

Session 1

Background/Plot

- Varinn leads the cult of Zarunites and wants to take over Terrathel once and for all to finish what his great-grandfather Marwinn started. His end goal is to have everyone be Zarunite humans under his influence.
 - The source of Varinn's power lies in Sorcerer's Silver, which has been sent from the distant future by a Chonurgy wizard named Kroninn. (It turns out that Kroninn *is* Varinn, who eventually figures out how to live forever by inverting the Raven Queen's necrotic energy into life energy)
 - Its world arrow is inverted (like in Tenet), and it was (will be) allocated in the Argent Expanse by Kronnin
 - It can absorb and concentrate raw energy from its surroundings (the reverse of forward time-like energy dissipation). A piece of raw ore feels cold to the touch because it is absorbing surrounding energy (magical and non-magical)
 - The "refining" process involves isolating the material and exposing it to large amounts of energy which it absorbs. Varinn achieves this by forcing his followers to cast energy intensive spells in a assembly line style factory
 - A refined piece can be harnessed for immense magical power with the right chonurgy magic to release the absorbed energy
 - Varinn has two artifacts which are powered by Sorcerer's Silver: the Eyes of Zarus
 - Left Eye (blue) = Scrying + Mind Control
 - Right Eye (red) = Paralysis + Race Swap
 - These artifacts are what gives Varinn control of his cult, but powering the Eyes consumes a great deal of magical power.
 - Varinn has to continually mine/refine Sorcerer's Silver in order to keep mind-controlling/mind-swapping people, and this cost has steadily outgrown his mining/refining capabilities.
 - To achieve total power, Varinn's plan is to harness the power of the Raven Queen
 - Necrotic energy is ideally suited for refinement since the time reversing process changes decay into abundance
 - Varinn is trying to obtain enough Sorcerer's Silver and farm enough raw energy from his followers to open a portal through time and space.
 - He aims to get to the Shadowfell during the era when the Raven Queen was at her highest power.
 - The plan is to use enough raw power to enslave the Raven Queen to being a permanent "battery" for the sorcerer's silver, thus allowing him to take control of the entire region

- As a proof of concept, Varinn recently enslaved Kaysa the Giant Fairy
 - Kaysa went missing and the Gallant Grasslands are now filled with black necrotic energy instead of Fey magic (because of the inverting process)
 - Kaysa is being used as a "battery" for sorcerer's silver underneath the Glimmerglade grove
 - The large amount of necrotic energy has attracted evil warlocks, Mayor Morgana among them
- Varinn's ideology believes that humans are the "perfect race." He tries to convert everyone into humans.
 - Using the Eyes of Zarus, he controls non-humans' minds and hypnotizes them to change their race into being human

Session Start

- Party starts in Owen's outpost.

You find yourselves in Owen's Outpost, a small town huddled on the outskirts of the sprawling city of Zaridel. This place stands as a pocket of defiance in a fractured world, a community built by the remnants of the old rebellion and now home to those who refuse to subscribe to the rigid philosophy of Zarunism. Here in the outpost, life is practical and unadorned. Dirt roads wind between plain buildings of timber and stone. You pass a house which looks abandoned: covered in moss and whose periphery is surrounded by weeds.

You approach the center of town, where shops are mostly empty. Prices on signs have been crossed out and replaced with higher numbers, multiple times in some places. Your eyes bulge as you see a single jar of honey priced at an astonishing 30 silver pieces. You shiver as the cold autumn wind blows, and you are relieved to find warmth in the town's only tavern, where the smell of woodsmoke and stew fills the air. You sit at one of the 4 available stools and have a moment to reflect about your journey here.

[opportunity for players to share about their character/backstory]

- There are only a few open chairs so they sit together
- NPC's present: Alyona's Parents (Lianes and Alan), Lori Faewood, Timothias, Jeremy(?)
- **McGuffin:** An elegant elvish woman with long flowing blonde hair casually enters the tavern and says

"There you are Alan! I just got back from my stroll and was looking for you and Alyona. Are you feeling alright? You look a little different."

He looks back in shock and eventually says "... got back from your stroll.. GOT BACK FROM YOUR STROLL?? Lianes, YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR FOURTEEN YEARS!"

"Oh, was it 14? How time flies! Sorry about that. I was having such a nice walk through the forest and got a little distracted by the most peculiar little squirrels. Then I went to the Library for a couple years and after that back to the Gallant Grasslands. That place has really fallen out of grace since I lived there when I was-- "

"You abandoned us! We thought you were dead!"

"Oh don't be so dramatic, it was just a few years. I would've let you know if I was going to be gone for more than a quarter century."

"Maybe 14 years is 'just a few' for you, but it's quite a bit more than that for the rest of us. My mother warned me about marrying an elf, but I didn't listen... She's dead now, by the way. Too bad you couldn't make it to the funeral"

"Oh, is that why you look so different? I guess I forgot that humans live for a few less centuries than elves do. Anyways, where's Alyona?"

"Alyona's gone. She didn't exactly react well to her mother abandoning her out of the blue. Not long ago she even went so far as to renounce her elvish heritage and headed for Zaridel. Can't say I agree with her choice, but I don't blame her either."

"Well I should very much like to see her. When I was in the Grasslands, I picked up an old family heirloom that "

"I'm not sure she feels the same way about you. Besides, once someone moves to Zaridel, they rarely ever want to leave. I doubt we'll ever see her again.

