

Session Preparations:



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Session 1: Welcome to Isle of Aetheria

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8. Starting Notes

8.1. Opening Scene

- **Location:** Port City of **Initiis** on the **Isle of Aetheria**.
- **Situation:** Characters are fleeing from thugs after a theft.
- **Environment:** Bustling docks, sprawling coast, numerous ships, and busy workers.

8.2. Initial Party Gathering

- **First Group:**
 - Three characters hide and meet, sharing reasons for being in the city.
 - Decide to escape onto **The Mortivagus**.
- **Encounter at the Docks:**
 - Thugs pursue them onto the ship.
 - Sailors (other PCs or NPCs) intervene, introducing more characters.
- **Formation of the Party:**
 - Up to six characters come together.
 - Agree to help each other and possibly join the ship's crew.

8.3. Initial Conflicts

- **Seeking Work:**
 - Characters explore Initiis to find ways to earn money.
 - Visit the adventurers' guild for quests.
- **Thugs' Return:**
 - Thugs take performers hostage in the town square.
 - Party must decide whether to intervene.
- **Introduction of the Prophet:**
 - A dark figure observes from the shadows (could be The Prophet or another significant NPC).

Session 1: Welcome to the Isle of Aetheria

Session Overview

In this opening session, the players find themselves in the bustling port city of **Initiis** on the **Isle of Aetheria**. Fleeing from thugs after a theft or misunderstanding, they converge and seek refuge aboard **The Mortivagus**, a ship docked in the harbor. This session introduces the rich world of the campaign, key NPCs, and lays the groundwork for the overarching narrative, all while providing a hint of the cosmic horror that will unfold.

Session Objectives

- **Introduce the Players to the World and Setting**
 - Immerse the players in the vibrant yet subtly tense atmosphere of Initiis.
 - Showcase the cultural and societal norms of the Isle of Aetheria.
 - **Establish Initial Character Relationships**
 - Provide opportunities for the PCs to meet, interact, and form initial bonds.
 - Encourage sharing of backstories and motivations.
 - **Introduce Key NPCs**
 - Ensure encounters with major NPCs like **Captain Elara Stormwind** and the **Thugs' Leader (Grimlock)**.
 - Foreshadow the presence of **The Prophet** as a mysterious observer.
 - **Set the Tone for the Campaign**
 - Blend moments of action, suspense, and subtle horror to establish the campaign's atmosphere.
 - Introduce elements of mystery and cosmic horror in a way that intrigues without overwhelming.
 - **Provide Initial Plot Hooks**
 - Present opportunities for the PCs to get involved in local events and hint at larger issues.
 - Seed clues that will become significant as the campaign progresses.
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Player Goals

- **Escape Immediate Danger**
 - Evade or confront the thugs pursuing them through Initiis.
- **Seek Safety or Passage**
 - Find refuge aboard **The Mortivagus** and consider joining its crew.
- **Explore Opportunities**
 - Investigate ways to earn money or resources in the city.
 - Visit locations like the adventurers' guild for potential quests.
- **Develop Their Characters**
 - Begin exploring their personal backstories and motivations.
 - Interact with other PCs and NPCs to build relationships.

- **Gather Information**
 - Learn about the current events, rumors, and mysteries of Initiis and beyond.
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Key NPC Tables

Major NPCs (Definite Encounters)

1. **Captain Elara Stormwind**

Aspect	Description
Role	Captain of The Mortivagus
Appearance	Tall, athletic woman with weathered skin and piercing blue eyes. Wears practical sailing attire and carries an air of authority.
Personality	Confident, pragmatic, and protective of her crew. She values competence and honesty.
Motivation	Seeking capable individuals to join her crew for an upcoming voyage. Possibly has her own secrets related to the gods' disappearance.
Interaction	May offer the PCs passage or employment aboard The Mortivagus. Will assess their usefulness and trustworthiness.

2.

Thugs' Leader (Grimlock)

Aspect	Description
Role	Antagonist in the initial encounter
Appearance	Burly man with a scar across his cheek, rough clothing, and a menacing demeanor. Often carries a crude weapon.
Personality	Aggressive, vengeful, not very intelligent but cunning in street smarts.
Motivation	Seeking to recover stolen goods or settle a score with the PCs. May be under orders from higher-ups.
Interaction	Leads the thugs pursuing the PCs. Will resort to intimidation and violence.

3.

