

WOE TO THE WICKED

Bitter Cargo

ALPHA v44 - PLAYTEST EDITION

A GM adventure for Alpha v44.

Simple rules. Complicated situations.

Preparation, restoration and consequential choices in a fallen world.

October 2026

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Use bookmarks for subsections and entries; search by name for a specific option.

For 2-6 players, default four. Begin with new Renown-1 adventurers or agree an experienced-start package. Suggested length: 7-9 sessions of 3-4 hours; advancement is earned through actual play.

Use with the current Alpha 43 **Player Book**, character sheets and equipment catalog. This packet contains the local opponents and adventure procedures. Pacing and encounter recommendations need independent table review.

The situation

Workers are renewing the crypt of the Order of the New Dawn, the guild that once cleansed Nessleblight. Supplies arrive ruined, memorial names are erased, and the resting remains have begun to move. Vexar the Venomous is deliberately sabotaging the recovery. His Venomous Order supplies alchemists, guards and couriers; his temporary laboratory turns the old cleansing apparatus toward contamination.

Vexar is a Wicked One: he pursues suffering and havoc even when doing so wastes materials or costs him an advantage. Alchemy is his method. His deeper personal grievance and wider affiliations need not be settled to run this adventure. Shadowmarked retain moral agency; neither they nor the guild's disturbed dead are automatically wicked.

Prepare in ten minutes

1. Give players Bitter-Cargo-Player-Briefing.pdf. Agree that the opening job is an escort, with investigation a possible continuation.

2. Read Styrt, Nalt and the opponent rules. Prepare one optional early creature scene, with a peaceful resolution and a retreat route.
3. Set the commission before play. Keep the Guild's private knowledge bounded: it suspects sabotage, not the complete operation.
4. Copy the finale package for the player count. Cross out followers removed by preparation.
5. Track saved people, secured records, remaining stock and what Vexar could actually learn.

Find it quickly

Use Contents and PDF bookmarks for locations, preparation, the crypt, finale, aftermath and opponent profiles. Keep the **player briefing** separate from GM secrets.

Low Resolve: at half maximum Resolve or less, Presence, Composure and Influence have Disadvantage on their Skill dice; normal cancellation applies. Ends above half. Odd maximum 9: threshold 4.

The numbered locations guide development; they do not require a fixed itinerary. Players can investigate, retreat, confront Vexar early or leave for free-form play. Their accomplishments remain real.

Locations and people

The island route

Styrt's port brings refined western goods into a community shaped by inland trade, archaeological guild claims and shared cultural halls. Show ordinary life alongside danger: porters sharing food, a cartwright repairing a neighbor's wheel, or a disagreement over a museum label.

Site	Use at the table
1. Styrt cargo yard	Accept the job; rescue a porter; preserve damaged supplies and memorial copies.
2. Survey camp near Nalt	Deliver cargo; compare evidence; obtain apparatus diagrams and repair materials.
3. Steadfast approach	Scout the mountain route and crypt before committing.
4. Mudwell crypt contacts	Learn who rests there and how to approach and restore the site. Optional.
5. Order of the New Dawn crypt	Behind Steadfast's mountain; stop contamination and resolve the disturbed remains.
Kilg port	Optional arrival investigation, available before or after the finale.

The crypt lies on the far side of the mountain when approaching from Styrt. Mudwell is northwest of the proposed crypt; Kilg is a separate port branch. This packet does not establish measured travel times or new roads. Use the current world map for travel scale. Rat Hole remains a ratfolk Hybrid settlement and a source of personal ties, outside the numbered route.

Cast

Person	Appearance and manner	What they can provide
Mara Venn, Guild clerk	Ink-stained cuffs, pinned-back hair and a steady, measuring gaze; reads every promise aloud.	A bounded contract, evidence storage and port contacts.
Tessa Reed, apothecary	Rolled sleeves, herb-scented apron and careful hands; labels every sample.	Residue comparison and limited neutralizers.
Pell Bristle, ratfolk cartwright	A whiskered ratfolk with a patched tool belt and grease-darkened paws; taps wheels while talking.	Cart repair, drainage knowledge and practical barricades.
Iven Silt, survey recorder	Dusty spectacles, sun-faded scarf and a ledger under one arm; numbers every find.	Apparatus diagram, entrances and supervised alterations.
Nera Vale, Order runner	A travel-worn cloak and tightly gripped satchel; watches doors and speaks in quick, guarded phrases.	Workshop routine, volatile stock location and a recruit's defection.
Bram Holt, waystation cook	Flour-dusted apron, weathered hands and a welcoming grin; remembers favorite meals.	Clean storage and observations of repeated deliveries.

For a necessary contested social roll, use d6 for these contacts' relevant social Skill and d4 for unlisted Affinities. They are not combat profiles, free healers or all-knowing informants. Ordinary credible conversation needs no roll.

The Order of the New Dawn is the historical cleansing guild, formerly called the Order of Light in legacy material. It is distinct from Vexar's Venomous Order. Its current name does not establish a founding date in the New Dawn era.

1 • Styrt cargo yard

Give the visible job

Mara commissions the party to escort healing and restoration supplies and copied memorial records to the survey camp near Nalt. Read or paraphrase:

"The camp needs these supplies intact. Help secure the load, get it to the survey workers, and bring back a clear account of damage or trouble on the route. If you find danger beyond the job, withdraw and report it."

