

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

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Chapter 1

After leaving Avatar's mansion in the German countryside (see the [Avatar](#) write-ups for details), Damon Flagg set out for Berlin in pursuit of the Follower of Germanicus known as Harbinger. Tracking him down to a leather bar called The Pit, Damon staked out the area. Meanwhile, having learned about the Der Nacht dimension through a temporary team-up with Fantasia (now working with Force d'Orleans), Menagerie (last seen with Avatar's ill-fated team), an Enigma, and Alistair Munro (who now works at the Legion of Champions Museum curator), Balatar began investigating the Followers of Germanicus. Having learned about the strange death of James Personairre (see [Prophet's](#) Limited Series), he had tracked down the man's son, Jacob, to Germany. He too was checking out The Pit when Damon entered the bar and drew his attention. Lastly, having tracked down the vampires that had killed his mentor, Nikoli approached The Pit, ready to annihilate every bloodsucker in the place.

Upon approaching the bar entrance, Nikoli shifted into his wolf spirit form, allowing him to determine that the bouncer was a vampire before staking him in the chest. Making his way into the bar, he began taking on all challengers while Damon and Balatar conversed and watched the floor show. Balatar was trying to find out what side the Follower in front of him was on when two vamps jumped Nikoli. Wanting to help the hunter, he dropped his disguise illusion and hit one of the attackers with an Arrow of Apollo spell. Seeing the distraction as an opportunity, Damon used the hanging lights to cut across the bar, knocking loose the entire system in the process. The crowd was fully exposed to the fight when Balatar used a telekinetic spell to launch the lighting system at his previous target, pinning his remaining form to the wall. Meanwhile, with only one dance partner to contend with, Nikoli continued the fight, working his way across the bar and staking anyone without a pulse within his reach.

Having reached the other side of the room, Damon waited for the office door to open. When Harbinger and The Abomination came out to see what was going on, Damon dropped behind them, knocking the were/vamp away and wrapping her in his red bonds. Turning on Harbinger, he recognized the son of his first victim of vengeance. The two men began their battle dance while Nikoli continued to stake and Balatar used the Light of Ra to continue to wipe out the vampire horde.

Harbinger was hit with Damon's hellfire before throwing the remains of the lighting system at him to allow time to run, but only made it as far as the door before The Prophet caught him in another bondage wrap. Damon waited for him to break his way out before knocking him into the next block. Meanwhile, Balatar saw The Abomination transform into mist to make her escape, only to be caught in a mystical bubble. Brought back down to the ground, she remained trapped long enough for Balatar to switch over to a fire spell and knock her into unconsciousness.

Dragging the unconscious form of Harbinger back to the bar, Damon is confronted by Nikoli, who passes him a stake and demands the life of Harbinger. Instead, Damon re-enters the bar to find contacts while Nikoli and Balatar tried to destroy the two remaining monsters. While the heroes are surprised that neither of them die by the stake as easily as they should, they don't allow the hindrance to stop them from chopping Harbinger's head off (Balatar) and stomping The Abomination to death (Nikoli). As Damon emerges with the computer hard drive and a bunch of documents written in German, Nikoli flees and the two remaining agree to meet in an hour to discuss remaining issues.

Using shards of a broken stake, Balatar tracked Nikoli down and confronted the young man. Discovering that ties existed between the vampire world and Der Nacht, the two men agree to team up. Shortly thereafter, they also met with Damon, who likewise shared similar goals, allowing the three men to form

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an alliance to battle the creatures of evil. Agreeing to get a hotel room to rest and examine the information gathered by Damon, the men retired for the evening.

Chapter 2

After checking into a local hotel, Balatar and Damon sit down to decipher the paperwork taken from The Pit. Included in the pile was a statement for a local bank showing transactions for the bar, including deposits made and withdrawals by an unknown, outside account. They also found a planner, which included such notes as a planned pickup and an appointment with someone labeled "H&tS." Lastly, they found a newsletter from a Lobod Enterprises. Tracking down these leads led them to stake out the bar again (the pickup was never made, but they learned where the missing patrons ended up), making a withdrawal from The Pit's bank account to finance their operation, and learning that Lobod was a dummy corporation.

When the time came for the appointment with H&tS, the trio once again staked out the bar. As they sat waiting, Prophet received a vision of a Follower ritualistic slaying, including the location of said event. Going out to investigate the vision, the men found a deserted storehouse with multiple bogies approaching. While some were identified as vampires, Damon mistook the others as Followers and attempted to intermingle with them. It did not take them long to realize that he was neither vampire or werewolf, sparking a fight.

Meanwhile, Helsing and Shaft arrived and had prepared for battle inside the storehouse, which half of the brood was happy to partake in. While they battled inside, Damon and Balatar worked their way through those who stayed behind, with Nikoli being sucker-punched by a werewolf and sent flying. As Balatar went to help their fallen comrade, Damon moved inside, where he accidentally knocked Shaft for a loop and into the waiting arms of a vampire. In retaliation, Helsing struck at Damon, opening himself up for a tag-team attack by another vampire and werewolf duo. Deciding to save Shaft first, Damon moved in to kill the vampire while Balatar and Nikoli saved Helsing.

Though the leader of the Slayers was unconscious, Shaft stopped Nikoli from healing him, stating that he was too dangerous to himself for his own good. Removing his Degeneration Torch and crossbow, giving them to Balatar, she states that they were sent here by their third member of their group, Harvester. The men point out that this was obviously an ambush for the two Slayers, as they had intercepted the other half of the attack squad a few nights before. Shaft asks them if they could return Helsing to his castle and check on the condition of their traitor.

Upon returning to their base of operations, Shaft places Helsing in his room to eventually recover, leaving him a note: allow her to continue his fight; that he needed to retire. The group also leaves behind his enchanted sword for protection, but nothing else. While Damon downloads, then wipes, his hard drives, Shaft learns that Harvester has fled the area. Asking to join their group, Shaft packs her few belongings and extra weapons, helps Damon take a stationary and laptop computer, and leaves with them.

Once back at the hotel, they rent a second room for their new teammate and set to work on installing the Pit hard drive into the Slayer tower. Using the Slayer database, Damon is able to determine that there are three actively known vampire nests (Vietnam, Sydney Australia and Seattle Washington), two werewolf packs (Greenland and in the Yukon Territories), and one individual - Midas of the Evicted Demonz, whereabouts unknown - that Helsing was tracking. While most of his facts told that vampires and werewolves did not travel together, there were rumors to the fact that an alliance had been made between

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the two creatures in Berlin, Krakow, and Munich. There was also word that the vampire known as Fang had resurfaced briefly in New York, only to disappear again a year and a half ago.

Using the Pit database, he learned that Harbinger had contacts with a man named Mark Lee in Chicago, Illinois (a name that is unfamiliar to Damon), Lisa Hargrove (whom he recognizes as a member of the Coven) who is currently located in Budapest, Brad LeVard (a name that he had heard, but never met) in Alabama, and Katrina Romanoff in Krakow. The Slayer database also registers this final name as a suspected C.O.T.N. (creature of the night) with whereabouts unknown.

With obvious decisions to make, the trio realized that thought would have to be given to what their next step may be.

Chapter 3

After comparing databases, Damon formulated a plan of attack and presented it to the group. After much discussion, they all agreed that pursuing Beastia in Krakow was as good a place to start as any and prepared for departure. Packing up their things, Balatar teleported the group to Poland and once again set up camp in a local hotel on the South side of Krakow.

As the afternoon began to turn into evening, the group divided into two teams: Damon and Nikoli heading into the markets to speak with the locals while Balatar and Sara checked out the castles and woods to the South. Nikoli questioned the locals about the possibility of werewolves, learning that he and his companion should stay away from the woods and castles. The other two were exploring the boundary and discovering that a majority of the castles, which had been turned into museums, had built up their walls to keep creatures out. One, however, had not built up the walls and was boarded up tight. When Damon reported what they had learned via Balatar's magic radio, the mage teleported the two men to their location so they could investigate the castle.

Once back together, the group agreed to enter the castle via one of the second floor windows, with Damon breaking through the wood barrier. Once inside, they were confronted by the head of the house; a vampire named Alexander. He revealed that he and his vampires were in league with the werewolves in the forest, by order of Drakus. He then sent his minions to attack.

After the group had wiped out the vampires, they heard the howls of the werewolves in the forest and decided to adjourn to the roof to gain the advantage. Sara stayed behind to cover their regress, picking one of the werewolves off as they exited the forest before joining her comrades on the roof. The four of them waited there, allowing Balatar to transform one of Sara's swords into a silver battle staff for Nikoli to use, until the werewolves tracked their scent through the castle and began to emerge through the hatch. As they emerged, Sara, Balatar and Nikoli each took out a werewolf as Damon bound Beastia for questioning.

After several minutes of debating Beastia's fate, in which she was telling her life story, and what she would be willing to do to ensure her survival, Sara stepped forward and told her that she would be released if she told them where to find Drakus. Beastia informed them that he could be found in Munich under the identity of Drakus Caesar, CEO of Armin lu's Incorporated. He had reunited with Panthenon, bringing the vampires and the werewolves together. When the group was sure that they had all of the information they wanted, Sara plunged her silver sword into Beastia's chest, killing her.

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While Balatar, Nikoli and Sara disposed of the bodies; Damon searched the castle, taking their laptop computer and various pieces of jewelry that the vampires and werewolves had taken from their victims. The group then returned to their hotel suite, cleaned up and debated their next plan of attack. After agreeing to sell the jewelry to a local pawn shop, hoping that it can eventually find its way back to families, they once again checked out and teleported across the countryside, setting up shop in Munich.

Chapter 4

After arriving in Munich, the group starts investigating Armin Lu's Incorporated and its CEO, learning that the company is an import/export business that was bought and renamed by Drakus Caesar the year previous. Before that point, there was no record of the man having existed. Hitting the streets to find evidence of vampires or Followers, the area was clean except for in the business district, where the smell of creatures of the night created a trail leading directly to Armin Lu's Inc. Realizing that Beastia had been telling the truth, the quartet began planning their strike.

Deciding to strike at high noon, the group was flown to the roof of the building, knowing that the CEO's office and penthouse was on the top floor. After Balatar blew a hole in the roof to allow entrance of both the heroes and sunlight, they descended to see a man with smoke flowing off his body running for the next room, but lost sight of him in pursuit. Balatar proceeded to blow out the ceiling in the next room as well, and then followed up by adding a floating disco ball to flush out the shadows, which succeeded in bringing Drakus back to view. Meanwhile, the vampires charging to the rescue were welcomed by the light of day and the werewolves to the piercing fists of Damon and the flying shafts of Sara.

