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Axis Adventures **Side Quests for 13th Age** **Adventurer Tier**

This article is to provide some side quests for you when your players are exploring the city of Axis in the Dragon Empire, perhaps but not necessarily after or during the Crown of Axis adventure by Pelgrane Press. They could be expanded into longer quests, and in 13th Age style, should incorporate Icon relationships, One Unique Things, and otherwise build on player input. The adventures here could be moved to another location or setting at your whim.

A Further Note on the City

This material builds upon what is presented in 13 True Ways and repetition will be kept to a minimum.

Axis is the capital city of the Dragon Empire, built in a dormant volcano along the coast of the Midland Sea. All of those nouns are important to how you present the city to your players! Remember to reference towering walls of natural stone casting shadows over the neighborhood at dawn or dusk (depending on where in the city they happen to be). A passing dragon should catch the PC's attention and awe any lower level character, and certainly npc visitors will be taken aback, perhaps ducking for cover to the amusement of locals. The harbors of the capital are bustling, and provide the markets with exotic goods; Glitterhagen may be a center of commerce and industry, but consider how much of their goods are sent here to tempt the Emperor's courtiers. At any given moment in your Dragon Empire, there is likely a few armies amassing on the frontiers, and the legions and mercenary companies of the city are constantly mustering, recruiting, equipping, shipping in, shipping out, conscripting, press-ganging, or hiring adventurers for errands their frazzled quartermasters can't find spare foot soldiers to handle. Tourists, merchants, courtiers, emissaries, petitioners, and other seekers of fortune and glory stream to the city in droves. Lastly, this is a city–not everyone the PCs meet needs to be the high and mighty, there are humble merchants and desperate peasants and farmers from the outskirts in town just to sell their potatoes.

Arrival

Point 1: Drawing them in

If, after looking at the players Icons & Uniques, you need a way to bring the players to the city, consider the following:

Through means dubious or heroic, such as clearing out goblins infesting the hills near their village, the PCs come into possession of crates full of vibrant purple cloth. The crates are marked with "Glittergrown Importers", and while they might get a few crowns in the local black market, returning them to the trading guild will likely fetch a considerable sum more. Glittergrown Importers, any merchant will tell you, is a trading company that primarily runs out of the Docks district of Axis, owning a large warehouse and operating stalls in the upscale markets. The boxes the PCs found were ordered to decorate the Crown of Axis Amphitheater, which is having it's grand re-opening this month.

Or, the PCs are being sent to accompany a friend from the local village (particularly one that might tie into a PC background) on his or her trip to start a new career as a gladiator, acolyte, scholar, or other profession in Axis. Bringing along their life savings, they promise their friends a night of revelry in the big city to thank them for the time.

Point 2: Setting the scene

Upon arrival, remember to mention the the sights of people from all over the Empire and the smells of the sea as the players either set foot on the docks or pass between the towering spires that form natural gates into the stronghold of the Empire. As they get their bearings, assail them with beggars, pick-pockets, shake-downs from the guards, and pushy merchants selling overpriced pastries. Give a chance for the players to relate how their characters react, and decide if you need to give them a friendly face or a chance to blow off some steam.

A wrong turn into a dead-end alley could lead to a confrontation with a gang of thieves– such as the Dead Flowers from Crown of Axis, or human thugs from the core rule book. Flavor combat with ties to an icon the PCs have a poor relationship with, and remember, fights are probably not to the death. Thieves don't usually want to be hunted as murderers, and players don't want to have to explain bodies on their first day in town. While your Dragon Empire may be darker, with cultists or sadistic muggers happy to leave the players bleeding out, attackers are most likely going to flee once a few of them become staggered.

Conversely, if you need an NPC for the players to chat with non-violently, you can easily use many of the npcs in the GM resource book. Otherwise, here are a few:

- Inquisitor Captain Atticus Pike of the Home Legion is a nondescript human man, but keenly observant. Essentially a detective, the typical overworked cop on beat with lots of connections and cases but not enough time to follow up on all of them. He might hassle the PCs at first, but could become a patron, giving the players tips he doesn't have a chance to investigate. He would respond favorably to PCs aligned with the Emperor.
- Lucius Vorenus is a soldier recently back on patrol after a season campaigning. He's likely to shake down the players for a bribe, but a sharp eyed PC will notice his tattoo showing devotion to the Great Gold Wyrm or your local deity of justice and shame him into more honorable conduct.
- John Finch is a captain of the trading ship Starsong. He's looking for replacement crew, as several crewmembers, on passing Santa Cora, went catatonic, overwhelmed by visions that happen to foreshadow whatever threats you want to deploy at higher levels.
- Scipio is a barbarian transplant from the provinces who got rich breeding and selling horses to the Imperial calvary. His uncouth manners and unbridled enthusiasm clashes with his staid neighbors in the Upside middle class district. He may venerate the High Druid.
- Sister Shayla is a kind-hearted nun serving the poor in the Rabbleward district. The local crime bosses have declared her off-limits for any ill treatment, as her patience is as divine as her ministrations. A Priestess tie-in here is obvious.

- Undin Proudpebble is a dwarven woman who runs a stall in the Something Fishy fish market. She's always happy to chat with visitors, more to size them up than sell her wares, as she has connections with the local organizations aligned with the Prince of Shadows.

Point 3: Finding a base

Shortly after arriving, or perhaps after following up on whatever initial adventure hooks brought them here and needing a rest, the players will likely look for an Inn. Asking around should reveal a few choices, such as:

- The Golden Goblin is in the Arena Town neighborhood; it's a large Inn recently renovated in the hope of capitalizing on the reopening of the Crown of Axis amphitheater. The common room is warm and inviting, decorated with idealized paintings of warriors throughout the ages of the Dragon Empire. It is run by Harpul, a gnomish woman with a knack for business–shamelessly so, as fake goblin ears and glittering make-up she wears attests to.
- The Familiar Toast is an Inn near University hill. You didn't expect the capital city to be without a center of higher learning, did you? True, most of the curricula does center on military history, tactics, and war magic. The Familiar Toast caters to the visiting family of students enrolled but the owner, an enigmatic half-elf known only as "the Professor", will happily serve anyone. Just be sure to stand when the crowd starts singing the alma mater, or expect to be levitated. The nearby gardens are useful for secret rendezvous of the conspiratorial as well as romantic nature.
- The Sea Hag's Lament is a stone's throw from the harbor in the Dock district, and is run by a halfling named Dennis, whose mouth is as salty as the sea, though he has a soft spot for travelers or wayward sailors. Frequented by a very loyal though decidedly lower class clientele, there's usually a few spare rooms that could go cheaply.
- The Cauldron Inn is in the high class mercantile district, Goldring, and incorporates natural hot springs. The most exclusive of the lot, this is run by Keyya, who keeps an eye out for out-of-work adventurers of good deportment to recruit for the Goldring patrol.

Regardless of where the PCs end up, you can work in some of the following events and plot hooks:

- A large round table in the center of the room is covered with a vibrant map and cheering on-lookers. The semi-finals of the Axes and Allies tournament is being held between Paulus Damasc, a dockworker, and Silistree Dawncrest, an acolyte at the Temple of Divine Justice.
- Paulus can point out troubles with local gangs, such as wererats operating out of the ruined palace of the Manticore or the Dead Flowers harassing the renovation of the Crown.
- Silistree can direct the PCs to the local temples and, since her sect/deity is the more militant sort, offers a prayer for the destruction of the Empire's enemies, Orcs or Giants or evil dragons or whoever you want to foreshadow.
- The judge of the game is Aurora Emberhill, an aficionado of the game and young professor at the University. She's the black sheep of the conniving Emberhill family,

failing to pick up much magical talent from her enrollment but rather being consumed by a passion for history, and could serve as a patron or resource for players looking for ancient tombs in remote locations.