Agree payment, destination and completion terms before departure. Known hazards include damaged carts, unstable ground and animals near stored food. This assignment does not secretly require the recruits to defeat Vexar.

Begin with the damaged load

A crate binding gives way while the cargo is assembled. A porter falls beneath the shifting load. Inside the opened crate, names have been scored through in a copied memorial register. Valuable healing or repair material has been spoiled and left behind.

Describe where the porter lies, which cargo is still slipping and a safe way to reach them. Ask each player what they do. Lifting safely, stabilizing a load or preserving obvious evidence succeeds when the declared method clearly works. Use an appropriate Skill at TN 4 when rescue or work under pressure is genuinely uncertain. Establish the possible injury or loss before rolling; do not add an automatic lethal trap.

Evidence and choices

The scored names clearly show intentional damage. The falling binding's cause still needs examination. A worker saw someone open a crate without authorization; that observation does not establish every act or identify an unseen culprit. Preserve these independent leads:

- Damaged names, while useful pages were ignored.
- Valuable material deliberately spoiled instead of stolen.
- A witness's limited account of unauthorized access.

The party can help the porter, save remaining cargo, interview witnesses, secure samples for Tessa or compare the packing. Clear clues survive a failed Test; uncertainty can cost time, expose investigators or complicate a rescue.

Private Guild knowledge

Mara has reports of ruined supplies, damaged memorials and frightened or missing workers. The Guild suspects deliberate obstruction and wants useful work plus reliable reports. It does not know the whole method, exact location or every follower; it may not know a Wicked One is involved. Its assessment can be wrong, and death remains possible under the [Player Book](#). There is no guaranteed rescue.

Optional expression scene

If the players want a local animal problem, one Chupecabra tests a livestock pen. Show blood loss, tracks, prey and exits first. Securing the prey or driving the animal away can resolve the scene. Use two only when the party knowingly chooses that danger. Do not force a faction fight against an unprepared starting party.

Pay when the stated escort is complete. A separate continuation requires agreement. Alternative openings - repair the approach or recover a missing register - use the same evidence and community, rather than adding three compulsory introductory jobs.

2 • Memorial survey camp near Nalt

Receive the delivery

Iven inventories what arrived and records what was lost without accusing the party for unavoidable damage. Workers use surviving supplies, preserve copies and explain what the records describe. Give the characters time to meet people whose work they have protected.

The apparatus belonged to the cleansing guild. Its old service diagram shows a loading entrance, a drain/service entrance and a hand-operated exhaust. A damaged memorial seal connects to the apparatus. Iven can explain these practical features without knowing Vexar's complete plan.

Choose one route problem

Use a damaged cart or bridge, one displaced Xylopod, or one warned Spiked Stalker territory. Present the threatened cargo, stable footing, cover and an alternate route before asking for decisions. Do not combine every problem into a mandatory gauntlet.

Problem	Combat expression	Other useful approaches
Cart or crossing damaged	Protect workers while others reposition cargo.	Repair, redistribute weight, secure ropes or take another route.
Xylopod eating old timber	Control space without fighting on weakened boards.	Offer different timber; avoid the structure; move unattended food.
Stalker's feeding ground	Coordinate cover and watch an isolated approach.	Observe, bypass or withdraw from its territory.

For an early expedition, one Stalker or Xylopod is enough to create a consequential scene. Followers may be seen conducting deliveries or pressuring witnesses, but are not weakened for a beginner fight. An optional Bog Monster is confined to a visibly warned ritual site with a dry bypass.

Compare what happened

Tessa can compare residue from a sample with another harmed site. A repeated formula mark on a vial or Nera's later account provides corroboration. Explain the limits of the evidence: matching methods connect events; they do not prove every alchemist is a follower.

The camp's register, a Styrt hall copy and Mudwell's accounts identify people buried at the crypt. Allow PCs to secure copies or arrange safe custody. These records cannot be erased later merely to restore tension.

Continue by choice

Once the initial job is done, Mara or Iven can offer continued investigation: protect the workers, determine who is interfering and stop further desecration. State the new work and terms. Players can decline while keeping their earned payment and relationships.

Pacing reference

Suggested pacing: opening session in Styrt; then inland obstacles and survey work; scouting, crew confrontation and preparation; finally the crypt, Vexar and renewal. Advancement follows actual Tallies and qualifying objectives, not this session schedule.

Award Impact for completed established objectives under **Player Book**. Record eligible Skill Tallies from actual rolls; no session XP or automatic Level award. A completion schedule is not a discovery gate.

3-4 • Steadfast and Mudwell

Steadfast: scout before committing

From the approach, establish the mountain, route back, signs of deliveries and the crypt's two approaches. Scouts can see or discover exhaust access, fresh chemical stock and disturbed memorials through plausible observation. Roll for exposure, haste or contested access, rather than permission to learn the site exists.

For the first major follower confrontation, use one Venomous Alchemist and one Cargo Guard at a crew cart. Their purpose is to move material and prevent inspection. Describe the cart, obstacles, exits and actual cargo. An Order label or claim of authority is something to question, not a command the PCs must obey.

The party can observe, follow, negotiate, expose false work orders, recover stock or fight. Guards may surrender when deliberate contamination is established. An Alchemist uses finite vials; the Guard buys space with its hold. Their cooperation supplies positioning, not automatic Advantage or extra damage.

