

to do (pre game)

- Add some items somewhere (maybe on Horst's guys) that address Kelly's (now aging) wishlist:
 - Having Isra upgrade to +2 at some point would be nice.
 - Although the theme is a bit sinister, I like the effect on +2 Bloodiron Armor quite a bit.
 - A +2 Healer's Brooch would give me a boost to healing and defenses.
 - A Belt of Sacrifice would essentially give the whole party a little boost to healing.
 - Dual Threat Gauntlets would be cool, though they might be better for Kasskar.

questions for players

recap from last time

Last time, Aeris's party attacked the Oracle. Gerholt Volker's god in a jar fed on the energy there, growing into a writhing, faceless mass. The spirit Anu claimed that the new god had just created the world, and that the party's memories of life before the god are an illusion.

Firestorm, Yawning Graves, and Thunderstatement

Aeris found 150,000 gold worth of greencake in an iron box about the size of a cigar box. He found the spells Firestorm and Yawning Graves, each in a 3-inch-thick dusty tome, with brass protectors riveted onto the corners. Looking through the tomes, Aeris sees that the pages are fragile from age but still readable. In each, the spell itself is just one page, with the rest of the tome chronicling the spell's history and apocrypha. It's clear that casting the two spells will use nearly all of Aeris' greencake.

Aeris also found a finely crafted and polished glass wand. On a DC 20 nature check, the players can see that the glass is fulgurite, which is glass made when lightning strikes sand.

The wand has the daily power Thunderstatement. When used, Thunderstatement silently fills the sky or room with light for an instant, like when lightning flashes in the distance. On the player's next turn, a thundering shockwave blasts through the area, damaging enemies who haven't found Superior Cover and throwing them around like bowling pins.

The shockwave is a Burst centered on square where Thunderstatement was cast and fills the entire battle map. Affected enemies take (3d4 + 10) (tweak in light of the fact that Aeris will be fighting the normal party) shock damage, are thrown out from the caster 10 squares, painfully bouncing off walls they hit, and are knocked prone. Enemies who find normal (non-Superior) cover take half damage only. The Cover is with respect to the square where Thunderstatement was cast.

Aeris heading to Apogee

Aeris now plans to go to a high point in the city, tentatively Apogee, to unleash Firestorm and Yawning Graves on Hollin. Who does Aeris want to take along? Does Aeris want to warn anyone? Is there anyone Aeris specifically does not want to warn?

Aeris and his allies leave the Oracle and go into Hollin's streets. Occasionally in the city streets, they see more of the random, surreal events that the god in a jar was creating inside the Oracle.

Aeris has been to Apogee once before, when the party and Oracle adepts opened the Hereward portal for Haas. So Aeris knows that his party can take either the steep cliffside path on the side of the mountain (which I believe Aeris did before with the party) or the cavernous stair inside the cavern under Lofton Castle.

Jaeris

Our story leaves Aeris temporarily.

We left Kasskar unconscious in the tunnel under Dule Tree Prison. Now, Kasskar is woken by someone gently touching his shoulder and speaking his name. Kasskar opens his eyes tiredly, and sees (show picture). Kasskar recognizes him as the harpooner Eldred, who Kasskar had considered recruiting as a boxer for the Whipsaw a year or two ago.

[Presumably Kasskar and Jaeris talk and Jaeris explains to Kasskar who he is, and what Aeris is doing. Jaeris knows what Aeris is doing, and wants to go get the normal party to climb Apogee and stop him.]

Before they leave the tunnel, Kasskar finds some valuable items on Horst:

- Horst's +3 Cloak of Protection.
- Horst's personal handheld emblem, which gives the Warlord level 6 utility exploit "Stand Tough" -- a daily minor action that gives you and each ally in the burst 10 + CHA bonus hit points. Ask Keith if he'd like to design the emblem. Left to my own devices I imagine it's something that could be crudely crafted in the Hobnail Prison workshop, like a shank.
- Horst and his allies, Shank and Shelde, were carrying 3600 gold between them.

When they leave the tunnel, Kasskar sees the surreal random god stuff for the first time.

Besides the normal party, is there anyone the party wants to take to Apogee?

Firestorm and Yawning Graves

We now return to Aeris.

When you reach Apogee, you look out over the city. Even from there, you can see a few of the god in a jar's random events happening, like buildings being built and falling into disrepair in a few seconds.

Aeris opens the iron box of greencake from the Oracle and sets it down on a large stone on the ground. He reads the spell page of the Firestorm tome, casting it. As he reads, the greencake starts to smolder, and a narrow spire of green smoke climbs from the open box. As Aeris finishes reading, the remaining greencake suddenly burns with a flash, like gunpowder, leaving the iron box twisted and charred, rattling on the stone it was sitting on.

The air on Apogee becomes still, but for a minute, you strain to see anything happening in Braddock. Then below, you can see the rippling sails of ships on the river also go still. In Braddock itself, you can see people on the streets stop and look around, feeling something strange in the air, then break and start to run in panic.

Below to your left, the Admiralty ammo dump in Braddock explodes, and flames there leap hundreds of feet in the air. The fire instantly jumps to the wooden buildings on every side, creating a wall of fire moving at 100 miles an hour. The fire turns into a tornado of flame, still hundreds of feet high, turning every second and sucking in oxygen from all sides. When the firestorm subsides, Braddock is a charred ruin. After a minute or so, a few stunned survivors come out of the burned buildings to see the situation.