- An old Dwarven servant has been given a corner of the room to solicit laundry to wash for coin; she is a refugee from the Artalian estate near Anvil, which vanished mysteriously, and is eager to tell her sad tale which ties into the Stone Thief adventure.
- Members of the Glorious Legion are here, drinking morosely. Their mercenary company was nearly wiped out–only thirteen of the original hundred survived their most recent mission, which, combined with an earlier windfall, leaves them despondent but well off, and Sisa and Zidon are throwing themselves into games and drink. Duenna the half-elven scout is trying to pawn off her (possibly magical) gear. See **the Glorious Legion**.
- Beggars are hanging around the Inn tonight in greater numbers. Asking around will reveal that the Mother's Mercy charitable kitchen in Rabbleward is closed, as a nun, Sister Shayla, was attacked there earlier that day. Both guards and enforcers working for the local gang bosses are looking for leads, but in the meantime the indigent are hoping for handouts elsewhere, to little satisfaction. See **The Attack on Sister Shayla**
- An older and finely dressed half-elven man bursts in with a small entourage, including another nobleman and a few guards. Drawing everyone's attention, Anduillius Dawncrest announces a bounty for any information tying the Emberhill family to the unnatural death of his son Anthony. See the Search for **Anthony Dawncrest's Killer**
- If the PCs show some interest or otherwise offer some reason to catch his eye, his nephew Sulla will quietly offer another job. He has been negligent in maintaining the family crypt, and now he needs to quiet the restless dead not shown their proper dues before his cousin is laid to rest. See **the Dawncrest Crypt**.
- A gladiator hopeful, fresh off his first win at the Bentswords Arena comes in and buys the crowd a round of drinks, boasting of his destiny. Alas, he grows increasingly agitated, then attacks the server, Faenia, with his bare hands and teeth. It's not readily apparent, but Arne, the gladiator, has been stricken with a ghouls hunger after being struck by a cursed sword. At the moment, the PCs can step in to save the server; it will require some pro-active skill checks and maybe a ritual to return the gladiator to his senses.

Do not feel the need to spring all of these, but enough that the players should wake up with a couple of options as to what to do in town. If the players ignore an urgent hook for more than a few days, consider how it might progress. Galba and Lilith will be causing further trouble among the nobles; perhaps Orcs attack the outlying farming villages. The Glorious Legion may dissolve completely and Opitor the traitor flee Axis. But only escalate if the players have become aware of the situation and chosen to ignore it.

Hooks unused on first entry to the city can be modified for later, of course.

The Dawncrest Crypt
Point 1: Background

The dead in the Dragon Empire have certain claims on the living; rituals that must be performed, proper care of the resting places, respect of their last wishes, or whatever other obligations you want to impose. Failure to meet these duties create unquiet spirits and a well of necromantic energy that the Lich King and other necromancers can exploit; even without interference, it can create dangers for the living.

The Dawncrest family has long ties in the Empire, though they went by the name Casola before intermarrying with a minor elven house at the end of the last age. They play up these elven ties in their crests and motifs (hence the name change to something that rings Elven). Their ancestral crypt is located in the Gardens, a small undeveloped area near the Palaces district that features some fountains, groves of fig trees, and flower gardens.

Sulla Dawncrest is a well-meaning nobleman tasked with maintaining the family crypt who did not take the duty seriously. Going in recently to tidy it up, he was set upon by an angry skeleton, fled for his life and is now searching for a way to fix this problem without alerting his uncle Anduillius, the head of the family. The PCs offer him this chance. Perhaps one of them is a Cleric, or Necromancer, or Paladin, or Wizard, with knowledge of the dead or the gods or ability to cast rituals. Or perhaps they are simply strong and discreet, and in that case Sulla will have procured services of a timid priest, Appius, and the necessary ritual and components. He can offer whatever reward is reasonable for a short adventurer tier quest in your campaign, as well as turning a blind eye to a few magic items going missing from deeper in the crypt. If the players agree to help, he will arrange a carriage to transport them from their Inn across town to the Gardens the next night. Of course a trip into a graveyard should be at night thematically; for an in-world justification, remember Sulla wants this done in secret, and if another noble paying their respects saw an adventuring party entering his family crypt it would be Imperial gossip within the hour.

However, Sulla is not entirely to blame. A local necromancer, Galba, has used the opening of the family's disrespect of their vaunted ancestors to put some skeletons to work, and is currently lurking in the tomb and will surprise the PCs.

“Yes, well, clearly I should have lit the incense or whatever, but let’s move on from that, shall we?”

Point 2: Entrance

You can narrate the passage through the city, as the PCs carriage takes them through potentially Arena town, Goldring, and the Palaces districts at dusk. In Arena town tourists are going from games and clubs to pubs and inns; in Goldring, craftsmen are finishing their day's work, smithing swords or fine jewelry, and closing their shops to retire for the night. In the Palaces, parties are starting, where fortunes are wagered and marriages arranged to secure

fleeting alliances or a chance at an Imperial favor. The players have a more grisly time ahead of them, putting down unquiet dead, and they pass from glittering lights to deepening shadows.

Through the ornamented gates of the cemetery lie a few shallow hills with rows of individual plots of lesser heroes from ages past; most noble houses have a crypt in a portion towards the rim, perhaps built into the mountainous walls of the city.

As families expect to enter the crypts with some regularity, dangerous traps don't make much sense for the exterior. The heavy door is certainly locked, though Sulla has the key. If your Dragon Empire is high magic, there may be magical wards to keep out non-family members. If you want, Sulla could forget this, but that's likely to negatively predispose him to the players.

Past the entrance is a steep sloping stairway. The walls here bear an engraved name of everyone interred, going back several centuries.

Point 3: Ceremonial Chamber

The first large room. Contents:

- 3 exits: the stairs to the entrance, stairs down to the left of the altar, and a hallway to the right of the altar. The hallway is behind a heavy door firmly shut.
- A small altar, used for performing rituals.
- Rows of inset sconces where dead were laid to rest.
- a roomful of skeletal mooks! Use 3-4 decrepit skeletons per player (core, 246).

These are unreasoning dead, and this unchallenging battle probably cannot be avoided.

Sulla will insist nothing in this room is harmed or removed, including the bones of the skeletons which he will carefully/comically recover after they have been felled. During this time, PCs may notice recent footprints in the dust which lead to the shut door–strangely, it doesn't look like the door itself has been opened recently.

This altar is where a ritual should be performed to satisfy the unhappy ancestors, but when the players (or npc hireling) try it, inform them that there is too much residual necromantic energy about. This indicates something more than just a brief period of forgotten rituals, which Sulla is notably confused by–but it's possible, from the PC's point of view, he is not being completely honest, though if any of them are good at reading people they will discover his confusion is genuine. In any event, they shall have to put down some more restless spirits by force before undertaking the ritual.

If there is a lull in the discussion, the players will hear almost rhythmic pounding coming from down the stairs.

Point 3: Tomb of the Ancestors

Stairs to the left of the altar lead down, at least a few dozen feet, into a large room. Here are where most of the family's honored dead are interred, as above in shelves and niches along

the walls. It is very dark, and ranged attacks may not be made far away until torches have been lit along the wall or the PCs use some magical means of lighting the room.

The far wall glistens a bit in torch light; something has seeped through the masonry. Before the players can conduct a thorough investigation, the source of the banging is revealed: skeletons wielding hammers are putting a hole in the far wall. These are more recent dead–not mooks.

There is one Skeleton Warrior per PC, wielding sledgehammers, also core 246. Also, hidden in the shadows, is a slime skull, from page 109 of the Bestiary. Roll initiative for the slime skull, but don't reveal it until it acts.