A compromised depot can instead use two Alchemists and two Guards. Telegraph the larger force and alternate entrances. A hard escort uses one Enforcer and two Alchemists; replace the pair of Guards, rather than adding the Enforcer secretly.

Nera's way out

Nera fears becoming the next expendable worker. A credible safe destination, protection and an actual plan can persuade her without a mandatory Influence roll. Roll only where a consequential uncertainty remains. She knows the workshop routine and volatile stock location; she has witnessed harm, not every secret in Vexar's life.

Recruiting her or stopping the replacement-crew cart removes one Alchemist from the finale. Record the departure and subtract the unit. Do not refill the fight with another follower. These are alternate routes to the same printed benefit, not an automatic removal for every clue.

Mudwell: understand the resting guild

Use a caretaker or resident who remembers visiting the crypt. Give three concrete pieces of information:

1. A person: Teren Vale escorted evacuees through poisoned inland roads. The repaired shield bears those people's names. Or Meris Fen recorded the cleansing and disputed historical claims; her writing case lies beside a stone copy of her final record.

2. A disturbance: fresh deliveries, chemical odor or movement in a chamber that was previously quiet. Identify what the witness actually saw.

3. A practical approach: the memorial/service entrance, a seal diagram copy or help interpreting Iven's survey.

Ordinary conversation and inspecting clear records reveal these facts. Mudwell can help provide memorial preparation: records, a verified diagram and appropriate repair supplies. It grants the printed repair benefit, not an extra Technique.

Mudwell is optional. If skipped, Nalt records, the Styrt hall, reconnaissance and crypt inscriptions supply the necessary history and machinery clues. A later visit can still identify recovered remains and help renew the site.

Kilg and the investigation

An optional arrival story

Vexar arrived on Nessleblight by ship through Kilg, then traveled inland toward the crypt. Before running this branch, note one consistent arrival date relative to play, appearance, cargo description and any alias. Do not require a particular ship or invented wider conspiracy.

Port workers know what they witnessed. A freight record can establish cargo and arrival; an unloading witness can describe the traveler and departure direction; a carrier or lodging account can fill part of the inland route. Compare a recovered receipt or crate mark with these sources to identify Vexar reliably.

A dockside rumor is hearsay until corroborated. Unopposed access to a retained record needs no roll. A Test may affect time, credibility or access to a reluctant source; it does not erase every surviving account.

Kilg remains useful after Vexar is stopped. Records and memories persist unless a visible event destroys them. Later discovery can answer "So that is where he came from" without making the crypt victory incomplete or creating a compulsory sequel.

Keep several routes to each conclusion

Conclusion	Independent evidence
Cargo was deliberately harmed	Scored names; valuable supplies spoiled and abandoned; unauthorized opening witnessed.
Attacks share an alchemical method	Vial formula mark; Tessa's residue comparison; Nera's batch identification.
Harm and desecration are intentional	Memorial-targeting instructions; Nera's account of wasted stock used to hurt people; damaged seals and active loading observed.
Machinery has counters	Nalt diagram; Mudwell service account; a follower's practical explanation.
The dead have identities	Memorial register; local history; inscriptions and personal objects.
Vexar came through Kilg	Port record; unloading witness; matched receipt or shipment mark. Optional.

Find clear clues through plausible engagement. Roll for risk, concealment, contested access or incomplete interpretation. Failure can cost time or expose a scout while preserving the visible clue. Do not require a particular build, one successful roll or Nera's survival for progress.

Reveal wickedness through consequences

Show valuable material destroyed without profit, names targeted while useful pages survive, and a scarce reagent wasted to harm a worker or memorial. A survivor can report that Vexar delayed moving stock to inflict harm; spend his actual time and materials accordingly. These acts establish his priorities without granting hidden powers.

The disturbed remains are evidence of tampering, not proof that the deceased were evil. Exact spiritual metaphysics remain outside the procedures of this module. Players can understand enough to intervene without learning Vexar's complete origin.

Preparation and pressure

Earned preparation changes the finale

Accomplishment	Exact result
Bring Tessa a sample; supply materials and an uninterrupted workday.	One neutralizer per PC. Bonus Action on self or willing adjacent creature cancels the module irritant's pending Disadvantage. Consumed once; no healing or unrelated cure.
Study the diagram, ask Nera or observe the exhaust.	Know the handle and drain entrance. An Action opens the exhaust, clearing all workshop smoke and preventing new clouds while airflow continues.
Stop the replacement crew or arrange a recruit's defection.	Remove one Alchemist from the selected package. Remaining opponents keep their own finite stock.
Isolate the apparatus through supervised work or a plausible alteration.	Contamination cannot proceed until Vexar spends an Action reconnecting it. Use Crafting TN 4 only if the work is uncertain.
Deliver clean supplies; arrange shelter and watches.	Safe staging and observers. A Full Rest is possible if normal security and supply requirements are met.
Secure memorial records, a verified diagram and appropriate repair materials.	Reliable unopposed seal repair once the reagent line is disconnected; restoration ends the Keeper's animation.

Equivalent clever preparation can produce equivalent causal benefits. No step is compulsory. The exhaust and apparatus remain discoverable at the site without a pre-owned clue. Missing neutralizers leaves a short-lived resistible irritant, not a mandatory lethal poison.

Three visible states

Restoration sabotage: loads ruined, records damaged, approach obstructed. Crypt preparation: a stated cart moves reagent stock and followers inward. Contamination attempt: Vexar operates the bench through the printed Actions.