When Panthenon arrived in the form of a were-bird to assist, Balatar trapped her in a gilded cage, followed by placing bars over the entrance, cutting off the arrival of more vampires and werewolves. As she broke out of that bond, Damon wrapped his own around her, essentially finishing her fight. Meanwhile, Nikoli had moved over to Drakus, ensuring that he was in the sunlight, and began torturing him slowly. Panthenon strikes a deal to protect Drakus from the harmful rays in exchange for information about the origins of Germanicus, having smelled the cult's stench on Damon. Having agreed to the deal, Balatar turned the building to glass, catching all of the vampires inside on fire, and left Sara to finish off the werewolves before teleporting himself, Damon, Nikoli, Panthenon and Drakus back to the castle in Poland.

Once settled again, Damon was enlightened as to the true background of the Followers of Germanicus: While Caesar was the one who requested the eternal torture of Arminius, it was she that had cast the spell that opened the original portal to Der Nacht and began the process, and likewise wrote the tomes that the members of the Coven followed religiously. As opposed to being prophetic writings, they were the fictional creations of a devious witch. She also revealed that, if they killed her and Drakus, they would just be sent back to Der Nacht, eventually to return, and that it would not stop the continued existence of werewolves and vampires around the world. Between calling Damon's goals and existence pointless, she informed him that he too would be condemned to Der Nacht upon his death, thanks to the pact he had made to gain his powers (not knowing that he was not the one who had been the Follower, but was forced upon him by his family).

After learning the true history of the Followers, Balatar believed that their deaths would not be the end of their existence, and decided instead to turn the matter over to a higher authority. Opening a portal to Der Tag, he cast the two monsters into the realm of light to be judged by them. With their business completed, the trio returned to Munich to reunite with Sara. Having determined that they had done all that they could along this vein, the heroes decided to return to their hunt of Followers. Nikoli, appreciative of the

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opportunity to avenge his mentor, agreed to stay with the team as they continued their mission. Sara likewise agreed, stating that Nikoli's training would continue. This left it to Damon to decide which lead to follow next.

Chapter 5

(Guest-GMed by Ken Hallaron) * **The Great Darkness Saga crossover** *

While Damon attempted to follow up on the leads he had gathered, most of which led to abandoned homes of Followers of Germanicus, the rest of the group hit the hills of Transylvania to dispatch those supernatural creatures dumb enough to use the fictional homeland as their happy hunting grounds. Upon their return, Balatar notices the morning paper reporting black beasts in Germany near the Black Forest. Recognizing the area as the base of Avatar, the group decides to go and check out the situation.

Upon their arrival, Balatar is knocked unconscious by one of the beasts, which is in turn destroyed by Damon and Sara. While she works to bring Balatar back to consciousness, Nikoli and Damon entered the mansion to investigate. Finding the lavishness of his previous visit tarnished, Damon sought out Avatar, just to find him fighting another of the creatures in front of another portal. (This takes place between the final adventure and the epilogue of [Avatar's](#) writeups.) Meanwhile, with Balatar waking up, Sara headed inside, leaving the wizard to deal with the portal outside.

Once inside, Sara witnessed as Damon and Avatar began a cross between a Mexican standoff and a peeing contest, which ended with multiple attacks emanating from the portal. Avatar retaliated by conjuring wolves to attack Nikoli and Sara while he entered combat with Damon. Sara quickly dispatched her two wolves with a single shaft, but allowed Damon to fight his battle alone, choosing instead to watch for more creatures emerging from the portal and summoning Balatar to the house.

As the two semi-supernatural men began their fight, Turbo of the Champions of Justice arrived on the scene. Separating the two, he informed them about the threat from the portals and how to close them, to which Damon used his hellfire inside and Balatar performed his Arrow of Apollo spell on the one in the forest. Seeing the portal closed and not wanting to spend any more time with the egomaniacs than necessary, Turbo left the house, stopping outside long enough to share information with Balatar in the woods.

As the rest of the group emerged from the mansion and Turbo left, Balatar opened a new portal, returning them once more to Transylvania but transporting himself to the states to follow up on the case with the Champions of Justice and other assembled heroes.

Interim 1

During the hours that Balatar was in America, so was his unifying perspective. No one of the group had really liked any of the others. Arguments over what to do next erupted. The Prophet went his way; Artemis and Wulf went theirs. When Balatar returned, the group was gone. And he had no great desire to reunite them.

Chapter 6

(Guest-GMed by Ken Hallaron)

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They spent several months apart until Balatar found himself shot in England, mistaken for Kristoffer, Son of Moldred, or one of his kin. It was at that point that he put out a mystical summons, bringing The Prophet, Artemis and Wulf to his aid. Confused by the change of scenery and the strange situation, Damon and Sara instantly started in on one another while questioning MI-9 secret agent Matthew Stockton and U.N.I.T. Brigadier Winifred Bambara about what was going on. After about a dozen insults, a half dozen threats and the realization of an extra dead body, the trio learned that the British hero Crusader had been killed in what appeared to be a Follower of Germanicus ritual sacrifice. While Wulf worked on stabilizing Balatar, Damon attempted to track the mystical scent of the attacker. When that didn't pan out, they agreed to go with Stockton to Soho, looking for clues to the FoG Underground.

Once there, Damon searched for runes that would signify safe-havens, leading the quintet to a local bar. Anticipating the obligatory bar fight and leaving Balatar in the car to continue nursing his wounds, the crew entered, Sara knocked out the bouncer and Damon began searching for Followers. When he couldn't find any sign of them, they went to question the owner, ending with Artemis holding an arrow to her head to gain the information they wanted.

As they left the office, Balatar had taken the place of Stockton, the latter having to report in due to the one-day romance of Prince William. Learning that the young prince had only met his fiancé that day, Artemis questioned the coincidence and drawing the conclusion that the soon-to-be princess could have conducted the ritual for a type of power beyond the physical. While Wulf and Damon tried to learn more through the newspapers, Sara took Hans to his near-by apartment to clean up and bandage what was left of his wound. The two guys rejoin them and an agreement is finally reached; Millicent Spencer had to be stopped.

A loose plan was quickly formed, with Balatar using what little strength he had left to teleport them. Wulf thought of setting off the fire-suppression system while Artemis and Damon went after the woman. Running distraction, Damon terrorized the guards and royal family while Sara struggled with Spencer. Damon ended up putting the princess-to-be into his special form of bondage, allowing Wulf to come in and carry her away. When done, Balatar teleported them back out again, returning her to the scene of her crime.

Damon had convinced himself and the rest of the group that he could create a ritual that, with the cooperation of the Follower, could negate the pact made with Der Nacht, returning their soul and removing their powers. Given the choice between negation or termination, Spencer chose to surrender her powers, transforming back into her previous frumpy form. Once done, Wulf suggested that she turn to religion, while Artemis told her that she had better stay clean, or next time she wouldn't see it coming. Leaving once again by teleportation as Stockton was brought in to make the arrest, the group returned to Hans's flat to recuperate and decide where to go from there.

Chapter 7

The group stays at Hans' flat for the next three days. When they awaken on the third day, they find a note from Wulf saying that he was moving on. Damon checked his e-mail to find a message from his contact in Brussels, a man using the internet handle GUI, saying that he was on the trail of Guy Duméril, a Follower of Germanicus that Prophet had discovered in the Delta Upsilon Delta Pi fraternity database. He was now late in checking back in, leading the group to assume the worst. Teleporting to the man's apartment, they find information leading them to the Cemetery of Haren, one of the local graveyards.

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When they arrived, they encountered Küm Ülüs, a monster hunter from another dimension, exiled to earth after having completed his mission there. Joining the trio, the quartet prepared to enter the cemetery. Balatar took to the sky to get a lay of the land, where he discovered a mass of open graves and zombies wandering the grounds. The group quickly entered and dispatched the four lookouts before turning their attention to the mausoleum. Realizing that's where the zombies were congregating, they stormed the entrance, dispatching the undead as they pushed forward. Balatar "magic missiled" as Küm slice-n-diced and Damon hit them with hellfire. Only Artemis was overwhelmed by the monsters, buried beneath the pile until rescued by Küm, who used one of the oak doors as a plow. Meanwhile, Damon spotted Guy, who was trying to make a hasty retreat, and leaped over the masses to punch the Follower to the ground. Balatar grabbed GUI, who had been zombified as Küm followed Damon's example of leaping over the undead fodder to get to the criminal. As Damon was trying to subdue Guy, though, Küm came down swinging his giant sword and played Cuisinart with him. With Guy dead, the zombies stopped and GUI reverting back to normal, under a mystical spell rather than truly being undead.

With the evil vanquished, the group learned about Küm's history in his own dimension and, realizing he had no place else to go and nothing else to do, invited him to join them on their hunt.

Chapter 8

For the next few days, Küm and Sara sparred, Damon worked with GUI to combine all of his stolen computer data into a workable database, and Hans took care of personal business and did research of his own. Comparing notes, the two men realized that they had multiple options as to who to pursue next: a series of elderly kidnappings in Virginia, another missing contact in Ontario or an artist who fit the Follower profile for targets in Florence. When Sara suggested they split up to cover multiple objectives, Küm balked at the idea and asked what she was trying to prove, leading her into a tirade about not needing to prove anything and storming out. Hans followed her, agreeing to send her to Florence to investigate while they followed up in Virginia. While retrieving her things for her, Balatar suggested that Damon contact a private investigator he had met during the Darkness saga named Lance Diamond to look into Ontario. He then left to take Artemis to Italy. With GUI looking up the PI, Damon made the call, but Lance diamond turned down the job, leading Damon to insist Hans take him to Ontario while Balatar and Küm went to Arlington.

After being dropped off in Ontario by Balatar, Damon set out for the apartment of his missing contact. After being let into the building by a helpful neighbor, he finds his contact tortured and sacrificed on a Germanicus alter. A taunting note gave Diaz full credit for the kill and reinvigorated Damon's desire to find the Follower. Searching through the contacts stuff, Damon found a hidden safe, protected by a Holy blessing, which held notes and video of Diaz's movements but failed to have his home information. In fact, it mentioned that he seemed to disappear.

Following the scent of the evil magic, Damon took to the streets of Ontario to try and track Diaz. While the scent was old, he managed to track it to a taxi cab that was covered in the smell. While the cab driver didn't recognize Diaz from the picture, he agreed to drive Damon around if he would be allowed to take care of an old man first. When they got there, Damon discovered that the old man in question was an aged Diaz. Subduing the driver and dragging Diaz inside, Damon gave the man a chance to talk.