If the players search the room carefully, they can find a handful of Crowns (GP) from a prior age or two. They will also discover that the skeletons have broken through to a larger, natural cavern. This cavern connects to the Undercity of Axis, a series of twisting caverns and tunnels conveniently connecting whatever portions you wish. Relevant to the moment, they come very near to the dungeons under the Imperial palace, and Galba had planned to use this as a secret entrance to it. Sulla will announce his intentions to get a work crew in as soon as possible to repair it. Perhaps the players can convince him to let them explore first, though not, of course, before finishing this job. If the players do head into the undercity, use a montage to have them suggest hazards; to keep the suggestions thematic, consider some of the following descriptors for the areas they wander through: The Sulphurous Chamber, the Echoing Catacombs, and the Plunging Passageway.

Point 4A: Empty hallway

On the other side of the shut door–the one with footprints in the dust. Don't require a check to open the door if a stronger character attempts it. There is a door on either side of this hall, leading to the rooms in point 4B & C. The names of each are inscribed above them and known to Sulla.

Point 4B: The Hall of the Wise

This room was built to honor the original elven ancestors from the dawn of the Age.

- There are a few coffins here, with stonework trees at their head. Some number of these contain thematically appropriate magical items relevant to your players; for example, a Rapier of Unerring Panache and a Hawkshot Longbow. However, if proper reverence isn't paid, taking them will spawn another wraith or ghost. (This respect can be an icon die, or just an in character acknowledgement depending on your generosity).
- Murals of the elven healers are on the walls.
- There are no other exits.
- One Wraith per two PCs are in the room now (core 250). Add a sad sack ghost if you need more challenge. (Bestiary 2).

This is probably a challenging fight. You can let any magically attuned PCs be aware that at the moment the Wraiths are bound to this room, and won't follow if the PCs flee. You can also let them know that they only need to stagger the Wraiths, not kill them outright, to complete the

ritual and put the dead to rest. It may also be a good time for Icon advantages, especially with the Priestess, Lich King, Elf Queen, or Emperor.

Point 4C: Patriarch's Rest

This room honors the founder of the family, Brutus Casola, from some prior age predating all the elven ties of the family. The script and mosaics of the room should reflect this older perspective.

- There is one exit, leading to the hallway in 4A.
- There is one large coffin in the center of the room.
- There is a trapped treasure chest along the far wall, guarded by magical runes dealing 2d8 damage to a careless tomb raider.
- Brutus has arisen as a wight (Core book 249) and called up a number of Sadsack ghosts equal to one or two less than your players. If you want, you can allow the players to negotiate with the Wight if they come up with a good story. If the table is eager to have another combat, that will resolve the issue as well, with Sulla reverently laying the body back into its resting place.You may wish to have the Wight equipped with a magic item, such as Crystal Mail (+1 AC after taking a crit), depending on the number of players and how much magic gear they've gotten their hands on recently.
- The treasure chest contains a book from the Book of Loot, and perhaps another item (any Lich King book fits well). The book is the Cursed Scroll, which prevents discussion of a deed written upon it. Handy for PCs with a mischievous bent, but it only works for one secret at a time. Currently it is inscribed with the Dawncrest family shame– something like, "During the close of the 12th age, we let our enemies die of the plague". Making use of it will cause a minor scandal. Sulla will look shocked upon reading it, but, of course, say nothing.

Point 5: Galba

"You interlopers in my father's domain, pay homage or suffer the remorseless wrath of the dead!"

Galba is a human necromancer, a middle aged man who looks much older due to the toll his studies–and hate–have taken on him physically. Some time past, he discovered, or was somehow lead to believe, that his family line descends from the Wizard King, the first ruler of the Empire, now known as the Lich King. He styles himself as the heir of the Lich King and true ruler of the Empire, though acknowledged as such by none but the dead he subjugates. If NPC's had icon dice, he would have a positive one with the Lich King that he falsely believed was 4 points; the Lich King does not feel he needs an heir, thank you very much, and his trusted courtiers are vampires and liches, not nobles of little repute. But that doesn't mean that Galba can't cause trouble.

Galba Init + 5
Teeth, ranged, at-will, +8 vs PD, 2 nearby enemies, 10 damage each, and if both hit, heal nearby undead for 5 HP
Terror, 1/enc, ranged, +8 vs MD, if <50 HP, target must use next turn to flee, then fear (-4 atks, no ED), save ends
Blade of Suffering, +8 vs AC, melee, 21 neg damage, plus: 5 extra damage when hit by melee attacks, Save Ends.
88 HP AC 19 PD 12 MD 17
Galba is also equipped with a mantle of the necromancer (so undead don't want to attack him), and Deathwalker Greaves (allowing him to pass through walls in a graveyard, hence the footprints that led to a shut door).

Galba is haughty, and will taunt any spellcasters or nobles in the party with his superior magic or lineage respectively. But he's not so haughty as to allow his enemies a fair fight; he will ambush the party either in the middle of or just after a fight (perhaps when one Wraith has been killed, or the Wight staggered). He will probably have a skeletal companion of some kind, like the Skeletal Watchhound from Dark Alleys and Twisted Paths.

If you are a kind GM, you will let the players keep the escalation die where it was when he ambushes them. Be careful here either way, this fight could go quite poorly for the PCs. Let the players know they can retreat, and if they come back they won't suffer a campaign loss. On the other side of things, Galba is not above running away, and his greaves may make him hard to catch. He also has a bag of ancient coins and some putrid spell components of value to arcane types with some asking around.

If he gets away, Galba will retreat to his boarding house near the university where he plots the downfall of the Empire. A few nobles or students may be aware of him, and if taken alive he can visit those Imperial dungeons he was trying to break into, albeit as a permanent guest.

Point 6: Resolution

If the players forgot their reason for being here, Sulla will be quick to remind them as he emerges from hiding behind a decorative carving or coffin. The players should perform or watch the ritual, which will "dissipate the lingering necromantic energy" and "permit the eternal spirits to return to their true rest" and "prevent the Lich King from claiming our cherished ancestors as his pawns." Sulla will not be overly forthcoming with cash, but will look the other way if they walk away with a family heirloom or two.

Take note of what if anything the players do with the cursed scroll. Let it tempt them anytime they get authorities suspicious of their questionable actions. If they erase the Dawncrest's secret, that's going to create an enormous political scandal and disrupt the balance of power in Axis. If they admit they have it to anyone, Sulla will be in trouble for allowing outsiders into a sacred, private place and neglecting his duties, unless they come up with a clever story about spotting and following Galba.

The Undercity

"Humble merchants, that's all we are, bringing supplies to the poorest of the poor."

The Undercity is reachable from many locations in Axis. It is a series of twisting caverns carved by ancient magma, volcanic gasses, miners, earthquakes, and/or underworld denizens. It is generally safer than the Underworld proper, but more dangerous than the surface.

Most of the under-city lies below Arena Town, with portions in Goldring, Saltpork, Rabbleward, Upside, and the Palaces. It is a hive of passages with multiple intersections, maked with graffiti, honest signs, magical sigils, dishonest guides, toll collectors, enforcers, etc. Keeping direction is a challenge. Various groups of squatters or more permanent residents lay claim to out of the way cul de sacs.

The undercity connects to the Dawncrest Crypt, the warrens under the Crown of Axis (perhaps in a toilet?), Smuggler tunnels in the docks, the palace dungeons, a cave along the banks of the Bronze River to the north of town, the wider Underworld, and wherever is convenient for your campaign. But navigating its twisting passages is challenging for novice adventurers. You can be generous and allow them to distinguish upward sloping paths.

Random connection point of a discovered exit:

1) Into a dungeon cell of a guard post in a neighborhood. (possibly occupied!)
2) Into a citizen's basement
3) Warrens under an arena, such as a toilet or collapsed gladiator cell
4) A smuggler's passage in an inn or tavern, possibly unknown to the owner!
5) Drainage area in an alleyway
6) An old tomb

Some people, even some half-way decent folk, call the Undercity home. Supplies come from brave traders, surface raids, begging, and some scant underground farming, eg, a hermit wizard who grows potatoes with magical light.