The Prophet (as a Mysterious Observer)

Aspect	Description
Role	Foreshadowing future antagonist
Appearance	Cloaked figure watching from the shadows, face obscured. Seems out of place and almost ethereal.
Personality	Enigmatic, observing, calculating. Exudes an unsettling aura.
Motivation	Interested in the PCs for his own purposes related to the gods and his grand plan.
Interaction	Does not directly interact but can be noticed by perceptive PCs. May cause feelings of unease or déjà vu.

Supporting NPCs (Possible Encounters)

1. Lira Whisperwind

Aspect	Description
Role	Ship's Navigator on The Mortivagus
Appearance	Young woman with delicate features, silver hair tied back, and nervous eyes. Carries navigational tools and maps.
Personality	Skilled but anxious, possibly haunted by past voyages. Polite but keeps to herself.
Interaction	May assist the PCs in hiding or provide information about The Mortivagus and its upcoming voyage.

2.

Marcus Graycloak

Aspect	Description
Role	Member of The Silver Hand (a local thieves' guild)
Appearance	Sly-looking man with a hooded cloak, sharp features, and quick fingers. Often seen lingering in shadows.

Personality	Opportunistic, cunning, always looking for an angle. Speaks in whispers and riddles.
Interaction	Might offer assistance, information for a price, or attempt to pickpocket the PCs. Could be a source of local rumors.

Minor NPCs (Unlikely Encounters)

1. **Jenna the Merchant**

Aspect	Description
Role	Market Stall Owner
Appearance	Cheerful woman with a warm smile, wearing colorful attire. Sells exotic fruits and spices at her vibrant stall.
Personality	Friendly, chatty, loves to gossip. Has a keen eye for people's moods.
Interaction	Can provide rumors or minor information about Initiis. May offer samples or good deals to friendly customers.

2.
Old Tom

Aspect	Description
Role	Dockworker
Appearance	Elderly man with a weathered face, grey beard, and a slight limp. Wears simple work clothes and carries a walking stick.
Personality	Talkative, nostalgic, enjoys sharing stories about the sea and old times.
Interaction	Might share tales about The Mortivagus, sea legends, or hints at strange occurrences. Could offer advice or warnings.

Encounters and Events Tables

Definite Encounters

1. **Chase Scene through Initiis**

- **Description:** The PCs are pursued by Grimlock and his thugs through the crowded streets and markets of Initiis.
 - **Mechanics:**
 - **Skill Challenge:** Each PC describes their actions to evade the pursuers.
 - **Possible Skills:** Athletics, Acrobatics, Stealth, Deception, Intimidation, use of spells or abilities.
 - **Outcome:** Success leads to evading the thugs temporarily; failure may result in a confrontation.
2. **Boarding The Mortivagus**
- **Description:** Seeking escape, the PCs find themselves at the docks and spot **The Mortivagus** as a potential refuge.
 - **Mechanics:**
 - **Decision Point:** Do they sneak aboard, ask for permission, or find another way?
 - **Possible Actions:** Persuasion to convince the crew, Stealth to sneak on board, or Athletics to climb aboard unnoticed.
 - **Confrontation:** Thugs may catch up, leading to a potential combat or standoff on the ship's deck.
3. **Meeting Captain Elara**
- **Description:** The captain confronts the PCs about their presence on her ship.
 - **Mechanics:**
 - **Role-Playing Opportunity:** PCs explain themselves; Captain Elara assesses them.
 - **Skills:** Persuasion, Deception (if lying), Insight (from the captain).
 - **Outcome:** She may offer them a place on the crew if convinced of their value.

Possible Encounters

1. **Thugs Take Hostages in Town Square**
- **Description:** Grimlock, frustrated by the chase, takes innocent performers hostage to lure the PCs out.
 - **Mechanics:**
 - **Moral Dilemma:** Do the PCs reveal themselves to save the hostages?
 - **Options:** Negotiation, stealthy rescue, direct combat.
 - **Consequences:** Actions may affect their reputation in Initiis.
2. **Mysterious Figure Watching**
- **Description:** A perceptive PC notices **The Prophet** observing them from a distance.
 - **Mechanics:**
 - **Perception Check:** DC 14 to notice the figure.
 - **Sanity Check** (optional): Minor unsettling feeling; no SP loss yet.
 - **Interaction:** The figure disappears if approached.