Diaz told Damon that he had been stripped of his powers and trapped in this old form after sacrificing Damon's friend. He also told Prophet the history of the Followers of Germanicus, the Arminius connection, the fact that Damon was placed as the replacement link between Der Nacht and Earth, and that there was now a new master of the demon dimension. While Diaz didn't know the identity of the new

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master, he was fairly certain that it was a former Follower who had died and took over after Bougimon was destroyed, and that this was the reason why he had been stripped of his powers and transformed into an old man. Damon then told Diaz that he needed to make amends for his evil deeds and that he would be in touch again soon. Leaving the old man's home, he contacted Balatar.

Chapter 9

When Hans and Küm arrived at the Arlington national cemetery, they found a demon lurking on the grounds. When they confronted him, they discovered that he was the returned Pallequin. The former Hawk relayed his story of how he had been captured and "killed" again, then rescued by Der Tag, who then gave one of their own his memories and sent him to earth as their Avatar. Vowing revenge on the imposter and Vision (the person who set him up for capture), he agreed to work with the pair after learning that they were after the same target. He took them to see Captain Fredrick Wyte, head of the DC Strikeforce, who confirmed that he was investigating the missing veterans, had questioned all of the personnel and that Vision had left town. Realizing that Wyte was most likely messed-with mentally, the trio left to check out the nursing home for themselves.

At the nursing home, with Hans and Küm going undercover as relatives of a prospective client, Pallequin went around the back to sneak into the records room. Taking a tour of the facility, Ham and Küm question the staff and search for Vision, but find that Charli is not on duty. The visit is cut short, however, when Pallequin is discovered, scarring an elderly nurse in the process, but makes off with Charli's personnel records. Aiding the staff in investigating the disturbance, Hans eventually confronts the director about the missing people and, after a process of elimination, gets the home address of the most likely candidate to be Vision.

Chapter 10

Once outside, Balatar gets Prophet's call and leaves to pick him up. Küm is approached by the Denver vigilante Facebuster, who had flown in to Virginia to stop the people who were kidnapping national heroes, and Vanguard, a local anti-hero who has a history of working with the DC Defenders. They are soon joined by Pallequin, Balatar and Prophet and agree to work together to take care of the Vision threat. Relocating back to Arlington National Cemetery, the heroes compare notes and formulate a plan of attack. Things are slightly derailed when Vanguard blasts the file taken by Pallequin, accidentally hitting the reformed demon's hand in the process due to not being able to see him. This causes a conflict between the two that has to be defused by the others. Reestablishing common ground, the group heads out for Vision's home on Balatar's cloak turned into a flying carpet.

Upon arrival, Damon takes the lead by busting through the back door with the others following. They find Charli, who was preparing to go outside to sunbathe, and instantly launch an attack. While most of the group were throwing everything but the kitchen sink at Vision, Balatar transported to the second floor where he found her pet demons and apprentices heading for the stairs to investigate the noise. He draws their attention, having Pulse and Specs focus on him while the others continue downstairs. Damon opens fire (literally) on Ardor and starts trading fireballs with the demon. Chance goes after Küm, pitting sword against swords, while AtoMic tries to face off against Pallequin. Facebuster and Vanguard continue pounding on Vision, who tries to control the very strong-willed Facebuster, who responds with bouts of profanity and finishing with throwing the kitchen sink at her, who finally knocks her unconscious. Having finished off AtoMic, Pallequin sees his opportunity to exact his vengeance and rips her heart out. With their anchor to the Earth plane killed, the demons were sucked back to Der Nacht, leaving Specs alone

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against the mass of vigilantes. Swiftly knocked unconscious now that Balatar's attention was solely on him, Prophet turned his attention on the two apprentice Followers and worked his spell to break their connection to Der Nacht.

Balatar searched the house and found a recently-used sacrificial altar in the basement, along with a journal of Morlaina in a hidden compartment in the wall. Returning to the group, he tells what he found, teleporting the journal away for safekeeping after confirming what it was with Pallequin. The former demon then goes downstairs to purge the altar, with Balatar following to put out the fire. The core group then thanks those that helped out and Balatar gives both Facebuster and Vanguard mystical communicators to contact him. Pallequin asks to go with them to continue hunting Followers, monsters and his impersonator. The group then leaves Vanguard to turn the two apprentices over to the authorities, drops Facebuster off in Denver and return to Brussels to reclaim their belongings.

Chapter 11

Having finished their North American assignments in record time, the ensemble goes back to the hotel in Brussels to pack their things and join Artemis in Florence. Arriving in Italy, Balatar takes his leave to set up accommodations for them in his Pocket Manor while the rest (disguised by magic to look "normal") head out to Sara's hotel room, which is located across the street from the potential target's apartment. After setting up surveillance on him and his daughter, the group settled in to wait.

Over the next few days, there had still been no movement across the street. The only thing of interest was the discovery that Balatar's old Freax teammate Enigma was not only still in Pocket Manor, but that he was also deceased. He had been taken for the battle with Der Nacht from purgatory. After the fight was over, Enigma went to the manor with the rest and, when they left, he had stayed. Once Balatar and Zwëihänder had discovered the truth about him, the two ex-teammates agreed that it would be best for Enigma to go out into the world and learn about it, but that if he ever wanted to return, the door was always open (thanks to the magical communicator spell).

Chapter 12

When the day of the gallery opening arrived, the group agreed that they would attend and see if anything happened, but if not, they would move on. Balatar cast a spell on the other three men, making them look like tuxedo-wearing versions of Moe (Damon), Larry (Küm) and Curly (Palequin). Quin agreed to play the part of the driver and keep an eye on the exterior while the other four split up inside and looked for the sisters. Once they arrived, the group split up with Sara and Küm sticking close to the photographer, Damon searching the crowd and Balatar being drawn to the crowd at the bar. He soon learned that a local hero - Fortedonna - was playing her drinking games to the enjoyment of the crowd. Balatar struck up a conversation with the heroine, learning about local action. In return, Fortedonna invited him to visit her hotel room after the party. The conversation ended quickly, however, when two local mercenaries - Cannella and Zuccherare - blew in the glass front of the gallery.

As the duo moved forward, Balatar dropped the glamour spell, revealing himself and the others in their true form, and threw up a protective barrier between the two mercs and their target. This seemed to establish a bit of a stand-off until the Hargrove sisters revealed themselves and made a play for the photographer. While Zwëi and Sara placed themselves between the sisters and their target, Balatar grabbed both the photographer and his daughter, teleporting them to Pocket Manor, which dropped the barrier. The fight then began in earnest, with Cannella and Zuccherare battling Damon and Fortedonna,

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Zwëihänder trading blows with a monstrous Maria Hargrove and Sara attempting to hold Lisa at bay, leading to Artemis being struck multiple times with electricity. Balatar returned and Pallequin arrived in time to use water and fire attacks to stop Lisa. Zwëi finally got his sword in under Maria's defenses, cleaving her in half. Realizing that their employers were no longer able to pay the rest of the bill, the mercenaries beat a hasty retreat from the fight.

Hearing sirens approaching, Balatar summons the Pocket Manor door so his partners, the unconscious Liza and the vivisected corpse of Maria could enter. Trying his best to protect the young girl from the gruesomeness of their work, Pallequin disposed of the corpse while Balatar assured the photographer that they would now be safe and returned them to their apartment. Meanwhile, Damon began the severing spell on Lisa, separating her from the effects of Der Nacht. Once complete, the group questioned her on her knowledge of both the Followers and the demon realm. She affirmed that there was a short period of time where the Followers lost the ability to increase their powers, but were able to conduct business as usual after the ritual that was performed on Damon. Once she had revealed all that she knew, the group issued the standard threats if she ever renewed her sacrificial ways. Pallequin then lifted her off the ground, Balatar opened the door in the midst of the police, and she was thrown into the windshield of the closest squad car. With the matter finished, the group retired for the night.

As Balatar sat in the privacy of his bedroom, a knock at the door revealed Sara, who wanted help applying salve to her burns. Instead, the mage used a healing spell. As the two talked, Sara shared that the experience was a bit closer to death than she was comfortable with. In the past, she believed that she had nothing to live for and therefore accepted the eventuality, but had lately been thinking about unfinished business she had back home. She told him that she would be leaving, but planned to return once her other business had been dealt with. He reminded her that all she would need to do was call and the door would open to bring her back. She then told him that she would leave in the morning, but that she would like to stay the night. At which point, Sara leaned forward and kissed the mage.... and did indeed stay the night.

Chapter 13

The next day, Sara bids goodbye to Balatar and [leaves for Detroit](#). With the door open to the outside world, cellphone and internet connections occur, sending various messages to Damon's savantphone. Checking through his texts, Flagg learns from his contact in Mexico that Brad LaVard has surfaced and that he should come immediately. After talking to Balatar about getting wireless service in the pocket dimension and rallying the troops (who take note that Artemis is gone), the portal door appears in the back of a taco stand a block away from the contact's home.

Balatar keeps watch as the other three enter Esteban's home to learn that, as a shipping clerk, he saw LaVard's name on a package and learned that it was being sent to a hacienda on the edge of town. Until a month ago, it had served as a bed and breakfast to tourists, but the recent owners closed it due to the down economy and have disappeared. Damon thanks his contact for the information and the group re-gathers for tacos and an attack plan.

They teleported to the edge of town -- a mile from the hacienda -- and watch for activity. Seeing none, they approached on foot to the gate of the property, which Pallequin quickly removed, and continued to the front door. Just as Pallequin is about to knock, Balatar rings the doorbell, which causes movement inside and Damon punches the door down. This causes Reaver to take a swing at Damon, but is quickly grabbed with magikinis and taken down by Zwëihänder. ANT also attacks from beside the door, but is quickly subdued by Pallequin, who recognizes them both from his very short time with Maelstrom on the

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

Hawk. Damon begins mixing it up with Black Arrow while Magnetron played keepaway with Zwëihänder's sword. Meanwhile, Balatar teleported to the back half of the house to divert the other four members of the Soldiers of Fortune on the job, eventually having to magically construct a stone barricade between himself and Jaeger, Sureshot, Eliminator and Tank to keep himself safe. When they realized that their intended target wasn't there and had set a trap, Damon called for an evacuation, taking Reaver and ANT with them as they went.

Once back at the Pocket Manor, Zwëihänder storms off infuriated. Damon awakens the prisoners for questioning, but when he learns that the captives won't cooperate, he asks Balatar if he can read their minds. Casting a spell that allowed him to hear their true thoughts, the questions commenced, only to learn that they didn't have any reliable leads to LaVard. Deciding to get rid of them, Balatar probes their hopes and fears, learning that they have been banished from England, which sparked his curiosity. Opening the door in England, he shoves Reaver out and watches as he vanishes from British soil. Maintaining the mental link long enough to learn that he has been returned to the Turkish prison, he turns to ANT to give her one last chance to share information. Not having anything to give, and not wanting to see her share Reaver's fate, he contacts Father Wayne at the Vatican and turns her over to them.