Random occupants

1) Deserter community, hiding from the Imperial legion or the Crusader's forces
2) Thieves, fences, smugglers, and other ne'er-do-wells comprising what is known as the Secret Market
3) Covens of demonologists, pagan cults of Earth gods/Fire gods, necromancers trading dark secrets, or Cultists of the Devourer
4) Inquisitors of the Crusader sweeping through looking for 1, 2, or 3
5) Dwarves, either smuggling goods from an Underworld raid, or searching for treasures of the Dwarf King's claim
6) Drow traders, ambassadors, or spies, or more likely all of the above.

An informal organization of the Prince of Shadows attempts to keep the peace in the Undercity. It will occasionally cooperate with the Home Legion. However, that doesn't make travel safe.

Hazards/Monsters to flavor or interrupt your travel montages

1) Pits	1) Giant Scorpions
2) Gas-leak	2) Bats
3) Spores	3) Thieves
4) Cave-in	4) Troglodytes
5) Pools of muck	5) Spiders
6) Labyrinths to get lost in	6) Goblins

The Search for Anthony Dawncrest's Killer

Point 1: Background

The upswing in the fortunes of the Dawncrest family comes from integrating in the Elven healers who came to mitigate the plague that ended the last age. Since that time, their half-elven longevity and preexisting noble claims have allowed them to thrive in the Empire's political stage, leading to some acrimonious rivalry.

However, this rivalry did not lead to the death of the Anduillius' son Anthony, the family heir. This quest is designed as a mystery, and to show the threats to the Empire don't always come from beyond the Koru tracks. Anthony was killed by his recent paramour, a devotee of the Diabolist named Lilith Bloodquench, or Lily around town. Her goal is to corrupt the nobility to worship demons, or, failing that, seduce them out of their fortunes and use that to build a power base in the heart of the Empire.

Lily was born in a small village named Wyehill not far from Glitterhagen that was subverted slowly by the followers of the diabolist for all the usual reasons–getting back at their enemies, salvation from an impending threat, hedonism. Inevitably the town fell to infighting and then the armies of the crusader, but not before Lilith's mother escaped with her young daughter to Glitterhagen, where her uncanny charms led to a position as a mistress for a wealthy merchant baron. She taught her daughter hate and deceit as well as poisons and pain; patience didn't stick.

Lilith, now a young adult, came to Axis a few months ago as the paramour of a merchant captain who subsequently keeled over in a fancy restaurant. Some blamed the fare, officials called it natural causes; Lilith, of course, was to blame.

Since then one other wealthy older man was seduced and killed discreetly prior to her setting her eyes on Anthony, one Gallio Tasius. This minor official was dumped overboard during a pleasure cruise, and Lilith has set up a cult in his townhome in the Palaces district.

For her most recent victim, she picked well; the young man was not close to his father and only rarely showed off his new red-headed lover, allowing the older family members to assume the worst about their political rivals when Anthony turned up a victim of foul-play.

Lilith was making some progress of corrupting the moral character of the young noble, as the scars on the masochistic young girl attest, but he found out about her true allegiance and balked at betraying the Empire. Some days ago, he fled her home after a tryst turned sacrilegious; she poisoned him with her demonic magic and he died in the streets. His family recovered the body, and are seeking to pin the blame on their rivals, the Emberhills, who are guilty of much, but not this.

Point 2: Clues

Players will walk into the quest knowing nothing about Lilith, and most of her backstory may not come up in play at all but is provided above for consistency's sake. Here are some clues that can help point them in the right direction with some snooping around:

- Anthony's body showed superficial cuts and lacerations; however these didn't kill him.
- His body was swollen, discolored, and foul-smelling, in a way that suggested advanced decomposition that shouldn't have been possible in the short time since he was last seen healthy a few days before his body was found.

- An arcane, criminal, or healer focused background aided medium skill check will suggest that various venoms could cause this, however there doesn't appear to be a particular injection site. This might suggest something magical, like a Green Basilisk or some profane magics. Obviously neither have recently been found in the city… but the latter would be much easier to hide.
- The Emberhills are reluctant to work closely with the adventurers, but if they are even aware of Anthony's death, they hide it very convincingly.
- Other nobles are aware of the acrimony of the two houses but would be surprised at a murder of one noble by another; the Emperor would not look kindly at someone risking the war effort with such disruptive behavior.
- Anthony had a few friends who knew he had found a new lover, some tall red head from out of town, and he was trying to keep her out of sight of his family.
- Her description doesn't match anyone who frequented the university, although Gallio Tasius, the retired trader, was seen in the temple services with a new paramour a few months ago who matches her description and wearing fancy new clothing. The acolytes at the service were unnerved by her giggling inappropriately.
- Anthony was known to hang out at a gaming club called The Den in the Upside neighborhood, a werewolf themed establishment. The owner, Dannet, didn't know Anthony's new lover but recognized her outfit as coming from Higher Attire in Goldring's Twilight neighborhood, a shadowed area dealing in niche products for the wealthy.
- The proprietor of the Higher Attire, the gnome Zignest, remembered the young woman with fiery red hair and scarred shoulders who was bought fancy clothing on a line of credit by Gallio Tasius, an elderly man from a respected family. Zignest is trying to take Gallio to court, but the case is proceeding slowly and he's basically written it off. He has personally delivered several court summons and can direct the PCs to the Tasius manor.
- Gallio's neighbors live in an area where inhabitants keep to themselves and value secrecy; however, questioning the servants will find one who noticed a half-naked man matching the description of Anthony fled the home several days ago. Another might recall having seen him come and go several times in the past few months.
- Since Anthony's death, Lilith laid low, but as the past few days have not led to guards coming by the Tasius home looking for her to answer for the death of Anthony, or anyone else, she's relaxing her guard enough to meet with her cultists and discuss her next mark. Stealthy observation of the townhome will reveal supposed servants coming and going, more than might be expected, often cloaked and carrying items that give off faintly profane auras, if the PCs are sensitive to that sort of thing.

Point 4: Confrontation

"You think poor Anthony is innocent? Look what he did to me!.. And I loved it. Shame I had to kill him."

Lillith has taken over a small manor in lower estates after seducing and killing its owner. She now runs a nascent cabal aligned with the Diabolist based in this unassuming estate, a three story townhouse, with master bedrooms on the second floor and servants' quarters on the third. The ground floor has a parlor which is kept perfectly normal, and a study, which has been

converted to a full-blown chamber of dark rituals and debauchery. There is also a kitchen and dining room. Generally the decor is extravagant, Elvish satins and silks and Dwarf cut gems, mostly in scarlet or crimson hues. Several items bearing the Dawncrest insignia, tokens of affection from Anthony to Lily, are in the master bedroom.

Gallio had three servants on the grounds; one of the servants has been converted to Lilith's cult, one killed, one is tied up in the basement. Other cultists of the Diabolist have made contact with Lilith and meet here regularly, posing as servants or guests as befits their station.

There are neighboring homes on three sides of the town home (one portion has a more secluded garden) that would potentially be endangered by a particularly dramatic showdown.

If the PCs approach the front door, the converted servant, Casca, will answer the door and explain his master is away on business, looking to buy furniture from Newport he wanted to inspect himself. He would like to chat, but he is in the middle of baking, perhaps the players could come back later? Of course, he has never seen Anthony Dawncrest and is very sorry but can't help them and no one else is here at this time.

If the Players seem like they are buying this obvious lie, perhaps from the street they notice a flash of light from the basement window; the captive servant has kicked over a lamp.

Should they force their way in, Lilith will come downstairs and ask the players why they are disturbing her at home. Depending on what they've learned, she can try to pass herself off as a victim, either claiming that Anthony was the cultist and she killed him because of it, or that Anthony was abusive and she was protecting herself. If the players waver in their conviction of her guilt, she will attack them unexpectedly and gain surprise. An appropriate number of mooks (such as human thugs or a more level appropriate creature re-flavored as a cultist) will emerge from the study, along with perhaps a dretch or two if you have a bigger or higher leveled group and are willing to stretch the bounds of belief about the size of the house. To crowd things further, Lilith will spend her first round summoning an Imp to aid her.

