to lift it. Give them a chance with *remove curse* as well, at CL check DC 20, with a chance to check again whenever they gain a level.

If the PCs decide to collect multiple items of the Panoply and wind up already rocking one curse, don't give them extra curses; instead, curse the PCs that didn't wind up cursed the first time through. So if someone resisted, was outside the area, or otherwise had it removed, fuck that guy, bonus curse for him.

Once the PCs know Dakari's location they'll have to confront him. He's used his powers to enthrall a few brutes, a monster or two, and a pack of dogs.

Dakari is a tiefling rogue/warlock. He starts with a *hex* to penalize Wisdom, and lays down *darkness*. His hexed target will roll Perception with disadvantage, and he has blindsight. He then picks off PCs one-by-one with the knife and Sneak Attack, while his dogs harass their feet and knock them prone, etc.

The three bravos: 3 nobles with the combat stats of veterans. Social or physical combat works either way. Each is CR 3, 700 XP. Total encounter XP is 2100 XP x 1.5 for numerical modifier for 3050 XP.

Stone Golem: CR 10, 5900 XP. This monster is more powerful due to its fire and stinking cloud ability, but weakened from its lack of damage immunity – it all evens out.

Succubi: three succubi/incubi waiting to mess with PCs, 1100 XP each for a total of 3300 XP. The mass multiplier x1.5 makes for 4950 total.

Dakari: Darkari CR 9, XP 5000. He has three mastiffs that attend to him, but these are counted as summoned creatures or pets.

All encounters: 18900 XP.

AKILA :: Half-Orc Fighter (Champion), Acolyte  
Pelte Mage-Hunter (Pelte Captain, Ekletheon Orthodoxy Paladin)

Akila is a member of the Pelte, working primarily on city guard duty. They are also an active member of the church, having grown up in a temple of Ceremar's. They considered joining the clergy, but had a formative episode at a young age after learning their parents had been killed by a rogue necromancer. Akila hunted the necromancer, was defeated, joined the Pelte and leveled up, went back, killed the necromancer. They've since learned strength and order are not for ones' self, but everyone.

Focused, protective, fierce, brooding.

NPCs: adopted family (several priests of Ceremar, one of whom they call uncle or auntie), Pelte captain

ARUNA :: Hill Dwarf Cleric (Death/Jagus), Soldier  
Inquisition Heavy (Ekletheon Orthodoxy Anointed Priest)

Aruna's position in the Church is nebulous: they belong to the Temple of Jagus, are an Anointed Priest of the Ekletheon, and report directly to an Inquisition Tribunal member. Aruna balances all this by focusing on what's important: keeping the dead dead, the hungry fed, and someone hot in the bed. A life in the service of Jagus can take on in many ways, and in Aruna's case it went from battlefield to battlefield. Being surrounded by death can desensitize someone, but that only forced Aruna to develop two very different attitudes: at work they are brusque, matter-of-fact, and coldly efficient. At play they are boisterous, clever, and flirty.

Charming, desensitized, dedicated.

NPCs: a few old drinking buddies from the war, and perhaps a senior priest of Jagus

CHANNA :: Human Wizard (Diviner), Noble  
Lodge Member in Good Standing (The Order of the Azure Lodge)

Channa has been a model University student and member of the Azure Lodge since they can remember. Born to a noble family, they were afforded every luxury. This came with exceptionally high expectations for performance. The stress nearly crippled Channa for their whole life, but molded them into a student that first impressed tutors, then shocked professors, then seemed to... fizzle out. Channa now passes the time with travel, idle entertainment, and socializing. This all hides the true Channa: a thrill-seeking wizard-for-hire working for the Lodge of Dusk. Channa's many connections with the criminal underworld sometimes require them to travel unexpectedly or take terrible measures – and this excites them.

Impulsive, brittle, intimidating, genteel.

NPCs: a family, supportive but strict; a half-fey member of the Lodge of Dusk that accompanies Channa on their shenanigans

HANSI :: Half-Elf Rogue (Thief), Charlatan  
Wicked Duke (Court of Thieves)

Hansi is the life of every party, and the saving grace of most burgling expeditions. They're a perfect generalist, equally at home with second-story work, wetwork, scams and cons, and forgery. Their broad exposure to different cons, money laundering schemes, and the act of forgery means they're the best agent to track a counterfeiter. Hansi grew up poor, but safe, and resented it always. They now accumulate wealth not for any lofty purpose, but to provide for their family and their own entertainment.

Hedonistic, clever, jack-of-all-trades, well-informed.

NPCs: a handler from the Church, their family for whom they still pretend to be poor, a companionable but dangerous Guild superior

HIRUNI :: Wood Elf Druid (Coast), Sailor  
Pilot Extraordinaire (Kinship of Khnum Circlemember)

Hiruni's first love was a beautiful human named Naranya, but the love that's lasted much longer is for the sea. Their 'day job' is as a pilot for the port, moving ships in and out with incredible ease. Their partnership with the sea is rewarding, even if the work is tedious. They are saving up to purchase their own ship, preparing to travel all across the sea. This puts them, at times, deeply in the debts of the various thieves' guilds.

Dreamer, wanderer, passionate.

NPCs: Naranya, now an old woman with a family; a companionable but dangerous Guild contact

KASUN :: Human Barbarian (Totem Warrior), Criminal  
Mafia Enforcer (Gold Hands Member)

Kasun's allegiance has been to the Family for some time, before they even knew it. Now they know, and they don't care all that much. As one of the Gold Hands' top enforcers they have a lot of privileges. That means a lot of duties, as well. For the gambling, the floozies, the spare coin and the smoke they owe the Family a job every now and then. Kasun is not well suited for any job that doesn't include slinking through the shadows and chopping apart debtors.