With the visitors gone, the troop goes to check on Zwëihänder, who is still upset over his ineffectualness in battle. In a fit of frustration, he loses control, shifting into a bestial form. he explains that, in trying to create the ultimate monster hunter, his people infused monster DNA with his own, causing him to shift in times of anger. While at first put off by the new development, Damon realizes that he is still the same man and accepts the new information. Pallequin quips that the new form "looks better" and Balatar offers to help Zwëihänder learn to control the change and enchant his sword so that it couldn't be taken away again.

Chapter 14

Damon continued to monitor his contacts using the new wi-fi and cellular system Balatar installed. In the first week, three of his 34 contacts didn't check in. By the end of the second week, seven more were off the radar. With the missing operatives scattered all over the globe, Damon began obsessing over trying to figure out what was happening, drawing the attention of Balatar. Once he was let in on what was going on, Balatar started calling contacts of his own, having the former Freax check their areas of operation for information. It didn't take long to learn that the contacts that were found were killed as sacrifices. A few moments later, Damon's phone rang. His Denver contact was on the line only long enough to cry for help.

Meanwhile, outside a small Denver dive bar, Rick Duke was unloading the Kitty Litter van when he heard a scream for help. Scaling the fire escape, he searched for where the sound came from as a front door magically appeared on the bar wall. Damon was the first one out the door and launched himself onto the fire escape, landing next to Facebuster, and crashed through the window. Once through, he finds a man standing over the body of his contact, sprawled across his kitchen table and a sacrificial dagger sticking out of his chest. The man standing over him was in the midst of getting his power from the sacrifice when Damon punched him through the chest, killing him instantly.

Facebuster and the rest entered immediately afterward and were greeted by laughter from a darkened corner. As he explained that he was surprised they had tracked him down already, three of Brad LaVard's duplicates appeared next to him. Facebuster responded by throwing a couch at the original, which passed right through him. Balatar, grabbing the sacrificial contact, teleported outside and performed mystical CPR, bringing the man back to life and asked a bystander to call for an ambulance. Zwëihänder also leaped into action, slicing one of them in half and cutting off an arm each off the other two. Pallequin

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

followed suit, beating each of them to pulp with their own arms. Four more appeared and began throwing down with Zwëi and Facebuster while Balatar and Damon tried to figure out how to take down the one that was intangible. When the magician conjured a sword that could touch him, however, LaVard and all of his duplicates disappeared.

Sharing that he had saved the contact's life, Balatar set to trying to trace LaVard while Pallequin used his fire-breathing powers to inhale the blaze set by Damon. Damon went outside to check on the contact, finding him being taken care of by a bystander who was a doctor and a set of paramedics. Getting close enough to speak to him, Damon promises to take care of the situation before drawing the attention of the doctor and walking away. Rejoining the group, he learns that Balatar has traced the teleport to Tippecanoe, Oregon and asks if Facebuster wants to see this through. He says that he needs to finish setting up for Kitty Litter, but Balatar offers to help if he wants to come along. A few mystically-moving moments later and the quintet was entering Pocket Manor again to teleport across half the country.

The door reappears on the side of a tree in central park. The group re-emerged and, having zoomed in on the location, began walking to LaVard's home. As they passed, Harry Cramden exited his home, saw them, and returned inside to lock his doors and hide. Finding LaVard's home, the group teleported into the first floor bathroom, directly beneath the villain's location, and Zwëihänder played cuisinart on the ceiling, dropping LaVard's bathtub down atop them. Turning himself intangible once again, LaVard took off running. Casting the same spell he had used on his own sword, but this time on Zwëihänder's, the swordsman took chase and, upon catching him, diced LaVard into ten separate pieces and scattering his de-solidified blood to the four winds, including through the side of Cramden's home, through him and splashing against the opposite wall.

Going upstairs, Facebuster began investigating the scene and found several useful pieces of information: a printout copy of the Germanicus instructions in English, a collection of ritual daggers, and a hidden compartment with translation materials and a copy of the instructions written in their original ancient German. Finding the printout led Damon to check the man's computer and found his website that published the instructions, plus issued a reward for any information leading to Damon's whereabouts. Tips sent to the site allowed LaVard to track down Flagg's contacts. Realizing the cops were on their way, the group gathered up the things they needed and left, returning to the Pocket Manor, and then Denver.

Realizing that they were arriving in time to see Kitty Litter's show, the quartet decided to join Facebuster in enjoying a brief reprieve. Once again casting a glamour on Pallequin and Zwëihänder, they entered the bar and began to relax. Kitty Litter's opening act was asked to go long as the second act, Monster Bashers', lead singer followed up with her boyfriend on the images caught on a bystanders phone: a man looking like Kristoffer appearing out of nowhere with an injured body. Having canvassed the area without finding anything, Linda Carlson and Dr. Doyle Conan returned to the bar.

With the two bands having switched and Monster Bashers taking the stage, Balatar quickly became annoyed by the blond man hovering in front of the band being territorial. Stepping forward to ask him to sit down, he's surprised when Doyle turns and cold-cocks him, knocking him unconscious and out the front window with one punch. Things quickly deteriorate with Ampere leaving the stage to join her teammate and boyfriend in the apparent threat of Kristoffer and his new thugs, including a demon and a blue-haired man with a giant sword. With Turbo arriving to snatch up Balatar and then return to try to stop things before they escalate more, the fight is stopped before it truly gets started, sending the two groups to their opposite corners. Verifying Balatar's identity through Alistair Munro, he tells them to leave, but Facebuster argues that he needs to pack the band's van. After Turbo mispacks it for him and Duke complains, he finds the van re-unloaded to the roof of the bar, angering Facebuster more. The only consolation is

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

Damon reaffirming that Facebuster has a place with the group if he wants it and Facebuster telling him to call him if they need him.

Once back in the Pocket Manor and returning to consciousness, Balatar goes to find a bottle of wine and discovers that the bottle containing Raith has been broken, allowing the ghost to escape custody.

Chapter 15

After learning about the Germanicus website, Damon's Belgian hacker GUI dedicated himself to trying to track down the users, reactivating the website after major edits to make it useless and tracking visitors to the site. After a ton of work, he learned of six people who were not only regular visitors to the site, but had a rise in murders within their area and were planning on meeting one another at Myrtle Beach in two days. Proving how useful he was, and a resource that would be sorely missed, GUI was invited to move into Pocket Manor for his own protection. Realizing that it was a chance to spend more time with Damon, GUI jumped at the chance.

Balatar then started working on a plan for a diversion at the beach, contacting Facebuster to see if Kitty Litter would be interested in getting some wider exposure by performing at Myrtle Beach. When the girls agree, Balatar falsifies the documents needed and transports them all to North Carolina, setting everyone up in a hotel.

That night, Damon was submitted to the gauntlet of band members (except Sherri, who was busy with Rick) showing up to his room to proposition him, turning each away in turn and eventually retiring to the bar with Küm, where the harassment (and free drinks) continued. Meanwhile, the keyboardist, Sandra, returned to Damon's room to give it another shot, only to find Hans there instead, who was willing to give her the attention she was looking for.

The next morning, everyone gathered for breakfast, where several of the band members split their time between gossiping about Hans and glaring at Damon for shooting them down. The group then set about getting ready for the concert, with Damon playing the part of the smarmy agent, Küm and a glamoured Pallequin joining Rick on bouncer duty and Balatar on the outskirts of the audience. It was Rick that spotted the five people walking away from the free concert at the appointed time, with Hans following them to a rendezvous along the shore, where they met with the sixth website visitor.

Damon and the others quickly joined Balatar and, after a bit of boastful banter, the fight began. As Tanaka tried to escape in the water, Balatar conjured a shark to drive him back to land. Facebuster made fast work of Viceroy and began tussling with Ashton while Zwëihänder sliced and diced Markus in short order. Veronica tried propositioning Damon before their fight started, but finished with Damon's fist meeting her face, knocking her unconscious. With Tanaka back on land, Balatar changed his spell to a ethereal version of Zipper from the beach party movies, running over the fish man. After seeing Pallequin in his true form, Brutus attempted to flee the scene, only to also become a victim of the mystical motorcycle, which then turned to take another run at Tanaka. Zwëihänder finished off Aston in a blaze of blade that left nothing but small chunks and a red mist before also joining in on the pile on Tanaka with Facebuster. The water-breather didn't last long under the assault of the three of them and was soon knocked unconscious as well.

After pushing the deceased into the ocean to become fish food and taking Viceroy to the hospital (Facebuster had collapsed his spleen, but Balatar had performed a small healing spell while Damon cast The Severing), The rest were taken to a secluded island to receive the warning and The Severing spell.

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

Once that work was done, the trio were dropped off at the local authorities with a tip to investigate them. The heroes then returned to help wrap up the concert and return the girls home. As they are being delivered individually to their homes, Sandra is the last one and suggests that she could stay for another night. Hans smiled and said, "OK."

Chapter 16

A few days later, while Damon was out checking on one of his contacts, a call came in for him on the manor's landline. Another of his contacts, named Freddy, was calling to let him know that something strange was going on in a small, backwater town in Arkansas and wanted him to check it out. Balatar said that they would handle it and gathered the troops to investigate, including calling in Facebuster once more. Opening the manor door against a dilapidated out-house in town square, the group stepped out, led by a Eastwood-esque Balatar in a serape and cowboy hat.

Arriving about an hour before sundown, the first thing that was obvious was how abandoned the town seemed to be, with multiple buildings boarded up, including the town hall, the saloon and the hotel. Choosing to start at the hall, Balatar magically removed the boards over the door and entered to check the place out. While it appeared as though the place was empty, something didn't feel right, but before they could investigate further, the group heard a pickup truck approaching. Balatar sent Zwëi and Pallequin inside to investigate further while he and Facebuster went to greet the new arrival. The stranger introduced himself as Butch Winters and stated that he was here to investigate rumors of "something strange going on." Balatar said that they were there for similar reasons and the trio agreed to work together with Butch and Facebuster headed over to the saloon.

Meanwhile, Zwëi continued to check out the town hall, spotting someone moving into the back room and following them in, only to not find anyone inside. While he had assumed that they had snuck out the back door, Balatar checked it to find it locked and boarded as well, but also realized that there was a counter back there that would make a good hiding place. Across the street, Butch decided to go around to the back while Facebuster took the more direct route, pulling the boards off and walking in the front door. Inside, he also saw movement, tracking someone to the second floor landing and surprising a young man. When he made a lunge at Facebuster, the strongman grabbed him up and started heading for the back door where Butch was making an entrance. As soon as he hit sunlight, however, the young man began to smoke. Butch told him to throw the man outside and shot him with a wooden bullet, paralyzing him until he was roasted by the solar rays.