Lillith Bloodquench Level 3, I+4
Soul Drinking Ritual Dagger: +9 vs AC, 15 damage, 25 damage if she is staggered.
Hit, 1/encounter: Lilith gains 10 temp HP
Summon Hopping Imp, 1/enc
Unholy transfer:quick action, any save ends conditions move to 1 nearby creature, 1/enc; takes the condition again when the creature saves
Killer heels: Move action, teleport and deal 6 damage to one enemy engaged with you
Diseased Blood:, when hit by melee, she cackles with glee and a poisonous burst sprays at the attacker; +6 vs PD, 24 poison damage [*Limited, 1/encounter*]
NS: Recharge when staggered
HP 80, AC 19, PD 13 MD 17
Resist Poison 14+
Summoned Hopping Imp L3, I+7
Festering Claws: +7 vs AC, 7 physical damage, 3 ongoing poison
R: Blight Jet: +7 vs PD, 7 poison damage, target dazed (save ends)
16+, either repeat against another target, or target is weakened instead
Oportune hex: Creatures who roll 1-5 attacking imp take 1d8 psychic
Unholy Provocation: Nearby allied mooks deal 3 damage on a miss
HP 40, AC 19, PD 13, MD 15

Lilith has two magic items equipped (and accounted for in her stats), a Soul Drinking Ritual Dagger and Killer Heels, both from Loot Harder. The Pillow Book of Unspoken Dreams and Scroll of Commission from the Book of Loot would be very appropriate to find in the house as well.

Lilith enjoys pain, but she's not eager to die. Once she drops to a quarter health, she will try to teleport away and then flee on foot. If the PCs don't act quick to catch her she will slip into a back alley and down a sewage pit. Don't play out the escape in initiative, just set a medium DC to sprint and catch her once she flees combat. Mooks or demons left behind will try to intercept to allow her to flee or flee themselves as appropriate.

If you are looking to spice things up, you could have Lilith pull down a lantern and toss it onto a pile of dry old books under the curtains. She's not a flame pact demonologist, but really what kind of demonologist doesn't enjoy a spot of arson?

Point 5: Aftermath

Needless to say, there's nothing here connecting the demonologist cult to the Emberhill family–unless you want there to be. But otherwise, Anduillius Dawncrest will be put off by the news that his son was consorting with demons, call it slander, and shun the PCs. Unless they want to plant evidence incriminating the Emberhills or their mercenaries, the Jade Tower, in the cult. Dishonorable behavior like that should probably be discovered by the paladins who move in to investigate their story, but the repercussions are up to you.

Hopefully at some point the players think to check the basement; there they will find Tertia, a servant girl who can relate the tale of Gallio Tasius and is quite grateful she won't be sacrificed at the next meeting. Alternatively, she could be in the study, bleeding out if you need to make it a bit more urgent and grisly.

If the players made a good impression on Sulla Dawncrest in a prior encounter, he will give them a reward, perhaps money or a magic item or connection. If they haven't, he will again approach them for help with **The Dawncrest Crypt** adventure, as Anthony's burial is soon approaching.

The Crusader has a significant presence in the city, recruiting troops. The local commander, Atsu Ollk, or perhaps Inquisitor Noj, will start inspecting the neighborhood and harassing young nobles if they get word of this coven. How they view the PCs will depend on their approach, openness, and icon relations and backgrounds; the players could get anything from an attempted kidnapping and interrogation to magic item gifts, depending on what your campaign needs.

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The Attack on Sister Shayla

"I should join the Legions? Maybe you should shut your mouth, god-woman!"

Grigor is a poor half-orc living in the Rabbleward district of Axis. He has a grudge against the Empire for his poor station and the expectation that he should join the legions to fight against the Orc Lord. The poor half-orcs in Rabbleward sometimes grumble that things would be better if the Orc Lord swept through the empire and lopped off the heads of a few dozen nobles.

Grigor and a few other indigent men were helping unload a cart of questionable produce for the soup kitchen Mother's Mercy in the Shanty Town portion of Rabbleward. Shayla mentioned some praise of the Legions coming in from campaign against "dastardly orcs". Grigor took this poorly, and as the others had their backs to them he shoved the Nun roughly down, muttering how the Empire was as rotten as the scraps she fed them, grabbed her bag and ran off. Shayla's satchel is a wondrous item gifted by the Priestess. It gives the bearer whatever they need at the moment according to their goals. Shayla's head hit the cobblestone, and she was unconscious for a day as her order carefully tended the frail woman.

Grigor has a brother in the legions, **Grachus**; hearing about the attack, he searched for his brother in vain and now accurately suspects him. He is angry and fears the attack will turn sentiment against the city's often upstanding half-orc population.

Shayla has recently received healing as of the PCs beginning investigating–her order is across town, full of refugees, had to move her slowly so as to not shock her aged system, etc. At the moment she claims not to recall the identity of her attacker. Her colleague in Mother's Mercy is Brother Simeon, whom she does not fully trust. **Brother Simeon** is eager to retrieve the satchel, and will reveal its true use to the PCs–he's worried about the Orcish armies having such a powerful tool. He is watching her recover at one of the city's temples, perhaps his Temple of Divine Wrath or hers, the Temple of Divine Grace.

Shayla in private will reveal her true concern is the fate of Grigor's soul. She wishes him to be redeemed. She realizes his despair and prays the gods give him succor even as she recovers from the injuries he gave her. If the PCs express some intention to work things out peacefully, she will tell them what she knows of the incident, namely that she inadvertently angered the poor Half-Orc and he struck her and fled.

Delm and **Garaysk**, two rival gang leaders in Rabbleward who sometimes fancy themselves respectable and appreciate the work of the soup kitchen, have both put a bounty on the head of the attacker. The other men working at that time have hidden themselves, fearing indiscriminate reprisals. They are Rabbleward residents who could be identified by intuitive PCs casing the neighborhood.

Grigor met briefly with **Sudd**, the unofficial leader of the ward's half-orcs, who urged him to flee the city. He gave him the location of a hidden Orc stronghold not far to the City's south. Then Grigor left the city through the southern gates a couple days ago, blending in with a crowd of farmers leaving the market day in the Southern market, not far from Rabbleward. This market generally consists of open air stalls of basic foodstuffs and some tools. The guards won't recall a particular half-orc, but they will recall the party from Sarton Vale, a small hamlet a day's march south. From there, PCs can use social or wilderness skills to find Grigor's trail (if they didn't persuade Sudd to tell them about the orc camp Grigor showed interest in at their meeting).

Sarton's Vale is little more than a handful of trees at a bend in the Bronze river, a ferry, a dozen families with farms, and the home of a tinker named Sarton who does the odd repair job and hosts local gatherings. Villagers can relate that a stranger left the city gates with them, then drifted behind and followed the group along the dusty road before heading further up river in the dusk. One or two of them managed to notice enough details to verify it is the PC's quarry.

Tracking Grigor from the vale will require a couple more skill checks, with failure meaning encountering a level appropriate creature, such as **an owlbear** or a pair of them.

Grigor's tracks lead away from the main river, along a small tributary that passes through the far reaches of the Direwood, then descend down the steep banks. After splashing around, the PCs will uncover a tunnel hidden in the river bank. The orc encampment is underground; but the orcs here may have tenuous alliances with the local goblins and if the players aren't alert and stealthy, they risk an encounter with a **goblin scout party**.

