

We make our way to the tavern Atapa recommended—The Bad Habit. Formerly an abbey, it has been converted to a tavern and inn with a drunken nun for their logo.

As we're headed there, we are taking in this strange subterranean world. There's a strange orange glow, but it's fabricated by a series of lamps in the ceilings of this vaulted cave. They're mimicking the day cycle with these lights, Ego pieces together.

In spite of the majesty sound of "The Dao Empire", the caverns are pretty simple. Most dwellings are hewn into the rocks. Lots of tiny caves. Few standing buildings—the Empress's castle being one. The castle is pretty magnificent. Gold highlights; very ornate. But most of the rest of the city is pretty mundane. Literally down to earth, if you will.

The Empire itself also doesn't take that much space. Vaulted ceilings are 200ft, but looking around the empire, we can see the end of it. It might only be 3 miles wide at most.

They seem to have done a good job of protecting from any disasters, in spite of being a city beneath lava. Though in the hall coming in, there was a sluice where lava could drain were any to come in that way.

The population is predominantly salamander with magfolk sprinkled in. No one is giving us particularly weird looks, but they're noticing, and merchants are eager to flash their wares, though we're not really in that district.

Hrothulf is keeping his eye out for glassteel, as he promised Idunn. According to her it's been hard to come by these past months. It's been used widely down here. The overhead lights, decorated flooring for a dance ceiling, lamps. But the export of it must have dried up.

We make our way through one of the passage ways, and Izar and Hrothulf double over with a groan. They don't feel too good. Blue glitter covers their bodies, there's a quick flash of light, and they're gone and Darnit is here.

We tell Darnit what just happened. He's been experimenting. It sounds like he intended to arrive, but is surprised the others disappeared. But something like this happened to coke bottles once, so he's hopeful they're back at HQ. Darnit wants our DNA. For science. Ego is very tentative, but eventually offers hair, and gives some. Dorinda also definitely doesn't like this (and doesn't have hair). She investigates Darnit to make sure he's actually Darnit. He pulls out the feather to summon Nilchi to prove himself. But it doesn't work down here. He does have a familiar feather anyway. But Dorinda wants to know the purpose of all this before she gives her...does she even have DNA?! Well, she's bio-synthetic and has unique nanite signature, so. Dorinda asks what Ego thinks. Ego was clearly very uncomfortable at first. She likes the idea of being able to do new things with science, and she doesn't think these guys are organized enough to do anything too controlling, but on the other hand, it's a bit personal. Darnit explains the process a bit more, with samples held in briefcases in a tent where the blue veil occurs. She

still wants to be convinced Darnit is Darnit though, so she has him do some of his dwarf combat maneuvers. He pulls out Barkamena and Oshuut, starts the ice and fire, throws Barkamena way out and before it hits the ground, calls it bad to him.

Dorinda is convinced. Darnit's starting to wonder if he shouldn't have trusted those scientists, given the responses. He's been working with them for several weeks though, he feels like he's sussed them out pretty well, and he sees the technology's potential. They aren't necessarily willing to share the technology, but Darnit thinks we'll get there. So far they can send and receive things that have been at the tent before, though they haven't yet been able to retrieve something that hasn't ever been at the tent. Dorinda still would rather wait for now, but if Izar and Hrothulf are on board she'll go with the group.

We get to the Bad Habit. We see 96% of this building is still the Abbey. They've basically put up a sign and a bar with a bunch of taps. But otherwise they've maintained this Abbey of the Sisters of the Perpetual Flame. We enter and there are a bunch of tables, chairs, bench seating that used to be pews in a parliamentary-style seating. Straight ahead at the front of the chapel is an incredibly ornate blaze of fire carved into the wall out of which the Abbey has been hewn. It is not very busy today. From the look of the artwork, Darnit can tell he's looking at something that is at least 1000 years old. We notice that at the base of the flame is an image of Gliton, god of fire and chaos. He is in one of his classic poses with one hand up above his head, holding the flame. In this, a modern carving has overtaken the original, and in his second hand he's holding a mug of ale.

We see wrinkly leather hands with huge knobby knuckles reaching up to pull taps of beer from being the bar. "Sit where you like," an incredibly old woman Salamander in a habit says to us as she takes beers to a table. "We have guests!" A young, spry salamander comes out and he welcomes us and helps us to a seat. Dorinda takes us to the bar stools nearest Gliton's carving, hoping people aren't avoiding Gliton's right hand for any reason.

Coal (the young salamander) tells us the specials and says to look at the taps, which are ever-changing. Coal runs off to take another table's order (they all order the special).

Darnit notices the one arm of Gliton has been replastered over many times. Everything else has been left intact, and even kept up well.

There are few options on the menu, almost all a variation on a roast meat and tuber. The special is roasted meat with waffles. It's been a while since Darnit's had a hearty meal, so he's looking forward to this. We all order the special with drinks. Coal tells Ego about an imperial ale that has a high alcohol content, to the point they light the suds on fire when they serve it. It's called Blaze of Glory. Ego and Darnit are excited to go with that. Dorinda asks for water.

We chat up the bartender.

Ego asks about the carving.

The bartender (Agnus) is about to dismiss us entirely, but when she hears “Gliton”, she’s like, “What did you say? What do you know of Gliton?”

Ego tells of how we seek the gods and their freedom.