Across the street, Balatar found a young woman hiding under the counter and offered her help, only for her to try and sink her fangs into him. Springing back, he tries to talk to her, not realizing that she has turned to mist to relocate. At the saloon, Facebuster and Butch start removing boards to let the sunlight in, soon to be mimicked by Pallequin and Zwëihänder at town hall. It was seeing Pallequin for the first time that made Butch question who these people really are, working with a demon. As he is ready to shoot at Pallequin, Facebuster steps in between to guarantee that they are there to help. As Balatar steps in as well, the three men see a young boy running toward them, trying to warn the visitors to leave while they can. He explains that the vampires have taken over the town and keep the residents prisoner to feed upon. Balatar tells the boy that they are here to stop the vampires and, to prove that they are up to the challenge, points out Pallequin, sending the boy away screaming.

Facebuster and Zwëihänder begin dismantling the two buildings to try and drive the vampires out of hiding, with Rick getting a little carried away and taking out a support pillar, causing the saloon's roof to collapse and sending four clouds of smoking mist fleeing. Seeing this, Balatar conjures a huge hookah to

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

trap them in until they exploded from exposure. Still wanting to talk to one of them, Balatar returned to the town hall, going to the basement, finding another vamp and trapping it in a conjured coffin. After a lengthy discussion over how vampires are not a part of the natural food chain and can't be allowed to continue, Balatar realized that discussion wasn't getting him anywhere, expanded the coffin to fighting ring size and teleported Zwëi in to dispatch the vampire. After finishing, Zwëi leaped to the roof of the hotel and began cutting his way in while Facebuster, Butch and Pallequin entered through the lobby as the sun finally set.

As the trio downstairs faced vampires no longer afraid of the sun, Zwëihänder dropped in on Axis Mundi, the queen of this horde of bloodsuckers. After she failed to seduce him, she attacked, drawing blood. He then attacked as well, surprised that after two strikes she was still alive. Seeing that this was going to be a larger problem than she was ready for, she fled through the hole in the roof as mist. While Zwëihänder tried to get Balatar to find her, he had been busy finishing off the vampires in the town hall and wasn't able to find her. Meanwhile, the trio in the lobby finished off over a half dozen vampires (between Pallequin's fire breathing, Facebuster removing a head and Butch's specialized bullets for dealing with polymorph vampires) and Zwëihänder decapitated the four remaining guards upstairs.

After the town had been cleared of bloodsuckers, Balatar cast a spell to insure the area was clear, then set out to heal the townspeople and ensure them that they were safe. Pallequin, Zwëihänder, Facebuster and Butch began burying the dead that were found in the basement of the hotel, conveying information back to Balatar so identifications could be made. Once both jobs were finished, Balatar began magically rebuilding the town, both the damage that they had done and the desolation caused by the vampires. Finally, the group worked together to create a mystical barrier around the town to protect them from future supernatural attacks before leaving.

Chapter 17

The current identity of The Shadow Lantern was called in to investigate the disappearance of a former security consultations' son. Running down leads over the next week, he managed to find the man's busted savantphone and had his own contacts track the lojack on the car. While it would periodically appear and disappear, the signal typically vanished in the same area; just south of San Francisco. Deciding to check out the area, Shadow Lantern went for a drive.

Meanwhile, at the Pocket Manor, things had slowed down, with no leads on the supernatural in weeks. Damon, getting stir crazy, had set out on his own for a while to search and establish new contacts to replace the ones that had been lost, though he and Balatar agreed to contact each other if any leads surfaced. Pallequin and Zwëihänder had taken to spontaneous sparring sessions, finding a violent way to bond with one another and leaving Balatar to fix any messes made in their wake. Pallequin had also requested GUI to set him up with a laptop so he could surf the web and re-familiarize himself with what was happening in the world since his return. This was what he was doing when Balatar entered the kitchen area, leading the ex-demon to ask about San Francisco and the supernatural activity going on there. After explaining that he had a man there, Balatar called Quadtron to find out if there were any new developments, only to learn that the hero and Zero Man had moved on to join the Crusader Force in Minneapolis, but that Enigma had taken over his spot on the Frisco team. Balatar then tried to contact the ghost, but was unable to reach him (due to Enigma's ill-advised travels to Mysteria). This caused Balatar to want to investigate and Pallequin to suggest that they get some back-up, just in case.

When Shadow Lantern arrived at the coordinates, he found the road ending in a dead end, leading into undeveloped forest land. When he crossed the threshold, though, he found himself on the outskirts of a small 1950's town. Taking on his shadow-form, he proceeded forward, making his way to the center of

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

town and a large, glowing dimensional rift. As he makes his way downtown, he sees a front door fade into existence in front of the rift. Upon opening, he sees Balatar, Butch, Facebuster, Zwëihänder and Pallequin emerge, all confused as to how they had arrived here when they had intended to arrive at the Hornet's Nest in San Francisco. As the men of the town retreat to indoors, several women came out to greet the new arrivals to Northwick Heights.

Balatar takes the lead in talking to the spokeswoman of the group, learning the history of the town and how the open portal has given the women mystical abilities over the years. Mrs. Baxter also explains that the town has been actively hidden from the outside world specifically to prevent outsiders from coming in and using the portal for their own nefarious means. The intrigued mage investigated further by casting a few spells of his own, discovering that the portal goes to an uninhabited dimension filled with magical energy that slowly leaks through the hole in space.

As the two groups were talking, a pack of teenage girls (all appearing to be around 18-19 years old) approached with an air of trouble about them. When the elder women told them to go back home, the leader of the girls got belligerent and, in the end, attacked her own mother with a blast of magical energy. This caused the men to get involved, led by a magical spell from Balatar that zapped the girls blouses open, causing them to cover their bare chests and diving for cover before resuming fighting. The Shadow Lantern followed up with his shadow form cutting off the leader's air, knocking her unconscious. The rest of the men then launched into action, doing their best to subdue the teenagers without causing them any real harm. After a few moments, however, one of the girls launched a magical bolt in the form of a dagger at Balatar that explained everything. The dagger was in the form of the sacrificial knife used by the Followers of Germanicus. Putting his magical might behind his words, Balatar informed the girls that they would be given until the count of three to surrender before they stopped going easy, supported by the drawing of Zwëihänder's sword and Pallequin's claws. The girls quickly surrendered.

Upon questioning, it is revealed that the girls had found the Germanicus website during one of their unauthorized outings to neighboring cities and had decided to build upon the power they had already gained from the portal. They had taken the man Shadow Lantern had been looking for as a sacrifice, keeping his expensive car as a joyriding souvenir. They had also intended to take over Northwick Heights by force; a mission that was thwarted by these meddling visitors. At this point, Balatar informed them of the pact they had unwittingly entered and their choices: allow him to perform the severing spell to remove their extra power, or be executed. Giving them a moment to decide under his allies' watch, he stepped aside to speak to Mrs. Baxter and Shadow Lantern. The town leader asked that they be allowed to incarcerate the girls, rather than have them taken away to stand trial and risk exposing their town. As Balatar agreed, he also asked the woman to contact him if they ever needed assistance, and that he would do the same, enchanting her bracelet with his magical communicator spell. He likewise spoke to the mysterious stranger that had aided them and, learning that they were on similar missions, enchanted his whip with the spell as well.

Chapter 18

With Damon and Artemis returning to the Manor from their individual travels, the core of the group was together once again. The evening of Sara's return, though, also brought a call from one of Damon's contacts, who had been watching the Panzer family house in the Hamptons, reporting movement. The group, remembering LaVard's ambush, feared for a repeat performance and called in Facebuster and Vanguard as backup and opened the Manor's door inside an empty house three down from their target. Going out to check out to do reconnaissance, Zwëi was given a banana hammock by Sara and a surfboard in which to hide his sword and took off down the beach.

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

After his second pass of the house without signs of movement, Balatar cast a scrying spell on the property, seeing an invitation written in blood for Damon to meet them at the Our Lady of the Isle Cemetery on Shelter Island and "finish this." After investigating the property in person and reclaiming Zwëihänder, the group moved the door once more, this time hovering in the air above the cemetery. From this vantage point, they can see that the cemetery is filled with armed soldiers and mercenaries on patrol, watching both the front gates and a large mausoleum in the middle of the grounds. Moving the door once again to the top of the mausoleum, Zwëihänder used his sword to cut a hole in the roof, allowing everyone but Artemis (who was keeping watch) and Damon (who was feeling the ill effects of being on hallowed ground) to drop down inside.

Once in the mausoleum, the group found Panzer, the Van Muller twins and two hired parahumans inside. Fighting immediately started, with Reggie and Shelly activating their magical bond to transform into a triceratops and an ice demon, with Facebuster facing off against the dinosaur and Pallequin fighting the iceman. Vanguard began trading blasts with Slagg and holding his own while Balatar quickly magic-missled Ice Blossom into unconsciousness. Zwëihänder first took a swing at Panzer and suffered for it, then was frozen in place by Ice Blossom, causing him to get frustrated and transform into his lizard-like monstrous form. When Damon did get involved in the battle, he freed Zwëihänder, who joined in fighting the dinosaur, and bound Panzer up in his mystical bonds. After Artemis announced that the cavalry was on the way, Balatar flung open the doors and blasted almost all of them into unconsciousness, with only Black Arrow of the Soldiers of Fortune still on his feet. When Facebuster threw the now-unconscious tricera-Shelly to block the doorway, though, Slagg saw the signs of defeat and made a hasty getaway, followed soon afterward by the other mercenaries outside.

With the battle completed, the questioning began with Panzer telling Damon that the only way it was going to end was with Flagg's demise. After having his link to Der Nacht severed, the Follower of Germanicus showed no remorse for his actions, leading Zwëihänder to dispatch him with several swift flashes of his blade. When Reggie was awakened and depowered, he was given the choice to renounce his ways or join Panzer, leading the male twin to empty his stomach contents onto the floor. Shelly then followed suit, but handled the situation with far more decorum and coldness than her brother. The former Followers, along with Ice Blossom, were then bound and delivered to the front steps of the Hampton police department.

Once Facebuster and Vanguard had been returned home, Balatar, Damon, Pallequin and Sara sat down to discuss Panzer's statement. Sharing information, it soon became clear that, after Pallequin had been killed (the second time), the Coven had made Damon into the new conduit between Der Nacht and the Followers of Germanicus, using his fiancée Susan as the sacrifice that sealed the pact. To support this hypothesis, Balatar cast a spell that allowed him to see the conduit, verifying that, as long as Damon remained connected to Der Nacht, the Followers would be able to sacrifice others to gain power. Believing that the same severing spell that they used on the Followers would work on him, though, Balatar began casting the spell. While it worked to sever the connection, Der Nacht fought the severing and Damon lost his hellspawn powers, becoming a normal human once more.