Orc Encampment

These Orcs are unusually deep into the Empire. Here are possible reasons why:

- This group was originally part of Fangrot's mission to capture the Stone Thief. After devouring a nearby site of forgotten power in the underground, it disgorged a section of the dungeon containing these Orcs.
- These Orcs are the remnants of an expedition sent through Underworld tunnels; they found a route that bypassed the Dwarven held territories around forge; unfortunately for them, they passed into a portion controlled by the Drow, who hunted them for sport until they tired of it, leaving a few remaining.
- The Empire is not as competent militarily as it lets on; the front lines are loose and often maintained only by alliance with various barbarian tribes and independent holds of Dwarves and Wood Elves. This often creates gaps that small forces can slip through, though usually these are caught by mercenaries operating out of Axis, and often conscripted by the Crusader, some such as these make their way to establish footholds in obscure cracks, waiting to strike at the Empire from within in unison.
- The Orc Lord has secretly been aided by another Icon, such as the High Druid, or Lich King, and used their hidden routes to move a few warbands through. Gods help the Empire if it is the Archmage offering him passages through the Overworld.
- Orc Pirates sailed straight up the Bronze River, exchanging shot with the fortress of the Axis harbor and fleeing before the soldiers could round them all up.

Choose the origin that ties in with whatever plots you want to run later. In any event, these orcs operate out of a warren of caves in this secluded riverside. They have allied with a few small goblin clans, trading muscle for supplies, but so far tried to avoid notice by not pillaging the Imperial holdings such as Sarton's Vale. A few other settlements, perhaps hidden cultists, a Dwarven mine, a halfling plantation, or the dwellings of a rarer and secretive race such as Frogkin, have been raided and taken captive.

Orcs are factious, especially when out of the direct supervision of an Orc Lord of iconic caliber. There are only about a dozen of the original Orcs left here (use Orc Berserkers and Orc Archers for these **Core 242, Bestiary 156**), divided among at least a couple of leaders such as:

Glasha is a female **Orc Shaman**, dedicated to the Orc Lord. Their original leader **Ughat** perished, and she is trying to hold the band to its original purpose. She maintains a shrine that allows her to communicate with the Orc Lord, or at least a close servant of his.

Fozog is a **Battle Screamer**, and he is enjoying his elevation to Lieutenant after the demise of Ughat. He's not so hot on the Orc Lord's plans; he'd rather carve a little fiefdom here, perhaps extort some supplies from the local farmers and torture a goblin every once in awhile or vice versa.

However, the Orcs have bolstered their numbers. Deep in the camp the Shaman has built a spawning pit. Or breeding pit, whatever unsettling way of reproducing fits your conception of Orcs. Perhaps they butchered hogs and dedicated the offal to their dark gods of entropy; perhaps they have breeding pairs and Orcs age extremely quickly. In any event, there are a large number of these **Pit-Spawn Orc** mooks. They emerge hungry, violent, and dull, and are given rudimentary training and shown who is the boss. They are unlikely to show any initiative, but will follow orders and recognize intruders.

As well, the Battle Screamer has been recruiting from disaffected half-orcs, largely deserters from the legionary campaigns against the Giants in the Southwest of the Empire. Many half-orcs, of course, perform exemplary service for the Emperor, but not these **Half-Orc Legionnaires** (Core book 233). There are five or six of these at any time; their training is far superior to that of the Pit-Spawn Orcs, but they are also a liability; if they aren't kept happy, they could leave and reveal the location of the camp. After sufficient violence is committed against the neighboring communities, a Half-Orc will typically feel they have no recourse to leave.

Because of their agreements with the goblins–and general disinclination to discipline–the Riverbend Band of Orcs have grown complacent lately. There will usually be guards around the main entrance, but there are other entrances less secure; in an Owlbear Den and a Hunting lodge formerly belonging to slain wood elves. These are likely to be intermittently occupied by Pit-Spawn Orcs, but without the leadership of an experienced Orc or Half-Orc, and they could be dispatched without raising an alarm.

The underground warrens consist of natural caves connected by small rough-hewn passages. Most of these caves have small vents leading to the surface, letting in some dim light and letting out smoke from cooking fires; these might be noticed and spied on by observant PCs, perhaps tipped off by slaves put to work expanding the cavern network.

Locations in the encampment:

1. The Riverside

There are probably a few orc mooks fishing or capering about in the water, watched over by a bored half-orc.

2. Entrance

Cave mouth along the riverbank. Decorated with trophies of recent conquests–head of a stag, Dwarven Axe, halfling skulls, etc. Probably contains 2-3 vigilant orcs, a couple half-orc legionnaires gambling, and some pit-spawns wrestling.

3. Garrison

A cavern forming the choke point to the rest of the complex. Houses the Orcs' weapons, and the most trusted orcs are stationed here when not raiding. Note: Most trusted orcs may still be passed out drunk on pilfered ale.

Connects to the Entrance and the Pit. A whole in one corner is above the slave pens.

4. The Pit

A central room containing a sloping chasm that the Orcs use as a waste dump. This is where the orcs came up originally if they used the underworld or the Stone Thief to get to this portion of the Empire. A number of smaller tunnels branch off from the walls of the pit. The barracks are opposite the Garrison. Down a treacherous staircase is a tunnel leading back to the Slave pens, and the Library branches off of this tunnel. Another tunnel leads down a sloping path the Breeding pit, under the slave pens; the Temple branches off of this tunnel. The Storeroom has cracks that abut the pit. Also leads to an alternate entrance, the Owlbear Den–responsible for a couple of one-armed Orcs.

5. The Temple

The home of the Shaman and her most trusted followers. Door to a passage that connects from the garrison to the spawning pit. Holds the Shaman's scrying bowl, which she uses to coordinate with the Orc Lord. Surprisingly well maintained. The Shaman has the following items, either on her or in the temple: Masterwork boots of the Cobbler spirits, Ring of Fateful reversals. The door to the room is usually locked by a hard lock on a sturdy door.

6. The Library

The home of the Battle Screamer, decorated with the trappings of civilization, including bookshelves with a few looted tomes and scribbled papers. Maps decorate the walls. Exits to the pit and the slave pens.

Roguish Cap, Enchiridion of Heroism

7. The Barracks

A catacomb like area with many nooks and crannies for Orc mooks to sleep. Leads to the Pit, the Kitchen, and smaller tunnels, including a passage to the basement of an elven hunting lodge.

8. The Kitchen

Leads from the barracks, cracks in the ceiling allow smoke to escape. Leads to the storeroom.

9. The Storeroom

Holds rotting foodstuffs, etc. Cracks leads to the Pit, but it's a sheer drop on the other side.

10. The Breeding Pit

Whatever process produces Pit Spawn Orcs happens here, in the lowest inhabited room.

11. The Slave Pens

A tunnel leads to the Pit, passing by the library. Small holes above and below lead to the Garrison and the Breeding pit, respectively. Not a pleasant place to be. 1d6 surviving captives.

Interacting with the Orc Encampment

"Orcs ain't looking out for us. Orcs ain't looking out for nothing but what to kill and destroy, and I just wish I could go back to Axis. But it's too late for me."

If the players are here, they are probably following the tracks of Grigor, the half-orc thief who fled Axis after robbing Sister Shayla the nun in front of the Mother's Mercy soup kitchen in Rabbleward. (Unless you are repurposing it for something else, in which case I hope it helps.)

But what exactly the players' goals and methods are can vary. Shayla wishes for them to convince Grigor to return and repent. She prefers as little bloodshed as possible in the process.

Brother Simeon just wants the blessed satchel returned. Grigor's brother, Grachus, wants the matter dealt with in a way that doesn't put the city's half-orcs in a bad light. The gang leaders of Rabbleward will pay for Grigor's head, though they aren't terribly interested in matters of due process or even the wishes of Sister Shayla in the matter. The local legion commander will be very interested to know of the Orc encampment, especially if the PCs put some effort into getting details like number of troops and connections to the Orc Lord.

Grigor himself, at the moment, is regretting his choices; even for the poor, Axis is better than a muddy cave, and the behavior of the Orc squad is putting the lie to his notion that Orc rule would be better than Imperial rule (unless you are working very hard to invert tropes). He would go back, but Fozog has convinced him that he will hang if he is caught. Plus, he's starting to like pushing around the mooks, so long as he doesn't think about it empathetically. Though the Shaman has him a bit creeped out and all the yelling is getting old. (These are some factors to consider if the PCs try to roll some persuasion at him–arguments to him based on his desires and the things they have observed should carry more weight than a high dice roll; an icon relation may reveal this).