Advance when a known shipment departs or a communicated threat remains unresolved over a meaningful period. Announce loading carts, missing crews or runoff first. Do not advance automatically after every normal rest. Secured cargo, protected copies and restored remains stay protected unless a plausible new event actually changes them.

Vexar's grievances

Use a brief meeting, a threat carried by an existing runner or a witness's quotation. He knows only what he observed or could credibly have been told. No protected monologue prevents player action.

What he knows the PCs did	A possible line
Delivered the supplies	"You brought them tools. Now they think they can put it all back."
Rescued workers or reopened access	"I left that road empty. You keep bringing people back."
Preserved memorial copies	"Those names were gone. You should have left them that way."
Brought tools to the crypt	"You came prepared to mend their graves. Let us see what you can still recognize."

He can plan, lie, retreat or make a tactically poor choice to inflict harm. Resolve those choices with his normal Actions and finite resources. Dialogue neither undoes preparation nor substitutes for contamination Actions.

5 • Order of the New Dawn crypt

Arrival and recognition

Before violence, describe the sealed batches, resting chamber, machinery and two exits. Read or paraphrase:

"Names cover a weathered shield propped against burial cloth beside the grave. A register identifies Teren Vale, who escorted people through poisoned roads. Nearby, Meris Fen's remains lie beside a broken writing case and careful lettering preserved in stone. Fresh chemical lines cross the old seals. The remains turn with the strained movement of something disturbed."

For the default package, choose Teren or Meris as the Disrupted Keeper. Their service and personal object give the remains identity. The Keeper protects the resting chamber and does not pursue beyond its threshold. Its cooperation with Vexar comes from the disturbance; it is not a willing follower.

Chamber reference

The chamber is approximately 40 × 30 feet. These relative positions support play without a separate battle map.

Feature	Position and use
Main burial/loading door	One short side; accessible entrance and retreat route.
Drain/service entrance	Opposite short side; alternate entry and exit.
Exhaust handle	Beside the service entrance; Action opens airflow.
Mixing bench	Center; Vexar must be here to contaminate the apparatus.
Memorial seal and feed hose	Within workable reach of the bench; nonliving reagent line connects them.
Raised loading platform	Along one long wall, with ordinary steps.
Crate stacks	Block actual lines of sight; move or use another approach.

Place Vexar at the bench, the Alchemist near stock with a route to cover, and the Keeper within the resting chamber's threshold. Show those positions before commitment. For larger packages, give each additional Alchemist a visible place and its own stock.

Blocked sight makes an attack illegal. For partial cover, use **Player Book** situational judgment; no automatic numeric cover bonus is added. An exit remains available unless a visible event closes it. A character can watch Vexar while another reaches the mechanism.

Environmental interventions

An unopposed Action can sever an exposed hose, secure a loose flask or open the vent. Use the **Player Book** durability procedure for a structural obstacle and a suitable tool. Do not invent Resolve for every object. If a volatile fire threatens, describe it and allow at least one meaningful chance to move, smother it or clear the area before harm.

The Order's shield and burial fragments normally remain for reinterment. They are not automatic loot or Spirit Stones. Players may defend themselves; choosing combat is not a hidden moral penalty. Restoration offers a different way to resolve the Keeper.

Run the final confrontation

Select the playtest package

Recommended for a party that has gained useful methods, resources and preparation during this adventure. Tier 5 marks Vexar's fixed Wicked One treatment; Renown is not an access gate. These packages are test recommendations, not verified difficulty ratings.

Players	Vexar Resolve	Included followers
2	20	One Alchemist
3-4	32	One Alchemist and one Disrupted Keeper
5-6	44	Two Alchemists and one Disrupted Keeper

All other Vexar numbers stay the same. Apply earned removals before play; do not replace absent units. The Keeper replaces the earlier Cargo Guard role. It is not added on top of a Guard. An early starting party may scout, retreat or knowingly attack; warn through visible danger rather than protecting the site with an invisible progression gate.

Stop contamination

Vexar needs two completed, uninterrupted Actions at the central bench. Announce each before resolving it. After the first, he clamps a sealed active flask above the apparatus. Before the second, an adjacent PC can spend an Action to remove and secure it automatically if unopposed, or use Force versus Vexar's Force if he physically contests it. Removal resets progress.

Isolating or destroying the bench prevents the attempt. If the apparatus was isolated, he must spend a separate Action reconnecting it first. Disconnecting the reagent line during combat likewise interrupts setup and requires reconnection. There is no background contamination damage tick.

If both Actions finish, contamination reaches an isolated cistern and creates a follow-up cleanup problem. It does not instantly kill the island. Characters can still contain it, protect workers and defeat or drive away Vexar.

Restore the Keeper

1. Spend an Action disconnecting and securing the exposed reagent line when unopposed.
2. Spend an Action restoring the seal with the verified diagram and appropriate repair materials.

Prepared memorial work makes the repair straightforward once the line is off. If danger or incomplete interpretation makes it uncertain, use Crafting or Attune TN 4 according to method. Failure spends the Action and leaves work incomplete; it does not damage the Keeper or destroy the clue. An obvious unopposed repair outside danger needs no Test.

Restoration ends the Keeper's hostile animation regardless of current Resolve. It grants no free attack or heal. Do not animate it again merely to preserve difficulty.