Now defenseless, the group was concerned about his safety, but Sara made the suggestion that, as Damon had been wielding black magic all this time, if he would be able to learn light magic to take its place. To find out, Balatar relocated the Manor door to the Himalayan Mountains and the home of his mentor, Professor Möbius. The elder mage and master of mysticism tested Damon's aura, learning his history and potential in the process, and agreed that he could be trained. Balatar asked if he would be willing to take Flagg on as a pupil, and Möbius agreed under the condition that Balatar return frequently to

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

learn how to be a teacher himself. Agreeing to the condition, the group bid their (temporary) goodbyes to Damon, leaving him to find his new path.

Chapter 19

The group were resting in the Pocket Manor when GUI entered the room. He has routed Damon's calls to the manor's phone so his contacts could still report in (and Möbius had made his disdain for interruptions quite clear). One such contact was on the phone now and GUI thought Balatar should talk to him. Donald Ving was a member of the US Marines, now stationed in Washington DC, and had met Damon in Europe. Knowing that Flagg dealt with the things that went bump in the night, he was calling to inform him that reports had been coming in for a couple of weeks about a zombie-like monster wandering across America. While his supervisors didn't take the reports seriously, Ving knew better and had worked out that the creatures path was headed for Washington. With the latest report showing it at the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, someone needed to investigate. Deciding to look into it, Balatar opened the manor door at the park entrance closest to the capitol and told the professional monster hunters to start hunting.

After a few moments, the group quickly realized that the monster hunters had actually had to do very little hunting, but they were able to figure out what direction to go when a young couple in the park began screaming. Zwëihänder bounded through the air to find the "monster," leaving Pallequin, Artemis and Balatar to catch up. When he arrived in the clearing, he saw the man enter the woods and began pursuing on foot, only to have everyone meet in the middle. When the newcomer saw the group, he ignited the thrusters built into his back, trying to fly away, leading Zwëihänder to throw Klar at him while Balatar cast a spell of magikinesis to bring the man back down. While in mid-air, he did manage to briefly catch the sword, but the magic spell placed upon it soon pulled it away from him and returned once again to Zwëi's hand.

Once back on the ground, the man explained that he was trying to get to Washington because he had friends and equipment there. Using a mystical crystal ball to probe the man's memories (what there were of them), they learned that he had been killed while working on an experiment, having accidentally summoned his killer. While the group discussed what to do about this situation, though, the man began complaining about the miniaturized person who was trying to dismantle his bionics.

As the little woman continued to terrorize the mechanical man, Balatar turned and entered the now-appeared door with Artemis close on his heels. After taking a touch of liquid courage, the mage called for GUI and asked him to find out what the building was in the crystal ball. They quickly learned that it was the Koezar Galactic Embassy, but was once the home of the DC Defenders. Switching the focus of the magical spell, Balatar was able to discern that, of the five people in his memory (Fantastic Man, Bouncer, Derby Queen, Emerald Knight and Ronald Lexington), only the armoured hero was in a location that was conducive to an interview. The duo then returned to the others, hoping that Pallequin and Zwëihänder hadn't taken matters into their own hands and dispatched the new arrivals.

Instead, they found Pallequin trying to talk to the woman while the "monster" complained about "first come, first serve." Zwëihänder stood off to the side looking confused. After sending forth a emu patronus to warn Emerald Knight of their impending arrival, Balatar and Pallequin ushered everyone into the foyer (the mage had locked off the rest of the manor to keep either of the visitors from wandering), the door reappeared in the former second home of the DC superteam, the Defender Depot.

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

When Emerald Knight laid eyes on the group, he realized that they were the people Vanguard had been working with lately, but when John Doe stepped through the door, the hero was in shock. Being the first person Knight had seen returned to life after being killed, it overwhelmed him to the point of passing out. Once revived by Pallesquin, though, Emerald Knight was able to fill in the details of John's demise, being killed by Hero's Death seven years ago. The news that so much time had passed was an equal shock to John's system, causing him to shut down. After a brief struggle between Pallesquin, who misunderstood her intentions, and Altitude, he finally relented to let her see if she could get the reanimated cyborg activated again.

While Emerald Knight was glad to learn of his old comrades second chance, he was still unsure of how he could help in his current situation. Agreeing to fetch Doe's old equipment from storage, he left the group alone to discuss the situation. After some prompting from Artemis, Balatar finally offered both of their visitors sanctuary within the Pocket Manor. While Altitude seemed hesitant, the voices within her head convinced her that it would be a good idea and, after retrieving Doe's radio, returned to the manor.

Once everyone was settled in, Pallesquin, Sara and Hans sat down to use his crystal ball again, this time focusing on Altitude. Through it, they were able to see her work for CREST, the fact that they had her institutionalized when she saw too much, and how the experience was more than her mind could handle, leaving her the shattered woman that they had encountered. Now knowing why she was how she was, they knew that, in her own way, she needed their help just as much as Doe did.

Chapter 20

Over the next couple of days, Altitude and GUI worked together to study the work done to Half-Life and doing the few repairs that he had developed since awakening. During the few times he wasn't being poked and prodded by them, he found himself dodging Zwëihänder's thrown sword as the blue-haired man practiced his aim for future use. Meanwhile, Balatar, seeking refuge from the new insanity, had returned to his flat in London. It was there that he received a call from Shadow Lantern, who was asking for the group's help in dealing with a vampire infestation he had heard about. Though Balatar was hesitant, he eventually conceded, calling Butch Winters in on the case as well. Opening the front door to the manor, he arrived to find Pallesquin and Artemis reading in the living room, greeting him with "you left us here.... with them."

After retrieving the western monster hunter, Shadow Lantern finally revealed that they needed to travel to Taulabé, Honduras. Once again relocating the door, Altitude volunteered to scout the area, with Shadow Lantern vanishing from sight as well. In her shrunken form, the wasp-sized Altitude flew around town without finding much of interest except for the tourist attraction of the Taulabé Caves, a natural cave system that spreads throughout the municipality. Finding a back alley to grow to normal size and put on normal clothing, Altitude then visits the tour entrance, but quickly finds herself struggling with the language barrier. Hearing her difficulty, Balatar casts a glamour upon himself to look like an elderly native and joins her, acting as translator for both sides.

Meanwhile, Half-Life, Pallesquin, Zwëihänder and Artemis left the manor to explore on their own, somehow managing to not draw attention to themselves in the process. Half-Life used his internal scanners to check out the maze of caves beneath the town, realizing that the area was still being explored. Having finished the discussion with Altitude, Balatar also began exploring, finding himself interested in the primary building in town: the Roman-Catholic church. Butch had also set off on his own, but was quickly joined by Altitude, as they pushed for a tour of the caves. It was when the quartet of explorers joined Balatar at the church, and as he was discovering that the blessed items weren't blessed, that Butch's

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

senses went into overdrive, realizing that the vampires they were seeking were just inside the cave entrance. Calling for an emergency teleport, Balatar brought them to the church just as the sun began to set.

A few moments later, the group was joined in the sanctuary by the church priest, who asked what they needed. While Half-Life talked to him about his “skin condition,” Butch was able to see the priest for what he truly was. Balatar magically created a Rosary with a silver cross on it, asking the priest to bless it, but having failed to avoid the crucifix, showed his true vampire form while his fellow bloodsuckers filled the rafters. It only took a matter of seconds for Butch to hit the Padre with his tomahawk, Altitude to blast him with her stinger and Half-Life to finish him off with a UV-heavy laser blast.

Meanwhile, Zwëihänder leapt into the rafters, trying to cleave some of the vampires there, while Palloquin breathed fire at the ceiling, catching one of the bloodsuckers and the roof ablaze. Balatar then launched the Sacramental bread into the air and explode, severely damaging all of the vampires up there. Transforming themselves into mist, their attempted escape was foiled by Zwëihänder using his sword and speed to create a fan vortex, pulling them down to ground level. As they returned to humanoid form, Half-Life used his backjet to launch into the air and his blaster set to a wide aperture to fry the rest of the vampires. While they were doing this, Butch, Artemis and Palloquin met the approaching townspeople, keeping them at bay through intimidation.

With all of the vampires destroyed, Balatar used his magic to extinguish the flames and repair the roof. He then contacted an ally in Vatican City to inform them about what had happened in Taulabé, stating that the people would need counselling as well as a new priest. After learning that the padre had recently returned from a missionary trip, Balatar searched the rectory, learning that he had been to San Luis Rio Colorado (in Sonora, Mexico and directly across the border from San Luis, Arizona).

With their work finished, the manor door was summoned again, enabling the group to return to their pocket headquarters. Noting that they were short a member, though, they began to question what happened to Shadow Lantern. When Balatar called his communicator, he found the man’s whip sitting on a table across the room. Spotting that a few books were missing in the same area, Balatar cast a scrying spell, discovering that Shadow Lantern had never left the manor, but instead had stayed behind to steal books and tools, including Helsing’s Degeneration Torch.

The investigation was interrupted by GUI entering the room with his tablet, telling them that they should watch a newscast from Chicago. The reporter described how Mr. Omega and a group of werewolves, arriving independently of one another, robbed a police auction. While the villains could have fought one another over the goods, they agreed to go their separate ways with what they came for rather than still be there when the heroes arrived. Intrigued by the situation, the group once again stepped through the manor door, arriving at the police auction site in the Windy City.

Balatar quickly spotted the Champion of Justice known as Turbo, and having encountered each other before, approached the hero, who was there to assist the investigation. Learning that the items that were stolen were archaic tomes on magic and that the collection had belonged to Barry Holliday (former millionaire, leader of Viper and host to the evil entity Raziel), they examined the records carefully, focusing in specifically on the one book the werewolf pack had escaped with.

Based on rumors, Balatar surmised that the book may be the Feral Book, which led Turbo to bring Howard Saunders in on the discussion. The wolf-man / media relations expert was quick to identify the book, having had it in his possession at one time, indirectly leading to him being trapped in wolf form for a

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

time. He states that he passed the book off to Dragon after the latter had helped him regain much of his human form, putting him into his present condition. This caused Turbo to call Sylvie and Andrew Zeein, who were able to confirm that the book had been studied by Dragon to help his wife overcome some of the lycanthropic limitations, but that he had passed the book off to Mo Fortanchu, to be delivered to Professor Möbius. Calculating the dates quickly, Turbo realizes that the exchange must have taken place just days before Mo had been (temporarily) killed by Mr. Omega during the time the villain was impersonating Captain Miracle. As Omega was suspected of working with Raziel, the timeline was completed, leaving the ensemble to wonder why Mr. Omega was reclaiming Holiday's library, had allowed the werewolf pack to take the Feral Book, and what they planned to do with the tome containing the knowledge of werewolf magic.