Anyway, how the PCs approach the camp will depend on their goals and preferred playstyle–and what the GM has promised in rewards. Let them know the various involved parties will give them loot roughly equivalent to a session's dungeon crawl if they manage to resolve it peacefully. Clever and lucky PCs may be able to smooth-talk Grigor, snatch and grab a few of the Orc's magic items, and escape without combat. This would probably require a lot of observation, planning, and improvisation. Consider mentioning off hand that the barrels of rum in the entrance cave will likely ignite explosively or that there is a beaver dam creating a small lake up river or that there are orc prints leading to the Owlbear den. Then let them put the pieces together and see how it rolls out.

Alternatively, the players may want to approach it as a dungeon crawl, and the pieces are here. But it should be a difficult one without caution; the PCs are outnumbered even by non-mooks, at least comparing them to all possible orcs present. It's possible at any given time a raiding party has gone elsewhere, with one of the leaders, several half orcs, and many mooks. Leaving just enough scattered about for a handful of on-level encounters. Or one long encounter with periodic reinforcements; noise will travel through the tunnels, and after a few rounds the Orcs in one area will rouse themselves to see what the commotion is in another.

To determine how many Orcs are in any given area, consider if the camp has any reason to be alert. Have the players left bodies of sentries lying around? Been noisy or spotted? An alert camp will bunch up, increasing orcs in the garrison, temple, and library areas, and decreasing them elsewhere. Roving and alert scouting parties may search out the PCs if they have cause to do so; otherwise groups of orcs will wander about with less care.

You can roll a d4 per PC if the area is less likely to be occupied, a d6 if more likely.

1 No enemy in this slot
2 4 Pit Spawn Orc Mooks (Bestiary 156)
3 Orc Berserker (Core 242)
4 Orc Archer (Bestiary 156)
5 Half-Orc Legionnaire (Core 233)
6 Leader, Shaman (Core 242) or Battle Screamer (Bestiary 157), or 4 more mooks if another 6 was rolled.

Resolution

As discussed above, Grigor can be persuaded to return with the PCs to make amends and/or face justice. It will take some care to get a moment alone with him, however; PCs would need to either take out all the orcs on site, quietly take out those with him and keep him from running, or to watch stealthily and patiently until he separates himself from the others, perhaps to water the woods. Be attentive to how the PCs approach this social situation. It's possible to intimidate him, but in that case he's likely to bolt at the first opportunity. It's possible to shame him, but leading with that would be a harder check. Getting his attention first by playing on his relation to his brother or the welfare of Sister Shayla seems the safer bet to work the redemption angle. It's also possible your PCs will lop off his head to collect a reward; you may wish to make known beforehand that such heartless acts would have repercussions, like riots in the city or worse relations with the kinder temple sects or whatever else.

Upon his return, Grigor's actions will depend on how the conversation went. Did he become remorseful of his actions out of sympathy for the nun? Perhaps he follows her vocation, serving the church as a lay brother. Is he just really sick of being in a cave? Maybe he returns to hiding in the Axis undercity after expressing his remorse to the sister. Or maybe he turns himself into the guard and is conscripted.

If the players think to inform the legions, the local commander will reward them with an item, such as the Shield of Fate Aversions, and some coins if their observations were detailed. Grachus will give them an item, such as the Lion Paw Gloves (Escalation 7) for not spreading news the attack was by a half-orc. (These are probably mutually exclusive, unless players are savvy). If Grigor returns alive and relates to Sister Shayla that it was done without needless bloodshed, she will reward them with the Satchel of True Need (Recharge 16+, reach in and retrieve an item that will further your goals–though not, perhaps, what you think you need. Quirk: Attributes luck to divine intervention)

If the players discover the encampment, and do not resolve the issue one way or another, either by telling the legions/relevant nobles or magistrates, or killing the leaders themselves, this should have consequences. Orc raids will soon begin on Sarton's Vale, then one morning the market in Axis will explode in drunken violence after the half-orcs smuggle the Orcs into the city in barrels of beer.

The central Pit in the encampment is a site the players could venture down, especially if you want to foreshadow the Stone Thief or some Underworld adventures. Use a travel montage for a couple of hazards along a dark and winding tunnel, then introduce the remnants of a place of power of a relevant icon–or perhaps even a former icon of a previous age–that were devoured by the living dungeon.

The Glorious Legion

There are many guilds of mercenaries and adventurers in Axis. These operate out of the Southern Garrison neighborhood, with the Imperial Legions and the Crusader's battalions butting heads in the Garrison North. The Southern Garrison is more cramped, with narrower streets, taller, more ostentatious guildhalls on smaller plots of land, often with symbols or engravings from past eras extolling fabled deeds. Camp followers hawking wares attempt to siphon away the war spoils until chased off by exasperated company sergeants.

Should the players wander through and you need a random group, here's a list:

1. The Wardens, a group of knights clad in living wood armor dedicated to the high druid. They stand watch imposingly outside their guildhall, the Grove, which houses a sacred tree–perhaps an exotic fruit tree or an impossibly tall redwood. Supposedly sent to the city by the High Druid to protect the City, they mutter about the coming end to corruption and blight–perhaps referring to some dark force threatening the city… or perhaps to the city itself.
2. The Forgeguard, or half-pints behind their back, are a small band of Dwarves sent by the Dwarf King to personally aid the Empire in any endeavors. It would be diplomatically unwise to allow them to die in combat unnecessarily, so while the siege experts have been moved to Imperial Legions, the officers hob-knob with aristocrats, and the rest bounce between the arenas and the pubs. They share a home at Bastion, a castle dating back 3 ages.
3. The Marchers of Silent Wrath are a prestigious mercenary company specializing in shock tactics; they often take convicts or runaways for short, bloody terms of deployment. Survivors get generous pay-outs. They share the Bastion with the Forgeguard.
4. The Giant Slayers is a company dating back to the first Age of the Empire, or so they claim. Their guildhall, Titanhew, is decorated with the skull of a giant; which type depends on who you ask. But gossip holds that no currently serving member has ever even seen a giant, and they are coasting on their reputation. They are frequently seen at the arenas, however.
5. The Templars are based out of the Reliquary and are a religiously driven order that won't take jobs unless they agree with the cause and only accept token payments. It's said they are either backed by a massive inherited fortune, divine blessing, or secretly serve as smugglers.
6. Jade Fortress are a popular company due to steady work in the service of the Emberhill family.
7. The XIII is an entire legion that was decommissioned at once due to some failure or insubordination–it's said in the battle of Dragon-Tongue Bridge they advanced against orders, capturing the enemy warlord in the process. They are used by the Empire when it needs disposable or deniable troops.
8. The Fullcoat Savages recruit exclusively from half-orcs. How do they react when they find half-orc bandits or followers of the Orc Lord? More lenient than the legions, or harsher? Rumors go both ways.

There's another guild that's on the brink of collapse as a result of treachery. The Glorious Legion operates out of Blackrock Hall, but their fortunes have plummeted in the very recent past. This 100 person mercenary company had success in Orc wars under leadership of Thalanil, a half Elf Paladin, freeing captive sons of a famous noble house on crusade and earning themselves a princely ransom in the process. They bought a large guildhall in Axis with their earnings, then hired on as auxiliaries in a further campaign.

The second in command, Opiter Hadrianus, grew greedy at the wealth they had gained. He blackmailed Duenna, the scout, over family connections to the diabolist, on a crucial mission to infiltrate an Orc stronghold. Erasing the Ogre-mage patrols from the report, he caused the Legion to fall into an ambush in which 87 of them died. The remaining 13 fled back to Axis, dispirited.