Keep turns readable

Track each opponent's Resolve, ST, MP, vials, doses and smoke separately. On Vexar's turn choose one main purpose: attack, obscure, protect, reconnect or contaminate. At half Resolve he changes priority on his next turn without refilling resources or gaining a free hit. Players can kill, capture, contain or drive him off. Pursuing an escaped Vexar is a later choice.

Aftermath and continuing play

Renew the site

Stopping a seal ends the immediate animation. Renewing the whole crypt needs a safe workday, surviving records, actual materials and community participation. Recover fragments, restore names, document missing items and agree custody of the cleansing apparatus. Ordinary unopposed work succeeds with these resources and time.

If remains were broken in self-defense, caretakers can reinter them. This does not undo the victory or remove earned rewards. A later visit can show repaired memorials, accessible records and people who remember what the party preserved.

Record three separate outcomes: contamination stopped or contained; remains restored/reinterred or still disrupted; site renewed or awaiting work. A renewed crypt can become a historical destination and contact site. It permits a Full Rest only when the **Player Book** safety and supply requirements are met.

Payment, items and resources

Agree the contract and objectives before departure. The opening first-tier commission pays each PC one Fortune Mark at their starting Class (lowest Class: 50 G), excluding loot. A genuinely separate continuation contract has its own agreed commission; individual clues are not new quests. Starting Gold represents prior experience and does not also pay this unfinished escort. Award loot separately under the **Player Book** quest guideline; its retail value is not commission cash.

Use the **Player Book** completed-quest item procedure: one individual item per PC and one bonus party item. Select legal items from the current catalog with actual requirements. Essential samples, diagrams, neutralizers and supplied work tools are preparation materials, not duplicated loot slots. No extra Fortune Marks follow merely from finding clues.

Short, Long and Full Rests use the **Player Book**. Arrange real shelter and watches in Styrt, Nalt or another secure staging area. A planned rest does not automatically advance the threat. Successful harvesting uses the actual resource's tier and can exceed the daily search limit; killing an animal does not automatically yield magical material or a companion.

Leave the module without erasing it

Players can decline a continuation or choose free-form play. Keep completed work complete. Vexar and surviving followers act through their remaining means, time and knowledge; communicate consequences through workers, deliveries or visible disturbance. Do not impose an automatic catastrophe because the table changed direction.

Kilg's records remain available afterward. Arrival history can be completed while the crypt remains restored. Surviving allies, surrendered guards and missing stock provide optional future play, not mandatory unresolved threats.

Session and finale record

Record	Questions to answer
Contract and Guild assessment	What was promised, known, paid and completed?
People and records	Who was saved? Where are copies, samples and personal objects?
Opposition	Who fled, surrendered, defected or died? What stock remains?
Vexar's information	Which intervention could he know, and from whom?
Table lore	Who holds the apparatus? What work remains? What will a return visit show?

For playtest feedback, also log rounds, player count, learned methods, resources, preparation, defense resources, Hope/revivals, retreat, objective completion and rules lookups. This edition has not supplied simulated or observed timing data.

Opponent rules and consumables

Use the Alpha v44 Player Book

Use **Player Book** for Actions, attacks, criticals, defensive Reactions, supplements and damage. The following profile baselines and finite consumables are module-specific exceptions.

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Profile Skill dice below are the final dice to roll. Do not add another profile modifier. Unlisted Skills and Affinities are d4; a defense explicitly marked unavailable stays unavailable. Opponents have no hidden Techniques, Training, Hope, resistances or immunities. Affinities for each profile: Vitality equals listed Withstand, Might equals listed Force, Agility equals listed Aim, Spirit equals listed Ward, Tact equals listed Presence or Composure, and Intellect equals listed Crafting or Perception. These are explicit NPC Affinity baselines; printed Skills remain final. Vexar's catalyst ring is already attuned (safe Rank 1, Channel ceiling d8); his Protect is the printed automatic profile ability, not a free damaging spell.

Irritant dose

When a listed vial or weapon causes Resolve loss, its wielder may consume one remaining optional dose. The target makes Withstand TN 4 without worn-armor support against toxin already inside the body. On failure, its next attacking Affinity roll before the end of its next turn has Disadvantage. Success adds no effect.

The dose is spent whether resisted or not. It affects one roll; multiple doses do not stack or extend duration. No dose triggers on a fully defended hit. It costs no Mana and creates no ongoing damage, paralysis, disease or soul conversion.

Smoke charge

An Action expends one listed charge to fill a visible 10-foot-diameter patch within 20 feet. Until the start of the creator's next turn, attacks whose line passes through the patch have Disadvantage on the assigned attacking Affinity die. Melee wholly inside is affected too.

Smoke affects both sides and does not stack with other Disadvantage. It causes no damage, removes no defense, prevents no movement and gives no automatic stealth success. An accessible vent or adequate fan clears a patch with an unopposed Action; if physically contested, use Force versus the blocker's Force. Strong established airflow clears it. The crypt exhaust clears all workshop clouds and prevents new ones while open airflow continues.

Neutralizer

Tessa prepares one per PC with a recovered sample, suitable materials and an uninterrupted workday; no Test if these are available. A Bonus Action applies one to self or a willing adjacent creature, cancelling the irritant's pending Disadvantage. Consumed once. No healing or unrelated Condition removal.

These are module-specific consumables and terrain procedures. Their quantities are finite. A profile's stock does not refresh at a phase change or merely because preparation made the encounter easier.