Unlikely Encounters

1. **Market Encounter with Jenna**
- **Description:** PCs pass by Jenna's stall; she offers samples and engages in friendly banter.
 - **Mechanics:**
 - **Role-Playing:** Light-hearted interaction; opportunity to gather minor rumors.
 - **Information:** She might mention increased thug activity or strange events.
2. **Old Tom's Tales**
- **Description:** Old Tom shares sea stories that may hint at future events or locations.
 - **Mechanics:**

- **Role-Playing:** Optional; can provide foreshadowing or context.
 - **Content:** Tales of reality warps, whispers at sea, or legends about **The Mortivagus**.
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Plot Hooks and Clues

Essential Clues

- **The Mortivagus is Preparing for a Voyage**
 - **Information Source:** Captain Elara, crew members, or dock gossip.
 - **Details:** The ship is setting sail soon, possibly needing additional crew or passengers.
- **Thugs are Part of a Larger Organization**
 - **Information Source:** Overheard conversations, Marcus Graycloak, or observations.
 - **Details:** The thugs may be working for a crime syndicate or a faction connected to larger threats.

Additional Hooks

- **Strange Occurrences in Initiis**
 - **Rumors:** People speak of odd happenings—disappearances, distorted reflections, or unexplained phenomena.
 - **Information Source:** Jenna, Old Tom, or Lira Whisperwind.
 - **The Prophet's Interest**
 - **Feeling Watched:** PCs may sense they're being observed, adding tension and mystery.
 - **Clues:** Subtle signs like finding a mysterious symbol or note.
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Notes and Reminders

- **Atmosphere of Initiis**
 - Emphasize the city's vibrancy contrasted with underlying tension.
 - Use sensory details to make the setting immersive.
 - **Subtle Introduction of Horror Elements**
 - Introduce unsettling moments, such as fleeting shadows or feelings of déjà vu.
 - Keep initial horror elements mild to build anticipation.
 - **Pacing**
 - Balance action sequences with moments for role-playing and character development.
 - Allow breathing room between intense scenes.
 - **Encourage Character Interactions**
 - Provide opportunities for PCs to introduce themselves and share backgrounds.
 - Facilitate conversations that build team cohesion.
 - **Be Adaptable**
 - Be prepared for players to take unexpected actions.
 - Adjust encounters and NPC reactions accordingly.
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Cinematic Descriptions

Opening Scene

Read Aloud:

"As the sun begins its descent, casting a warm golden hue over the sprawling port city of Initiis, the streets buzz with life. Merchants shout their final offers, children weave through crowds laughing, and the scent of spices mingles with the salty sea air. But amidst this vibrant tapestry, urgency grips you. The hurried footsteps behind, the shouts growing closer—thugs with grim intent pursue you relentlessly. The maze-like alleys twist and turn, offering both escape and dead ends. Ahead, the docks sprawl out, a forest of masts and sails against the shimmering water. The promise of refuge or further peril awaits."

The Docks

Read Aloud:

"The docks are a cacophony of sound and motion—creaking wood, gulls crying overhead, sailors calling out orders. Ships of all sizes bob gently, their hulls painted with distant colors and flags. The air is thick with the smell of tar and fish. Amidst this controlled chaos, one vessel stands out: a sturdy ship with weathered sails, the name 'The Mortivagus' elegantly etched into its side. The ship seems almost serene amidst the bustle, a potential haven from the dangers pursuing you."

Encounter with Captain Elara

Read Aloud:

"As you catch your breath on the deck, the wooden planks solid beneath your feet, a sharp voice cuts through the din: 'I don't recall inviting stowaways aboard my ship.' Turning, you see her—a tall woman with sun-kissed skin and eyes like stormy seas. Captain Elara stands with hands on hips, a mixture of curiosity and stern authority etched on her face. The crew pauses, eyes flicking between you and their captain, the tension thick as the silence stretches."

Subtle Horror Element

Read Aloud:

"Amidst the throng of the chase, a chill runs down your spine. For the briefest moment, you glimpse a figure cloaked in shadow standing utterly still amid the moving crowd. Their face is obscured, but you feel an intense gaze locked onto you. Time seems to slow, the sounds around you muffled. But as quickly as you notice, a passing cart obscures your view, and the figure vanishes as if they were never there, leaving only a lingering unease."

Thugs Take Hostages

Read Aloud:

"Laughter and music fill the town square as performers delight the gathered crowd—acrobats twisting through the air, musicians strumming lively tunes. Suddenly, the joyous atmosphere shatters. Grimlock and his thugs storm into the square,

rough hands grabbing the performers. 'Come out, cowards!' Grimlock bellows, pressing a dagger to a young musician's throat. 'Show yourselves, or their blood stains the cobblestones!' Gasps ripple through the crowd, fear replacing festivity."