Aeris kicks the empty box off the stone. He opens the box of greencake he took from the Voss greencake mine on Hilde and sets it there. He reads the spell page of the Yawning Graves tome, casting it. As he reads, green smoke rises from the box, taking the shape of one horrified ghost after another. They are many old, small cemeteries throughout Hollin, often sandwiched between tall buildings or houses, and as the last greencake is consumed, the ground of those cemeteries snaps open in cracks. The dead there slowly wake, then struggle to climb out of the ground. At the same time, Braddock's newly burned buildings crack apart, and the newly dead there get up and clamber into the streets. Some start to attack the few survivors in the streets, and the rest start to go into the buildings to attack survivors there.

Fighting on Apogee

On the way up to Apogee, the party sees Firestorm and Yawning Graves. They reach Apogee just as Aeris is getting ready to go on his way.

On the battle map, so random god in a box things can appear and disappear?

If the normal party goes down, Ord and Beowolf still have their animal spirits to rely on.

Assuming they beat Aeris' party, they can take their items and most importantly, the phylactery. ASK WHICH CHARACTER TAKES IT.

Destroying the phylactery

Soon after the battle ends, the midwife Wren arrives on Apogee and surveys the scene.

If they discuss how to destroy the phylactery, she'll listen without saying anything. If they settle on something lame (like throwing it in the river), or if they ask her, she'll suggest that the phylactery has an indestructible space-time shell, which would be inert in a place without space-time.

She'll tell them that the plane Kairos is a place without time. She says there is, and has always been, a horse and carriage in Braddock's market that can take them there. She describes it as a highly polished black carriage with silver-painted wheels, fine trim, and a black horse. She says you can distinguish it from other black carriages because it has no windows and no driver.

Given this description, Kasskar realizes he's seen a carriage like that in the market hundreds of times when he was working there as a child. He never thought about it, and he can't say he's ever seen the driver or seen anyone use the carriage. Kasskar remembers that children in the market used to say that the horse could quote "count" by pounding its hoof, but no one was ever able to actually make the horse count.

If the party looks down into the Braddock market now, they can actually see a shining black carriage with a black horse and no driver, standing unhurt among all the destruction.

When they approach the horse, they can use questions and experimentation to figure out that the horse doesn't count, it plays MasterMind. It has the code:

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If nothing is right, it shakes its head the way that horses do. It whinnies once for each correct number in the right place, then hits its hoof for each correct number in the wrong place.

(The party has no way to know this, but the horse's name is Thimblorig (a.k.a. shell game), representing the confusion about the order of events in Kairos.)

Kairos, the plane without time

When the party gets it right, the door of the carriage opens and they can get in. When they close the door, it stays closed for a moment. They notice that the space-time shell around the

phylactery dissolves, leaving just a chunk of the meteor Noreste spinning to a stop in the character's hand. Then, the carriage door opens by itself -- they're in Kairos, the plane without time.

Maybe there's a sundial there with pointedly no shadow...maybe the sundial only has one position marked because it's that time all the time.

Are there people there -- people stranded there? There's a slow creature there like a snail or turtle? There's an old catatonic man there? People shuffling around in a circle forever? on a mill wheel ? -- or shuffling down an endlessly long corridor in a Hamlet's-Ghost-esque prison house? Maybe they have to solve the puzzle to get out. Maybe they have to do something there that takes almost infinitely long...but they don't age there because there's no time.

Before naming the plane, what is it like? Is it really another world or e.g. just a doctor's waiting room or some other location describing tedium -- a solitary confinement room or grad student's office. It seems like I've already used a lot of the types of locations you might want to use for this. Obviously there'd be tumbleweeds or dead leaves blowing around there. Aeris' change of existence place was already a place like this, and had probably the best prop -- the abandoned army post from Lawrence of Arabia.

One thing that's left unsaid here is that the Stiles -- the asylum hulk on the river -- is a place without time. It also has no door, which no one has noticed. But unlike Kairos, there's no way to get in.

Do they have to fight to go back? Possibly there's someone there who says going back to a place without time violates the principle of Kairos. They would fight a character whose abilities are related to "no time" or "right moment", "opportune moment". The idea that events aren't ordered here could make the battle interesting. Maybe the enemy can pick where he goes in the turn order after it happens -- e.g. moving out of a square where the party attacked. So, here thunderstatement could work well.

To go back, they have to play the shell game where their antagonist exploits the fact that order of events has no meaning here. He'll put the ball under a shell and allow the players to move the shells around. Then, he'll ask which shell it's under. Despite the players controlling the shells, it will be under a different one. He then puts the ball under a different cup, same thing. Then under the third cup, same thing. All that's required is that he "later" put the ball under a shell that he previously took it out of. And, he could have done this in the past before the party arrived.

To go back, they have to play the game with the horse again. But, in Kairos, the ordering of events has no meaning. So, the horse won't be doing any hoof stomping -- there's no such thing here as a number in the wrong order -- any order of the right numbers is correct. So, just neighing.

post game summary

Aeris casts Firestorm from Apogee, destroying Braddock with a tornado of fire. He casts Yawning Graves, raising the victims as undead who attack the remaining survivors. The party, now Beowolf, Kasskar, Ord, and Aeris's resurrected brother Jaeris, arrive soon after and defeat Aeris and his allies, with Jaeris killing Aeris.

treasure given out

to do (post game)

- player questions to answer
- requests to send players after the game