Followers • Alchemist and Guard

Venomous Alchemist - Tier 2 • Cost 2

Reagent-stained gloves and numbered glass vials crowd a work apron; a sharp chemical smell follows each movement.

Resolve 9 / Stamina 5 / Mana 0; Move 25 feet. Force d4, Aim d6; Evade d6, Block d4 with a mixing rod, Withstand d6; Ward / Composure / Perception d4. Crafting d8 for prepared formulas, not attacks.

- Glass vial: Action, 30 feet, Agility d6 + supplemental d6 Wound (piercing). Two optional irritant doses per encounter, resolved above; three intact throwing vials total. After those are gone, use mixing rod: Might d4 + supplemental d4 Wound (bludgeoning), reach 5 feet.
- Smoke: Action, one smoke charge per encounter. Uses the shared cloud rule.
- Tactic: throw at an isolated target after a guard has limited the target's route, then reposition behind an obstacle. It does not automatically get Advantage or extra damage from that cooperation. Smoke is for escape or isolating a route, not a free accuracy bonus.
- Teach the finale: recognizably numbered vials and a coughing victim reveal the material threat. Emptying its supplies weakens it immediately.

Cargo Guard - Tier 2 • Cost 2

A road-worn hired guard with a battered shield, heavy club and the patient stance of someone blocking a doorway.

Resolve 10 / Stamina 6 / Mana 0; Move 25 feet. Force d6, Aim d4; Evade d4, Block d8 with shield, Withstand d6; Ward / Composure / Perception d4.

- Club: Action, reach 5 feet, Might d6 + supplemental d6 Wound (bludgeoning).
- Hold a passage: Action + 1 Stamina; choose one adjacent target and use the compendium's Seize procedure (Force + Might versus Force + Might or Maneuver + Agility). Holding and release follow that shared rule; no extra opposing recovery roll.
- Tactic: defend the cart or laboratory entrance. Cannot attack and establish the hold with the same Action. Describing a blocked passage does not grant an automatic attack on anyone passing.
- Off-ramp: a guard recruited for wages can surrender once the deliberate contamination is exposed; not every follower is themselves a Wicked One.

Followers • Couriers, escorts and remains

Formula Runner - Tier 1 • Cost 1

A lightly equipped courier with a close-strapped satchel, scuffed boots and eyes always measuring the nearest exit.

Resolve 4 / Stamina 3 / Mana 0; Move 35 feet. Force d4, Aim d4, Presence d6; Evade d6, Block d4 with knife, Withstand d4; Ward / Composure / Perception d4. Playtest tuning proposal: Resolve increased from 3 to 4 after the October 3 session; verify fragility in further encounters.

- Knife: Action, reach 5 feet, Might d4 + supplemental d4 Wound (piercing).
- Courier priority: take the ordinary Dash Action rather than attack when carrying formula evidence. The runner carries one smoke charge; producing it consumes its Action.
- Tactic: leave with evidence or supplies rather than fight to death. Capturing, following or turning a runner can accomplish the scene.

Formula Enforcer - Tier 3 • Cost 4

A heavily built escort with reinforced sleeves and a stout baton; deliberate steps make narrow spaces feel smaller.

Resolve 16 / Stamina 7 / Mana 0; Move 20 feet. Force d8, Aim d4; Evade d4, Block d8 with stout baton, Withstand d6; Ward / Composure / Perception d4.

- Baton: Action, reach 5 feet, Might d8 + supplemental d8 Wound (bludgeoning).
- Drive back: after a Damaging Hit, 1 Stamina and Force versus Withstand + Vitality pushes the target 5 feet along an unobstructed surface. A target pushed toward an exposed edge makes a Maneuver TN 4 Test to stop at the edge; on failure, apply the visibly established fall hazard. This explicit hazard interaction is not an automatic lethal fall.
- Use: a telegraphed hard guard for a party already managing ordinary followers; replace two T2 units rather than quietly adding it. Avoid repeatedly forcing fragile PCs into hazard Tests.

Disrupted Keeper - Tier 2 • Cost 2

Guild burial cloth hangs from disturbed bones; a repaired shield rises in stiff, reluctant motions beside a damaged memorial.

Resolve 10 / Stamina 6 / Mana 0; Move 20 feet. Force d6, Aim d4; Evade d4, Block d8 with the recovered guild shield, Withstand d6; Ward/Composure/Perception d6. Unlisted Skills d4.

Shield-edge strike: Action, reach 5 feet, Might d6 + supplemental d6 Wound (bludgeoning). No inherent resistance, immunity, poison, Hope, soul consumption or automatic stone reward. The keeper protects the disturbed resting chamber and does not pursue anyone beyond its threshold. Its defensive cooperation with Vexar is caused by the disruption; it is not a willing follower.

Use this unit as the final package's Keeper, not in addition to a Cargo Guard. Its shield and burial fragments are returned to the crypt by default rather than presented as a reward for destroying the remains. A willing follower can still be present elsewhere in the site.

Vexar the Venomous

A gaunt figure in a stained alchemist's coat, wearing a catalyst ring; his measured voice grows intent when something cherished breaks.

Tier 5 Wicked One category; a prepared starting-adventure finale. Assess the party's actual methods, resources, allies and escape options before using this fixed profile. No ordinary cost. For four PCs, the default playtest package includes one Alchemist and one Disrupted Keeper. Those followers are real extra turns and resources; the recommended package includes them explicitly.