Closing Scene

Read Aloud:

"The day's light fades, stars piercing the deepening twilight like shards of crystal. From the deck of **The Mortivagus**, the vast expanse of the sea stretches before you, its surface reflecting the first glimmers of moonlight. The gentle sway of the ship and the rhythmic lull of waves offer a momentary peace. Yet, beneath the tranquil facade, an undercurrent of mystery stirs. Unseen eyes may still watch, and questions linger like shadows in the corners of your mind."

Starting Notes

8.1. Opening Scene

- **Situation:** The PCs are being chased by thugs led by Grimlock through the lively streets of Initiis.
- **Mechanics:**
 - **Skill Challenge:** Each player describes their method of evasion.
 - **Possible Skills:**
 - **Acrobatics:** Dodging through obstacles or climbing over barriers.
 - **Athletics:** Sprinting ahead, moving heavy objects to block pursuers.
 - **Stealth:** Hiding in shadows, blending into crowds.
 - **Deception:** Creating distractions, misleading the thugs.
 - **Magic/Abilities:** Using spells or class features creatively.
- **Outcome:**
 - **Success:** PCs gain distance, possibly losing the thugs temporarily.
 - **Failure:** Thugs close in, leading to a potential confrontation.

8.2. Initial Party Gathering

- **First Group:**
 - PCs may meet during the chase, recognizing mutual goals.
 - Brief introductions can occur while on the run.
- **Decide to Escape onto The Mortivagus:**
 - The ship presents a strategic escape route.
 - PCs may notice it's less guarded or seems welcoming.
- **Encounter at the Docks:**
 - Thugs may attempt to follow onto the ship.
 - Crew members or other PCs can assist in deterring them.
- **Formation of the Party:**
 - Up to six PCs come together through shared circumstances.
 - Provides an opportunity to discuss next steps and motivations.

8.3. Initial Conflicts

- **Seeking Work:**
 - After escaping, PCs may seek to secure passage or employment.
 - **Captain Elara** may offer them roles based on their skills.
 - **Visit the Adventurers' Guild** (optional):
 - PCs can explore Initiis if they wish, seeking quests or information.
 - **Thugs' Return:**
 - The hostage situation in the town square forces a moral choice.
 - PCs must decide whether to intervene or avoid further conflict.
 - **Introduction of The Prophet:**
 - The mysterious figure may be spotted again, heightening intrigue.
 - No direct interaction yet, but the presence is unsettling.
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Additional Notes

- **Emphasize Sensory Details:**
 - Use descriptions involving all senses to immerse players.
 - Sounds: Market chatter, distant ship horns, clashing steel.
 - Smells: Sea air, spices, smoke from street vendors.
 - Sights: Vibrant colors, shifting crowds, shadowy alleys.
 - **Balance Horror Elements:**
 - Introduce subtle hints of horror without overshadowing the session.
 - Focus on building suspense and a sense of the uncanny.
 - **Encourage Role-Playing:**
 - Provide downtime moments for PCs to converse and share.
 - NPCs can prompt discussions or offer insights.
 - **Set the Tone:**
 - Aim for a blend of excitement from the chase and unease from mysterious events.
 - Foreshadow larger themes without revealing too much.
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Possible Skill Challenges and Checks

- **Perception Checks:**
 - Noticing **The Prophet** or other subtle details (DC 14-16).
 - **Persuasion/Intimidation:**
 - Convincing Captain Elara to help or accept them (DC varies).
 - **Stealth Checks:**
 - Hiding from thugs or moving unnoticed (DC 12-15).
 - **Insight Checks:**
 - Gauging NPC intentions or detecting lies (DC 13-15).
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Potential Outcomes

- **Successfully Escaping Thugs:**
 - Builds a sense of accomplishment and teamwork.
 - May earn the respect of Captain Elara or crew members.
 - **Conflict with Thugs:**
 - If combat occurs, ensure it's balanced and offers escape options.
 - Defeating thugs may have repercussions later.
 - **Agreeing to Join The Mortivagus:**
 - Sets up the next stage of the campaign.
 - Provides a reason for PCs to stay together and continue the adventure.
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Adjustments

- **Party Size and Composition:**
 - Scale encounters based on the number of players.
 - Adjust NPC reactions to fit the group's dynamics.
- **Player Choices:**
 - Be prepared for unexpected decisions.
 - Maintain flexibility to keep the session engaging.