She goes into a tale she’s clearly rehearsed, about joining the Sisters of the Eternal Flame to keep the memory of Gliton, the flame, who brings the change of place. She hates this place but it’s the only way to keep the Abbey from being lost. This is the only way to keep the memory until the time comes when she can earn enough to buy it outright and reinstate it.

She slides a petition over to sign. We now realize there are silver canisters all over the place looking for donations to restore the Abbey. The ones on the bar mention restoring the abbey also, but have TIPS taped over too. She’s hoping with enough signatures the empire will give her a more reasonable price. Currently they’re asking 300k credits. She’s pulled together 50k in 70 years.

Dorinda asks what the original left arm of Gliton was or was holding, and are there others of her order that she knows of. On the other side of town they have an orphanage. There are seven of them total who remain faithful to Gliton. They sometimes come over to help out but mostly run the orphanage.

We ask whether there are other temples to Gliton. She hasn’t been topside this century, but she thinks there should be, on every solid land.

Gliton is ever-changing, so they symbolize that by changing the left arm. In the beginning, she’s heard tell, it was crafted so he would hold a chalice of sacramental wine. The current cup is at least an homage to that. But it changes every 70 years, 90 years or whatever, because he is a god of many changing interests. It’s been a sword, an outstretched welcoming hand, a shovel. Gliton is all things to all people. She has to get back to work, but says it was a pleasure meeting us in this filthy hold of sacrilege. She thinks we’ll like the special.

Darnit notices a brutish, large salamander in the corner that hasn’t stopped staring at us, in a trying-to-put-the-pieces-together sort of way. The other patrons at the bar have no food, just a pint in front of them, and none have consumed anything from those pints. They’re just sitting there, huddled together in quiet conversation. At a back table some people are playing a card game.

Everyone’s attention is drawn to the kitchen as there’s a scream, coinciding with a random flash of blue light! Izar stumbles out, “I—What?—I.”

Ego: Where’s our fiery prince? Is he ok?

“Yeah... I don’t know we were both throwing up violently for a while so we were separated a bit. I’m sure he’ll be fine. He’ll find his way. He always does.”

Izar sits at the bar and orders a Mai Tai. He says he’ll set it on fire himself (and he does).

Izar subtly notes the people at the bar. She wonders whether they’re scared or paranoid, but they seem to be one or both. Izar strikes up a conversation. He’s a bit intimidating. The guy there is sweating, pulls out a gun and puts it at Izar’s head, “Don’t move, I don’t want to do this!”

The others pull out guns themselves and yell, "Alright everyone be cool we're robbing the place!"

(We roll for initiative)

Dorinda steps aside, throws a flash grenade in the middle of these guys and warns her companions to look away.

The gun goes off. There is a flash of light from the flashbang that illuminates, and Izar sees a muzzle flare right in front of his face blast. Izar falls to the ground holding his face with both hands, and he is still on the ground.

When Ego opens her eyes she sees Izar lying prostrate on the ground. Breathing at least. Ego takes a metal contraption out of her cloak and says "Everyone be cool," as she lays it on the bar. When she sets it down, some gears turn as it points down the bar, and sudden shoots forth a cone of flame. The robbers dodge as best they can, but get hit by flame. The one who shot Izar drops his gun.

Izar takes his hands away from his face and can't see anything. But he's definitely still alive. He doesn't feel a wound, or anything, on his face. No pain, just blindness. But he knows this was very much a real gunpowder-and-bullets gun. Is he dead? Izar feels the flames above. Is he in hell? He *blinks* to the ethereal realm.

Two over the bar are looking at each other figuring what to do next.

Darnit grabs the dropped gun, pommels over the bar to the two who are looking at each other, pumps the shotgun, and says, "Go ahead and drop 'em now!" He realizes it isn't loaded when he pumps it, but intimidates like it is.

The guy with a shotgun drops it.

The other runs out the kitchen.

The salamander in the kitchen comes out saying, "You're ruining everything!" as the guy pushes past her saying, "Sorry Aggie!"

A Salamander in the corner is holding a chair up in front of himself to protect himself. The ones playing cards ran out. The one who shot Izar sees Izar isn't there and is crying hysterically, "What have I done?! It wasn't supposed to go like this."

Dorinda quick draws her dagger and puts it to the throat of the robber with the last gun. "Drop your weapon!" He's sobbing and pleading for his life, and Dorinda takes the gun. Dorinda, suddenly unequipped how to deal with idiots: "Does anyone want to give me a hand here."

Ego calls to Agnus, "Is that one good and gone? He isn't coming back, right?"

"I don't know, it all happened so fast."

Ego realizes she's suspect. Agnus realizes Ego thinks the same and gives a pitiful look, like, "Don't." and glances over to the other patrons. Ego turns to pick up the guns off the ground, like she has a more pressing matter than Agnus, and Agnus uses the opportunity to say, "Get out of here who knows what'll happen next!"

The patrons are terrified, looking at us, and we indicate that they should get out. They leave quickly.

Darnit looks exasperated at Agnus like, What's going on? I thought we were going to have a fight.

Agnus: "It was just bad timing. Though y'all were religious types. I didn't see this coming."

Ego: "What were you hoping for?"

"A bit of an insurance payout, honestly."

Darnit: "I thought *you* were a religious type."

"Desperate times. Can these boys go? You know you've done more damage than any of them have."

Dorinda sheaths her dagger.

Agnus tugs at the boys and tells them to just go. If they need to, they can catch their breaths in the kitchen, then they should go. She says she's going to talk to us fine folk.