Chapter 21

After Shadow Lantern's theft, Balatar needed to clear out the manor in order to do an inventory. Setting up shop in the old mausoleum in Brussels that was formerly used by Guy Duménil, the rest of the group used portable generators and supplies to get by. This also gave GUI the chance to return to his old apartment, bouncing between the two locations to tend to their needs. Two days after being dropped off, he returned to the mausoleum with news of a shadow demon in Moscow. Figuring that this was worth interrupting the inventory, Palleguin called Balatar and filled him in, leading the mage to deduce that one of the shadow creatures from the Underdark had returned. After much discussion on how to investigate, Balatar opened a magical portal, taking the group to the Russian contact's apartment.

Teleporting into downtown Moscow, Balatar casts a translation spell in order to communicate with the startled informant before shooing the entire group into his small apartment. The elderly gentleman shows the group his journal, which had been tracking the shadow beast's appearances over the city, as well as underground newspaper clippings on the creature. Assuring the man that they would investigate, Balatar summoned the door to the manor for the group to leave. As Half-Life was exiting, though, his internal communication system picked up a military broadcast. Once inside the manor foyer, he repeated the message, which was then mystically translated into a call for assistance at a storage facility in Syberia. While the FSB were on site, military backup was needed. While Half-Life verbally sparred with the person on the radio, claiming that Ghost Team Six was in route, GUI fed the coordinates to Balatar, learning that the facility was in the eastern part of Siberia, in the hills to the north-central of Kazakhstan.

When the door re-opened, they found themselves looking out into a battlezone. As IOGWP agents fought Russian soldiers, Northwind had imprisoned three FSB supers in ice while Mega-Ray battled the shadow beast in the sky. Mole was working on prying open the doors to the facility while IOGWP technicians waited to get inside. Diamond and Ram were taking out armored vehicles while Twister used his control over the fourth dimension to kill soldiers from a distance. The group quickly got to work, with Mole being the first to fall to the blunt side of Zwëihänder's sword. Half-Life started blasting Diamond from a distance while Palleguin started trading blows with Ram. When Zwëihänder failed to hit Northwind, his bestial side came out, shaking both allies and enemies alike.

Having managed to get the door open before being knocked unconscious, the technicians stormed the building, with Altitude close behind them, allowing her to see the Hreudi technology inside, sending her scientific mind reeling and hands grabbing for the alien blasters. Balatar used his magic blast to blow the outer area of the facility to kingdom come, not knowing that Altitude was inside, blowing his female teammate out and damaging her new toys. Resilient managed to free himself, Stalin and Zaubijstvo before engaging Diamond, but Half-Life used his flamethrower to take down Northwind before either Zwëihänder or Zaubijstvo could act on her, driving both into a frenzy. With Resilient using Diamond as a

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

club, he knocked out Ram before chucking him into Mega-Ray, with Stalin, Mamuna and Altitude joining in the Diamond-based volleyball game. Meanwhile, Balatar and Zwëihänder were working on ferreting out Twister before he could get away. With all of their technicians dead, more than half of their foot soldiers down and half their metas unconscious, the IOGWP agents chose to surrender rather than continue the losing battle, but when Twister became three-dimensional, Balatar struck with a magical spell that caused the villain to apparently disintegrate

With the IOGWP operatives in custody, Half-Life began speaking to Diamond, asking for repentance. When the terrorist threatened him, both he and Altitude blasted him, finally knocking him unconscious. Preparing to deliver a death blow, Half-Life was stopped by Stalin, who thanked the group for their assistance but insisted that they leave, trying to protect the prisoners. Realizing that they were surrounded by the FSB agents and a large contingent of Russian soldiers, the group chose to leave. As they entered the manor door, they saw the shadow beast transform into a blonde woman in the uniform of the FSB.

Chapter 22

Having finally completed the inventory of Pocket Manor, Balatar had returned to pick up the others at Brussels' Cemetery of Haren. As they were gathering their things, a mystical portal opened, allowing a man from Küm's past to arrive. Zwëihänder identified him as the Klug (Wise One) of Shin-Ra, his home dimensions spiritual and political leader. Klug informed Küm that he was once again needed as the monster-slayer and, after verifying that it was the leader's intention to banish him once more if he succeeded, he was still willing to do his duty to his people. When Altitude and Half-Life began talking about wanting to go with to help, however, the conversation stops being polite... and starts getting real.

After calling Half-Life a halfling (half-man, half-machine) and telling Altitude to learn her place as a woman, the two attacked. While the rest of the group settled back to enjoy the show (Balatar conjuring a lawn chair for himself and lemonade for the spectators to share) Half-Life tried to close the magical portal with technology and Altitude grew to her full height. After Klug magically disintegrated Altitude's suit, believing that it would shrink her back down to size, both of them were surprised when she remained a sixty foot woman in her bra and panties. She retaliated by kicking at him, forcing him to change his magical focus into a protective spell and allowing the portal to close. The fight ended as quickly as it started, however, leading the Klug to return his focus to Küm. When asked if he was ready to go, Küm stated that there was one condition; his compatriots would come with. When the Klug refused to let outsiders come along, though, Küm rejected the elder's request. Klug then re-opened the portal and, as he left, told Küm that if he refused to come to the monsters, then the monsters may need to come to him.

With the intruder gone, the group began discussing what had transpired. Altitude seemed nonplussed by her size-changing ability, even though her suit was now gone, but still complained that she wanted it back. The others contemplated what the Klug had meant by his parting statement and, when Half-Life stated that he would view any actions as a terrorist attack, the portal re-opened once again, releasing four man-sized, four-limbed cockroach-like creatures, known to Küm as Annihilations.

As battle began anew, things were tough for the group. The creatures were fast, and when they were hit, their carapaces were tough to penetrate. Additionally, the electricity they could project through their antennae played havoc with Half-Life's systems. The tide began to turn however, when Altitude, once again at her full height, picked up one of the Annihilations and pulled his antennae off. Balatar followed up with a magic blast and Zwëihänder lept through the air and played Cuisinart with the parts that were exposed, sending puke-green insides that smelled like month-old urine spraying. This had a very

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

negative effect on Artemis' stomach. Fortunately, Balatar was able to conjure a bucket for her. Meanwhile, Pallesquin charged forward and, with a powerful swing of his claws, separated another Annihilation's head from his shoulders. Catching his prize as it tumbled through the air, he once again said his tagline with a laugh. After taking several blasts, Half-Life was able to reply in kind to a third monster, heating its insides with a laser blast to the point of popping like a zit; its head also tumbling through the air and landing at the feet of Artemis, sending her back to the bucket. With everyone focusing on the last Annihilation, Altitude dealt the knock-out blow, bringing the heel of her giant foot down on it like the big bug it was.

With the fight over, the group finished getting their stuff inside the manor and, before going in themselves, Half-Life suggested that Küm carve a note of warning to Klug on the remains of the first Annihilation to fall. Altitude also added that she wanted her costume back. Balatar used the magical paths he gleaned from the Klug's exit, delivering the message. He then asked if Pallesquin and Küm wanted to keep their souvenirs, bronzing the two heads for them. Learning that Altitude didn't need the Annihilation alive to examine, Pallesquin snapped its neck before it was taken into the manor. As they all entered, Küm questioned if there was more of a connection between the Klug and the monsters than anyone ever knew.

Half-Life and Altitude went into her makeshift lab to do repairs on his systems, with Küm going along to watch. Once he was back to full working order, he wanted to return the favor and examine how she still had her powers without her suit. Taking a blood sample, it appeared normal, but when she learned that no nanotechnology was present, she became bothered. They began running tests while she shifted her mass, also learning that she still had her wings, apparently now part of her body. Wondering what other abilities she still had, Half-Life instructed her to try and use her stinger, in spite of its absence, and was rewarded by a blast of unknown origin to the chest.

The discharge alerted Balatar, who investigated the situation, having her size change again for him. GUI also returned from his apartment, where he was getting a few final supplies, and brought what was left of Altitude's costume in from where it was rematerialized outside. With a lack of knowledge about the technology involved, though, Klug's reconstruction of the suit was less than useless. Balatar, with a smirk, asked Altitude and Half-Life if they could get the issue resolved before he had to ferry them off to their next destination. He then left them to their fruitless scientific investigations, believing that she had somehow absorbed the abilities of her suit without knowing it.

Balatar then joined Sara in the main room, where she was feeling melancholy over her ineffectiveness and nausea, once again thinking that she was out of her depth. Having been thinking about her concerns from before, Balatar asked if she would be interested in him casting some spells on her arrows to make them more powerful in battle; an offer she readily accepted. The two then adjourned to do some magic.

Chapter 23

Balatar had spent a good portion of the day with his mentor, learning how to teach others about magic and how to use it. While he was very good at casting spells and the like, he was finding the talent for dealing with a lack of knowledge elusive. By his standards, if you didn't know it or understand it, you should get out of the way, and Mobius trying to get him to see from another perspective seemed like a waste of time. As such, when his magical communicator activated, his frustration level rose. Fighting the urge to fling it into the nearby koi pond, he answered, finding Artemis on the other end. She was calling him home because GUI was upset, struggling with his English. All she could make out was Followers of Germanicus. Agreeing he would return, he stopped by the room of his former traveling companion, wanting to see if he would be interested in coming along. Before Balatar could ask, though, Mobius

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

stopped him, stating that Damon Flagg was struggling with learning a new way of magic and shouldn't go out to face the enemy. Begrudgingly, Balatar summoned the door to Pocket Manor and stepped through.

Once he had entered the main living area of the house, he was greeted by Sara and the frustrated computer specialist, who has making so much noise at this point to draw the attention of the rest of the residents. Trying to calm him down, Balatar spoke with him in his native French and learned that the man was blaming himself for not paying attention to the Follower boards as much as he should. He had learned that a group of them had planned to meet together; a situation that had the markings of being a bad thing. Having traced their most recent IP addresses to Empire City, he was able to narrow down their location and state that they were planning on meeting at a recently damaged storage facility on the border of the warehouse and garment districts. He also told them that whatever they were planning was scheduled to begin at dusk.

Balatar quickly adjusted the door to open beside a local gas station and stepped out as the sun was dipping below the horizon. Stepping inside, he asked the cashier if there was any recent parahuman activity in the area and was told of the warehouses general location (the same one that had been damaged just days before when the Champions of Justice foiled Puppeteer's attempts to sell ninja robots to the Shotuka Clan). Purchasing a bag of pixie sticks, he returned to the manor, offered the others some candy, and once again moved the door. Once opened again, Altitude shrunk down and took to the sky, spotting the damaged warehouse with ease. Providing the others with directions, she set out to get a closer look.