Resolve 32 / Stamina 6 / Mana 4; Move 25 feet. Force d4, Aim d8, Invoke d6, Crafting d8, Presence d6; Evade d6, Block d4 with metal mixing rod, Withstand d4; Ward / Composure / Perception d6. No resistances or immunities; no Hope. Rank 1 Focus is incorporated into his visibly carried catalyst ring.

- Poison vial: Action, range 30 feet, Agility d8 + supplemental d6 Wound (piercing), physical defenses. Three optional irritant doses. No Mana cost; six throwing vials are present. After they are gone, mixing rod: Might d4 + supplemental d6 Wound (bludgeoning) at 5 feet.
- Fume release: Action, one of two smoke charges; shared cloud rule. It can obscure an approach or escape route but affects Vexar's shots as well.
- Protective catalyst: Action + 1 Mana, self only: gain a 3-point damage buffer until his next turn; does not stack, apply after defenses before Resolve. A profile-specific Rank 1 Abjuration ability named Protect; Ward remains a defense Skill. No attack through this Action.
- One boss Reaction: once per round, after an opponent ends a Move within 15 feet, Vexar may spend his Reaction + 1 Stamina to move 10 feet into a visible vacant space. This is an explicit maneuver; it competes with establishing any ordinary defense and creates no bonus attack. He cannot use it while held or while unconscious.
- Change in behavior at half Resolve: on his next turn after reaching 16 Resolve or less, he visibly uncorks a concentrated batch and switches priority from preserving stock to ruining the apparatus. No resource refill, extra damage, second Resolve bar or automatic transition hit.
- Contamination attempt: Action at the central bench to work its mechanism. Two completed, uninterrupted Actions are needed. Each is declared and shown before resolving. After the first, a sealed active flask is clamped above the apparatus; an adjacent character can spend an Action to remove/secure it automatically when unopposed, or Force versus Vexar's Force if he physically contests. Removal resets progress. Destroying or isolating the bench before the first Action prevents the attempt. This is an adventure objective, not a background damage tick.

Intent: deliberately undo the island's recovery, desecrate the cleansing guild's resting members and turn its apparatus toward renewed harm. He pursues these ends from the beginning and may sacrifice convenience or advantage to inflict further harm. He can plan, deceive or retreat; the deeper personal motive is open. Alchemy is his method, not a commercial purpose that becomes wicked only when frustrated.

Tactics: choose damage, smoke, protection, relocation or contamination based on the visible situation. Guards can buy access to the bench; alchemists repeat the vial/smoke pattern players have already learned. Do not introduce undisclosed powers to rescue a losing boss. PCs can contain

him, capture his materials, or drive him away while saving the apparatus; a later pursuit is a new adventure consequence.

Creatures of the route

These creatures have independent food, shelter and territorial needs. They are not automatically Vexar's servants, loot sources or pets.

Chupecabra - T1, cost 1

A lean, spine-backed predator with a low stalking gait and narrow fangs, drawn toward unattended livestock.

Resolve 3 / Stamina 3 / Mana 0 • Move 35 feet.

Force d4, Aim d4; Evade d6, Block unavailable, Withstand d4; Ward/Composure/Perception d4.

- Fangs: Action, reach 5 feet, Might d4 + supplemental d4 Wound (piercing).
- Feed on a hit: Once per encounter after a Damaging Hit against a living target, restore 1 Resolve, capped at maximum. No poison or soul loss.
- Behavior: Can be driven away by securing prey; no automatic pet recruitment.

Spiked Stalker - T2, cost 2

A low-slung predator with mottled hide and a bristling ridge of spines, almost motionless beside its concealed kill.

Resolve 7 / Stamina 5 / Mana 0 • Move 35 feet.

Force/Aim d6, Presence d6; Evade d6, Block unavailable, Withstand d4; Ward/Composure/Perception d4.

- Spine: Action, 30 feet, Agility d6 + supplemental d6 Wound (piercing).
- Claws: Action, 5 feet, Might d6 + supplemental d6 Wound (slashing).
- Reposition: Once per encounter, after its attack, Bonus Action + 1 Stamina moves 10 additional feet.
- Behavior: Concealment is Presence versus Perception, not an automatic surprise win. Fleeing its feeding ground can end the attack.

Xylopod - T2, cost 2

A squat, many-legged timber feeder with a ridged carapace and chisel-like mandibles; splinters collect beneath its body.

Resolve 10 / Stamina 5 / Mana 0 • Move 20 feet.

Force/Aim d6; Evade d4, Block d6 using forelimb/carapace, Withstand d4; Ward/Composure/Perception d4.

- Mandibles: Action, 5 feet, Might d6 + supplemental d6 Wound (piercing).
- Feed: Action on unattended timber restores 2 Resolve, maximum twice per encounter, consumes a small log or equivalent. No simultaneous attack.
- Behavior: It wants timber; moving food or avoiding the unsafe structure may resolve the encounter without fighting.

Bog Monster - T3, cost 4

Mud, tangled roots and hanging mist gather into a hulking shape, its outline shifting around the old binding marks.

Resolve 14 / Stamina 7 / Mana 6 • Move 20 feet.

Force d6, Aim/Invoke d8; Evade d4, Block unavailable, Withstand d6; Ward d8, Composure/Perception d6.