Ambitious, intimidating, confident, aggressive.

NPCs: the yuan-ti owners of the Cestus; a few Gold Hands, all subservient but affable; two siblings living together out in Knives.

Hauntings have begun occurring at an unusual rate in Talmussin. Soon there's an epidemic of ghosts, wraiths, allips, and all manner of incorporeal undead. The Moth has created a kind of dimensional anchor and is waiting until he can create a critical mass of lost souls. He'll then harvest them to fuel a huge curse, killing thousands at once. He'll then harvest these souls for another curse, and etc., a chain reaction that could kill everyone in Talmussin. He's worked out an optimistic curve of harvest-able souls that, at its peak, he'll use to achieve apotheosis.

One of the PCs encounters a haunting: assaulted by a single ghost, some restless spirit that died in a fire in the building across the street a week back. It's wreathed in spectral flames, and the room lights on fire with the same pale flame.

When the ghost is defeated the fire consuming the room fades as well, leaving everything untouched except whatever the PC smashed up. They hear screams from outside and, lo and behold, a crowd of specters, geists, ghosts, and the other immaterial dead.

During this scene other PCs should be taking active part, maybe playing townsfolk or guards that enter the combat. Maybe other spirits, also: turn it into a player fracas.

It all starts with Tygla the Red, a necromancer that lived 200 years ago. She was well known for her favorite ritual, the bleeding of younger women to keep herself looking young (as a potion of longevity w/o the chance to age you). At one point she caused an eclipse, or so she claims.

Tygla's most skilled apprentice was the one that survived her, Ashali. Ashali was wealthy, the scion of the Vleda-Mehet family, a vassal family of Vleda. Ashali's siblings all died suspiciously, and she ruined the house's finances on the creation of four powerful magical items.

When Tygla became too powerful Vecna visited Ashali in her dreams, convincing her to trap Tygla in the Chalice of Ashali, rendering her powerless. Vecna's priests then ensured that Ashali died, and her tools were scattered. She was killed in the undead plague 180 years ago, and her skeleton now haunts the Dead Pit.

The Moth found the Chalice, recovering it from where it was buried under an abandoned building. He struck a deal with Tygla to build a gigantic dimensional anchor and use the souls of the dead to power a terrible curse.

There are five objects of importance in this adventure, and a like number of NPCs worth mentioning.

Most of the objects in question are the relics of Ashali: her Chalice, Wand, Athame, and Sigil. The Chalice is in the Moth's possession; the others are scattered about the city.

The last object is the Ghost Lantern. This is a gigantic, city-wide *dimensional anchor* that targets only the ghosts attempting to pass on to Manifest or the Greenwood. The device is designed to Tygla's specifications and assembled by the Moth. It consists of a one-way mirrored hyper-cylinder. The inside is

a demi-plane packed with ghosts: a circle a mile across with a pillar of black flame at the center. The object looks like a cylinder of mercury that spills intense light from the top and bottom. It sits at the center of a complex arrangement of *magic circles* and a capstan driven by twelve ogre zombies.

The NPCs that matter are the Moth, Pilar Peach-pit, and the PCs' connections with the Church of Jagus, the Peltê, the Kumpal, and the Azure Lodge (or Lodge of Dusk). The PCs may also interact with Tygla or Ashali, or both. They may also interact with Jikishi the jungle witch, or with Dakani Mehet.

The Church will provide undead-hunting supplies without question, and will assist with healing and even, in the right circumstances, a resurrection.

The Lodge will provide some limited magical assistance (potions, mainly) as well as research materials and the *locate object* ritual design the PCs will need to find the *Chalice*. They can also be hired for spellcasting at an advantageous rate.

The Peltê will act to clear a path when the PCs need space, and can offer a few swords at request, though if the PCs throw away their lives they won't get further assistance.

The Kumpal will provide underworld connections, information nobody else has, and can offer thieves and assassins if needed.

Tygla's interaction with the PCs will likely be only after the Moth is defeated, if he doesn't escape with the *Chalice*. If she's recovered by the PCs she'll attempt to trick them into releasing her, or claim she's an innocent. Releasing her has the doubly-terrible effects of letting a powerful necromancer loose, and pissing off Vecna directly. If the PCs don't release her the *Chalice* is basically radioactive waste: it can't be used safely, can't be destroyed safely, and is harmful to those around it.

Ashali's interactions with the PCs should be minimal as well: she's mindless undead at this point. Unless she's resurrected or a spell like *speak with dead* is used she's just an enemy in an encounter.

Dakani Mehet is Ashali's great-grandson, a rogue and blaggard. He's a skilled enchanter, and carries his great-grandmother's *Athame*, a powerful weapon. He rolls with charlatans, thieves, and thugs. Getting close to him to steal the knife will be distasteful.

Jikishi is a night hag that recovered Ashali's *Wand* but was too cowardly to pursue the other artifacts. She lives in the jungle, paralyzing animals and people so that her territory looks like a medusa's den. However, she tortures the folks by *stone shaping* the statues, then returning them to flesh, then back to stone, sometimes many times. Her garden is filled with mad, angry creatures of misshapen flesh and stone.

Pilar Peach-pit is an innocent bystander, a halfling grocer that happened to be walking home from a bar when the Moth was out stealing that onyx statue. He saw the *Chalice* in the Moth's grip and heard Tygla's voice coming from it.