As she entered through the crumbled corner of the building and swooped past the overturned forklift, she spotted four people (two men, two women) surrounding a young girl and her mother. The older of the two attacking women drew a long-ornate knife, grabbing the daughter while chanting something in a foreign language. Teleporting over, the rest of the group was also witness to this and, with a few mumbled words of his own, Balatar teleported the two victims to the garment building behind them. He was also concentrating on the spell Van Mueller was trying to cast -- one in which a new conduit of power would be created between Der Nacht and the Followers -- and the one she was actually saying, which were two different things. Having a feeling as though he knew them, Half-Life rocketed to the building to protect them while Zwëihänder charged in for the kill, but missed. Altitude, in her shrunken form, had no such problem, however, as she flew into their midst, pirouetting in mid-air with her stinger blaster singing, dropping all four of the former followers into puddles of their own viscera.

With her last, dying breath, Shelly completed the spell she was casting, and with the blood all around them, a portal began to open in the sky. Balatar told Palloquin what they were attempting, as well as what she had succeeded in doing, and knowing where she was trying to connect with, feared for the worse. Instead of demons from Der Nacht, however, seven humans fell out of the spacial anomaly, and after being told where they were by Balatar, who was trying to broker peace, the members of ACID smiled at their return to this earth. Showing no signs of being willing to stand down, the battle between the two groups began in earnest.

After apologizing to the girl he was sure was his daughter and her mother, Half-Life lept from the building, firing an EMP pulse on his way down that fried Professor Polarity's systems. While a recently-distracted Altitude traded blasts with Faultline, Artemis fired one of her new magic arrows at Shortstop, and while having missed, it circled back on its own until connecting with the diminutive baseman. Balatar first fired a blast of flame at Blizzard and, finding that flames didn't have the expected effect, turned his attention to Stormlord with far more success. Palloquin set his sights on Psi-Demon, only to be telekinetically tossed into the air. Zwëihänder bounced from target to target, seemingly unable to make up his mind who was

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

ticking him off more, and Half-Life moved over to the evil-incarnate Samhain and began trading blows. With Stormlord and Shortstop unconscious and the numbers finally falling in their favor, Balatar noticed that the dimensional vortex was still open and, manipulating the magics to reverse its polarity, sucked the villains back to their own dimension before shutting the portal behind them.

With the fighting at an end, Half-Life searched for the two victims only to realize that they had escaped into the garment building and the police were about to arrive. Asking the still-distracted Altitude to deliver a note, he and the rest of the group stepped back through the manor's door, but remained in place for him to watch through the peephole. Going inside, Altitude was able to spot the two women just before they exited the building to meet up with the cops, stepping out in front of them and handing Half-Life's note before shrinking down out of sight and joining the others. As the two women exited the building, however, Half-Life saw no sign of the note with them.

Waiting for the police to finish took hours, but once the coast was clear, he exited the manor once again and entered the building to find the note right where the mother had dropped it. Returning once again to the manor, he began describing the two women to GUI, hoping that the hacker could run facial recognition to find out who they were. Meanwhile, though, Altitude was struggling with problems of her own, finally sharing that something else had apparently come through the portal and had taken up residence in her head. Calling itself Princess, she was apparently lost and confused, believing that she was supposed to have been looking for the Champions of Justice. Somehow connected to Burt Remington, the entity was almost as confused and frustrated as Altitude. Realizing that, with them still being in Empire City, there was a very simple way to contact a Champion, Balatar changed his clothes as he stepped through the door into a new, more heroic costume and then cast a spell into the sky like a spotlight with Morning Star's symbol in the middle of it.

Chapter 24, Part 1

Morning Star was flying over his city, dwelling on the events from just a few days ago: being mind controlled, fighting his commands by focusing on his own anger with Fury, and the efforts that his teammates had to make to reel him in before he did something that he would regret. The feelings were amplified when he realized that a spotlight with his symbol was shining from the very location that the battle started., where he found Balatar and his traveling companions waiting. he was able to piecemeal the group from other people's encounters: Pallequin from his days with the Hawk, the blue-haired, blond-eyed swordsman from Ampere and Megaman's encounter in Denver, and the insta-masked female archer reminded him of someone, though he couldn't place who. The man in the purple and blue, given who he was hanging out with and the magic spotlight, made Morning Star believe he was the one that Megaman had clobbered because the doctor thought he was Kristoffer. But the other two - the cyborg that looked like death warmed over and was looking froggy and the woman standing separate from the rest talking to herself -- weren't familiar.

Morning Star greeted Pallequin first upon landing, remarking on how it was good to see him looking like his old self. After explaining how the man known as Avatar stole his identity and hearing about his actions, the reformed demon seemed more devoted than ever to finding the imposter, and Morning Star offered to keep him in the loop. The Champion of Justice then turned his attention to Balatar, confirming his belief that the man was from the encounter in Denver, as well as helped Eidolon retrieve Liberty Station from the Underdark. While the connection with the evil mage bothered both men, neither could explain it, leading to the reason they had summoned him. Pointing to Altitude, Balatar stated that she had picked up an "imaginary friend" who claimed to come from Freiezeit. Recognizing the name of the Burt

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

Remington symbiote's home dimension, Morning Star's interest was peaked. (Follow this link for the actual [Play-By-Post](#).)

Part 2

With all eyes turning to Altitude, the woman introduced herself to Morning Star, and then proceeded to explain who he was, apparently to herself. Quickly realizing that, if there really was another being inside the woman's head, then having a master mentalist's help would be a good thing and called T'Zianthra at the Koezar Embassy. With her on the way, the puzzled group discussed the situation further, with Half-Life and Altitude vehemently pointing out that they were not friends. By the time Prophecy arrived on the scene, tensions were starting to rise, only to surprise everyone by confirming that there was, indeed, two consciousnesses in the woman. Establishing a mental link with all of the parties present, Princess was finally able to speak for herself, explaining that she was the daughter of the prince who had come to earth many years ago and shared the form of Burt Remington Jr. Prophecy also looked into Lydia's past, realizing the pain that she had gone through over the years and apologized because, while she could remove the pain of the past, it would change who she was, which Altitude understood.

After discussing the various technicalities and differences of the situation, Morning Star and Prophecy decide to call in the closest thing that they have to a specialist on the subject of Freiezeit residents, leading Altitude to wonder how many of them there were to warrant a specialist. In answer, Morning Star called in Burt Remington Jr., who reluctantly agreed to join them. As he made arrangements for transport with Libby, Prophecy realized that Balatar had reached a conclusion about Altitude that he had neglected to share: Lydia Monroe wasn't human, she was (at least part) pixie. While she couldn't believe it, Half-Life surmised that the physical differences between humans and pixies could have caused the differences in the bonding process.

Realizing that the group could draw unwanted attention where they were, Balatar magically teleported them to a nearby rooftop, thus leaving Burt to look for them when he arrived on the street. Sensing his already high levels of frustration, though, Prophecy telekinetically lifted him to join them. Princess' emotional reaction to his arrival triggers Half-Life to mimic her, leaving Burt with the misimpression that the Freiezeit was in him. Realizing her true home and being tapped into the mental link, he was able to finally speak with the Princess, feeling a bit of parental connection to his symbiote's daughter and her host.

Discussion soon turned to ways of removing the entity from Altitude, with Half-Life suggesting temporarily killing her to release Princess to go home. This suggestion was met by a resounding refusal by Remington, however, as he firmly stated that heroes don't kill, and especially not their teammates. Besides, it would be no guarantee that it would send her back. From personal experience, Burt knew that the entity could just as easily jump to another host. With that and the realization that, because it is far from being a "normal" bonding, it's impossible to tell what would happen (up to and including the Princess' death), the idea was ruled out and Altitude reluctantly began to accept that she could be bonded to the entity for a while. The Princess didn't take the discussion nearly as well, though, revealing through her reactions and crying for her missing brother, that she was around ten years old. Altitude then moaned that she never wanted kids.

As Prophecy got ready to leave, Half-Life asked her about when she said she could take away the pain, wanting to know if there was anything she could do for him. Approaching the cyborg corpse, she gently laid hands on him, establishing a physical connection, and entered his mind. Increasing his blood-flow by stimulating the proper areas of his brain, color returned to his skin and he was able to feel her touch. By

RETRIBUTION

Game Master: Jim Caswell

probing his memory, she found that his amnesia was caused by brain damage, but she was able to recover three memories from before the loss: walking through Rock Creek Park, holding hands with the woman that had been kidnapped earlier that day, before being shipped overseas; looking at a photo of his newborn baby girl; and being told by his commanding officer that, if he didn't volunteer for the experimental program, he would be court-martialed and his family would pay the price. Having done all that she could, T'Zianthra broke the contact, leaving Half-Life on his knees with tears in his eyes, grateful for the gift. When he could, he stood, apologized to Lydia for the things that he had said, and excused himself due to exhaustion.

As Prophecy lifted herself into the air, Burt asked that she get him out of there as well, his discomfort in dealing with Freiezeit matters apparent. The two of them left as Artemis took the still-in-shock Altitude to get Princess her first taste of ice cream. Morning Star stopped Pallesquin from following Half-Life and Zwëihänder, telling him that some old friends were on their way to say high. Moments later, Larry Carter and Howard Saunders arrived with Captain Miracle, who was handed a spare communicator to give the former Hawk as part of the annex. Reunited, the four men agreed to travel back to Chicago to revisit Moe's Tavern, like old times. With a smile, Pallesquin told Balatar that he would call for a ride later and left for his old stomping ground. This left the two leaders together. As Morning Star lifted into the air, he recommended that the mage learn why he looked so much like Kristoffer before flying off.

Transitional Epilogue

The next morning, both Half-Life and Altitude stated their desire to leave the manor to seek out some answers. After the door was once again opened in Empire City to release the cyborg zombie, Sara stated that she wanted to go with Altitude, her motherly instincts clearly activated for both the lost Princess and her unwilling host. As the two of them were dropped off near Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, Pallesquin also stated his desire to go on walk-about, taking Küm with him to introduce the extra-dimensional traveler to the world he is now defending. With all of the others gone, GUI decided that it was time for him to return to Brussels and resume what passed for his life there, though he accepted one of Balatar's mystic communicators so he could maintain contact and continue his cyber-hunting for the mage. Once the hacker's equipment (save for the mystic-connectors that allowed the equipment to access the Internet from Elsewhere) was moved back to the real world, Balatar again found the manor empty and, suspending it in its limbo, headed back to Tibet to begin his training as an educator of Magic.

The adventure continues in the [B.A.D.A.S.S.](#) Write-ups