" Don't be so dramatic! I'm sure we could find someone to help us find her. How about.... you?"

If party offers to help, the family pleads to give Alyona a childhood memento of her mother in hopes that she will return.

- Timothias says

Zaridel... be careful. You'd better know how to take care of yourself if you're heading out on the road. Nowadays, the Silver Rush has got people acting crazy. Everybody's got big ideas as to how those cold rocks will make em rich, and Zaridel's no exception. Sorcerer's Silver they call it. Used to be we could barbecue in peace, but now Zarunite patrols are everywhere, hauling the stuff back and forth.

Encounter

- On the way to Zaridel, the road is paved and well-maintained
- DC15 Perc to notice a squirrel

You feel the air grow suddenly cold and look ahead to see the source. A massive black creature pulls an iron, armored cart laden with chunks of silvery metal, escorted by a group of 5 men wearing blue and red clothes. The metal cargo seems to radiate coldness, and the light around it looks unnaturally dim.

There is a tall, slender human man wearing flowing blue and red robes who leads the caravan and shouts, "Who goes there? Be you friend or foe of Zarus?"

[Everybody Rolls Perc DC15 to see if notice Loxodon ambush]

BANG BANG BANG BANG, your ears ring as 4 gunshots fire in quick succession. The creature pulling the cart burrows underground in fear as a pair of enormous Loxodons wielding pistols drop from the trees above and engage in combat with the Zarunite Caravan.

"Help us!" cries the human man in the robes. "Defend Zaridel and Zarus shall reward you."

"Don't listen to him" responds the Loxodon. "That cargo is stolen from our land and doesn't belong in Zaridel."

[Roll for Initiative]

Loxodon Gunslingers x 2

HP: 48

AC: 15

Action: (Pistol Shot) +5 to hit, 1d10+3 piercing (Reload 4)

Zarunite Guard x 4

HP: 15

AC: 14

Action: (Longsword) +4 to hit, 1d8+2 slashing

Brother Merten

HP: 30

AC: 13

Action: (Firebolt) +3 to hit, 1d10 fire

(Magic Missile) 3x(1d4+1)

(Misty Step) Teleport 30ft

(potion of healing) heal 2d4+2

Bulette (CR 3)

HP: 50 (starts with 26 due to surprise round. aggros onto Loxodons)

AC: 15

Action: (Bite) +4 to hit, 1d8+4 piercing

(Leap) Jump at least 15ft, DC14 Str|Dex or take 2d6 bludgeoning (or half on save) and be knocked

Prone

- If they helps the Loxodons,

Thanks for the help, we owe you one. I'm Dav and this is Gray. Those no-good Zarunites got what was comin to them for stealin from the homeland. Still, we wouldn't want you getting into any trouble cuz of us. We'll take care of this mess from here. If you ever make your way up to the Argent Expanse, we and the other Loxodons could certainly put your skills to good use.

- Loot: Their equipment + 20sp in cash + potion of healing
- Trying to take the Sorcerer's Silver will upset the Loxodons

- If they help the Zarunites,

Excellent work defeating those ill-tempered savages! May Zarus bless you. Come with us to Zaridel. I shall tell Varinn of your victory and he will surely reward your initiative with generosity.

Zaridel

- Upon getting to Zaridel, the atmosphere is celebratory and it seems there is a festival going on
- citizens act very strange,
 - all moving in unison and being blasee about how imperfect they find the party to be
 - refer to Varinn as the chosen one

" Zarus knows all, and Varinn channels his holy wisdom to us. "

- when asked about Alyona.

You mean Lynn? You've come just in time! Today's the Festival of Perfect Unity and she's the guest of honor

- As the party makes their way to the crowd, they see a stage set up in front of the blue and red cathedral (describe the cathedral with the two giant spheres in front)
 - Alyona (Lynn) stands emotionless on one side of the stage while Varinn addresses the crowd from a podium.

Praise be to Zarus! (Audience: "Praise be!" *clap*) Praise be indeed, for we are blessed today to witness the ultimate purification. Today our sister Lynn will ascend one step closer to perfection, which she was always meant to be. We should remember that no matter how flawed our origins, Zarus smiles upon all of us. He wishes us to shed our defects, and so he shall deliver to Lynn the perfect vessel. A vessel which will free her of chaos and bring us one step closer to perfect unity! [Audience starts clapping in unison]

- Mayor Morgana brings out a bowl of shimmering liquid metal and places it in front of Varrin. [Vaaneeth rolls Perc DC5 to notice the Corvine Corset DC12 also notice that Morg is changeling]
- Varinn raises a red orb above his head and then dips it in the liquid metal.

- Suddenly, a blinding beam of light emits from the orb and everything goes white. After a moment, you see a tall human woman in the spot where seconds ago stood a slender, emotionless half-elf. "Praise be to Zarus," she says. ["Praise be!" *clap*]
- Immediately after the clap, everyone starts walking away in unison (including Alyona), muttering things like "great ceremony!," "yeah, even better than yesterday."
- Zarus approaches the party and invites them to the feast
 - Insists that Lynn is there voluntarily
 - Lynn seems in a trance, but momentarily snaps out of it when told that her mother is alive
 - ▮ Meet me in my quarters after sunset