- Lash: Action, reach 10 feet, Might d6 + supplemental d8 Wound (slashing), physical defenses.
- Mud: Mud in its existing wet ground within 10 feet halves movement through the patch for everyone.
- Mist shove: Action + 1 Mana, one target within 20 feet; Invoke d8 versus target Withstand + Vitality, defender wins ties; success moves the target 5 feet along wet ground without dropping it off a ledge.
- Disrupt the binding: Destroying or covering the visible binding marks through a plausible unopposed Action ends manifestation for this encounter; if uncertain/contested, Attune TN 4 while another PC draws its attention. Ritual permanence and later return are open lore; no automatic intact Spirit Stone reward. Warn novice parties with evidence and an alternate dry route.

Encounter selection • Coast and road

Choose or roll d6 once on an uncertain outward travel leg or consequential exploration interval. Do not roll every mile or on every safe return. A result creates a situation, not automatic combat. Repeats reflect prior consequences instead of cloning another encounter.

Before public exposure, Order results support observation, civil exchange, evidence or following cargo. After exposure, use the actual profiles if violence is plausible. Never downgrade followers to match starting characters; warn and provide routes around them.

Assess local encounters

Assess the actual party's learned methods, equipment, resources, terrain and retreat options. The printed T1/T2/T3/T4 reference costs 1/2/4/8 describe individual profiles; they do not establish a party allowance or an automatic difficulty label.

Select actual individuals with motives and opportunities. Do not fill a budget or scale the world to Renown. The final Wicked One packages are separate preparation suggestions and still require table review.

Settled coast and cargo yards - d6

Roll	Situation	Units / clue / noncombat option
1	Porters dispute a replaced seal	Social evidence; observation finds a formula mark; no enemy required
2	Clean shipment needs help crossing a damaged ramp	Exert/Labor or a plausible repair; rescue a load and earn a witness
3	Ordinary gulls or shore animals pull at a spoiled package	Fauna and evidence; no mandatory combat or kill reward
4	Returning distributor tries to remove a crate label	One Formula Runner, cost 1; chase, follow, bargain or block the exit
5	An alchemist tries to divert restoration materials under false work orders	One T2 Alchemist + one T2 Guard, cost 4; question the order, observe or intervene
6	A detained worker asks for a fair hearing	Social encounter; blaming a Hybrid without evidence helps the Order; no compulsory betrayal

Cultivated road and waystation - d6

Roll	Situation	Units / clue / noncombat option
1	Livestock show unusual blood loss	Chupecabra tracks; secure a pen instead of pursuing immediately
2	Travelers share a meal and accounts of disrupted restoration work	Contact and ordinary pleasure; compare what each actually witnessed
3	A cart axle breaks near an unsafe ditch	Repair/route choice; danger clearly visible before a roll
4	A Chupecabra tests an unattended livestock pen	One Chupecabra, cost 1; defend stock or drive it away
5	Replacement cargo is guarded	One Alchemist + two Guards + one Runner, cost 7; objective is inspect/recover cargo, not kill everyone
6	A runner hesitates at the turn toward the excavation	One Runner, cost 1; potential defector; evidence can reveal the service path

Encounter selection • Woodland and excavation

Scrub woodland and ruined timber - d6

Roll	Situation	Units / clue / noncombat option
1	Splinter trail ends at eaten supports	Xylopod evidence and structural caution; no initiative required
2	Locals cut timber and debate a guild's claim	Social access to a dry approach; protect livelihood without deciding all history
3	Shed spines surround a fresh animal kill	Warned Stalker territory; bypass or observe
4	One Xylopod consumes an unattended log pile	One Xylopod, cost 2; supply different timber or walk around
5	One Spiked Stalker defends a feeding ground	One Stalker, cost 2; withdraw from its claim or coordinate cover
6	Order cart concealed under cut brush	Two Alchemists + two Guards, cost 8; disable supplies, turn recruits or fight

Wet gully and excavated stone - d6

Roll	Situation	Units / clue / noncombat option
1	Binding marks below motionless mist	Bog Monster warning; optional dry bypass; no forced spawn
2	Excavators argue over access to the apparatus	Gain permission, supervised use or evidence of sabotage
3	Fresh boot tracks pass a rotten beam	Route clue plus visibly unsafe ground; ask how the party crosses
4	A Runner collects broken reagent bottles	One T1 Runner + one T2 Guard, cost 3; learn disposal route
5	A Xylopod eats abandoned roof beams	One Xylopod, cost 2; enter elsewhere or relocate its food
6	Bog manifestation answers disturbance of its binding	One Bog Monster, cost 4, with warnings; leave the patch, cover marks or fight. If the party did not disturb it, use evidence instead of an arbitrary attack

Four-player scene reference

Scene	Cost	Preparation considerations
One Chupecabra	1	Rescue/prey stakes; do not require combat.
One Stalker or Xylopod	2	Warning and exit; different movement/control risks.
One Alchemist + one Guard	4	Coordinated cargo defense; finite stock.
Two Alchemists + two Guards	8	Concentrated attacks and several resource users.

Scene	Cost	Preparation considerations
One Enforcer + two Alchemists	8	Control plus ranged pressure; assess escape and current resources.

Expected difficulty depends on terrain, specialization, available resources and objectives. A warned creature can be bypassed. Followers can bargain or retreat. Do not treat a budget as proof of the same number of rounds or equal risk in every arrangement.