Each of the surviving guild members now claims a much larger share of their fortune, but they are haunted in various ways by survivor's guilt and trauma. Duenna has angrily confronted Opiter, who bought her temporary silence with a reminder that she would suffer equal incrimination. Then he contracted the assassins known as the Theater to kill her, probably 'tonight' (ie, after the PCs first become aware of the group), while making it look like a suicide. The players could discover this in any stage of the act, depending on if you want some combat or a mystery out of it. Here's one way it plays out:

As the PCs emerge after a meal at their accommodations to go shopping, hit up some contacts, or just get some air, they encounter Blossia. Blossia is a Glorious Legion member in charge of morale, recruitment, advertising… basically a bard, and having a rather poor time the last few months. She was supposed to meet her friend for drinks, to try to cheer her up, but can't find her. If the players stop to help her look, they'll find her body swinging from a balcony nearby, dead, with the words "It's all my fault" written in a note. A careful investigation shows bruises and cuts, however; the hanging was a murder, not a suicide. And the way it was staged indicates someone familiar with her guilt.

(As the scout on the faithful mission, her guilt would be evident to all her comrades, even if they interpreted it as guilt for missing the ambush, rather than guilt for allowing it). Blossia doesn't know who the culprit was; the guild doesn't have enemies in town and she suspects and inside job. If the players have ideas to help her figure it out, run with that.

One possibility is investigating Duena's room. Doing so will uncover a Dagger of Secrets Revealed, an item connected to the diabolist that was a family heirloom, and one which could, if used, help resolve the situation. She also has a copy of the original scouting report which differs from what she reported to the guild in preparation for the mission; this discover recontextualized her guilt–but not her murder.

Here is the full list of the surviving guild members, not all of which currently reside in Blackrock Hall, as it looks like the guild will fold:

1. Thalanil is a half-elf Paladin and the Commander of the guild. He is looking to secure a replacement for the guild before retiring to a monastery. He knew Opiter was kicked out of the legions for embezzling, but wanted to rehabilitate him, and saw no reason to doubt him.

2. Opiter Hadrionis is the second in command, the tactician and field commander who engineered the guild's demise for personal profit. He may be related to a villainous icon–or simply a greedy bastard.
3. Duenna Greenhand was a halfling ranger and the guild's chief scout; her death sets off the investigation. She worked hard to overcome her family's ties to the Diabolist and to keep that hidden; Opiter found out about it from his knowledge of heraldry and the obscure symbols in the Greenhand crest.
4. Blossia Tancinia is a human bard, working hard to keep the guild from disintegrating. She views it as her family.
5. Sisa the Boar is a human ranger, missing his nose with bright red hair; Zidon is his twin and they have been losing themselves in drink and the Arena, a combination that is likely to lead to an early demise.
6. Zidon is a human fighter, missing an ear, with a devil-may-care attitude even prior to the guild's reversal of fortune. Like his twin, Zidon is usually found in a tavern, arena, or sleeping off a hangover and/or concussion.
7. Umirac Bentback is a Dwarven cleric who tended to the spiritual and physical health of the guild. An Ogre-Mage curse has left him blind, and he is making preparations to leave Axis for Forge.
8. Roger Goodhaul is a Halfling who oversaw the guild's supplies and logistics. He's recently left the guild and fallen in with thieves.
9. Fegne the Eye is a Gnomish Diviner/ritualist. Like Duenna, she blames herself for missing the ambush; in her case it was because Opiter and Thalanil consulted her before Opiter altered the scout report. She has been in a mystical trance in Blackrock for the past week.
10. Johnny the kid was found hiding in a village the guild liberated, and always saw the GL as his second family. Devastated by its losses, he's gone to enlist with the crusader.
11. Golze the Small claims to be a short Dragonic; actually he's a tall kobold. He speaks a variety of uncommon languages, from Orcish to Draconic or Abyssal, but mostly served as the mascot. He's currently working in the Axis University as a test subject.
12. Rime is a Tiefling female sorcerer with an affinity for cold magic. Lately she has been spending her time encased in a solid block of ice; she says it helps her cool her temper, though few have seen her show much passion. Her cold affect causes some distrust among the other members.
13. Matthias is a prodigy with numbers, though only a novice wizard, capable of casting a cantrip now and then with great effort. He was the guild's treasurer, with people skills to match his combat capabilities–poor to non-existent. He's recently been hired as an Imperial tax collector.

These aren't intended to all be red herrings in an investigation; use one or two to divert suspicion from Opiter if you need, but player investigation rarely needs much obfuscation. Some members might suspect the treasurer or diviner to have led the group to its demise, perhaps, but PCs will get the impression they haven't gained any more than anyone else. Do avoid mentioning only a single name as a suspect, but don't try to drag out the investigation too much. Discussion with the guild members could turn up recollections such as:

- Duenna would say, after a night of drinking, that her biggest mistake was “listening to him” but wouldn’t elaborate.
- Thalanil always took the guilds loses harder than Opiter; perhaps his time in the Legions hardened him.
- Opiter was particularly strict in counting the spoils and complained that members like Johnny or Golze weren’t entitled to a full share.
- Usually a ‘lead from the front’ type, Opiter held back in that final assault.

You could also allow the PCs to find correspondence between Opiter and the Theater assassins, perhaps after being targeted by them for other reasons.

If the PCs go to investigate the guild headquarters and it is not immediately after finding the body, they may find that Duena’s room has been locked and/or is under guard; or else her things have been packed up to be sent out to her next of kin in Concord. Opiter is keeping watch over it, or has assigned an outside guard to do so. At the moment, there are work crews in to remodel the hall, as it was in a state of disrepair when purchased by the guild after their successful mission. Mixed in with these are mercenaries Opiter has hired.

In Opiter’s quarters, the PCs may find the original scouting report, with some evidence of tampering. Or his Ring of Poor Choices (but if so, remove that from his stats if they fight him).

Ultimately whatever sleuthing the PCs do should end in a confrontation in Blackrock Hall; or alternatively, Blossia has already deduced the treachery and needs outside help to take him down as her guildmates are too absorbed in their own coping mechanisms.

Opiter, L3 human commander Init +8
Saber of Vanity (core) +9 vs AC (8 if others engaged), 20 dmg
Too Good for the Likes of You!: Deals +5 damage if the target attacked him this round.
Tactical Strike! Quick action, nearby ally makes an attack w/+2, 1/encounter, recharge when staggered
Ring of Poor Choices (BoL): quick action, +6 vs MD, target PC next turn must move away and takes the rally action *or* move towards and makes a melee attack on next turn, chosen by Opiter to be most tactically advantageous.
Not like this When first staggered, Opiter’s Signet Ring shatters, releasing obscuring fog in the area, giving him free to disengage next turn
HP 90, AC 19, PD 17, MD 13
Treasure: Ring of Poor Choices, opulent clothing and jewelry

Disguised Bodyguard Init +5
HP 27 AC 17 PD 15 MD 11
Weapon Attack, +6 vs AC–5 damage
Natural even hit, target pops free from all the DB’s allies and takes -2 to disengage
Forceful interception When DB intercepts an enemy, they take 5 damage

Like other villains in these adventures, Opiter is assumed to want to escape with his life if possible, to return for revenge if foiled here. If the PCs and Blossia have gathered enough evidence to make a compelling case, or Opiter monologues during the combat, Thalanil and the

other surviving guild members will react gratefully. However, the wound left in the company by the treachery was fatal; Thalanil has no wish to remain in command. As his replacement, only Blossia is a possibility, but her talents are interpersonal skills and not strategy, tactics, or discipline. Besides, most of the members have already decided to quit. However… the PCs may be inspiring heroes who could carry one the reputation of the guild. If their behavior was honorable, Thalanil is willing to give them command of the guild and ownership of the guildhall before he retires to a monastery to atone for his failings.

The Guild

From the description it should be clear that the players, should this offer be made and accepted, aren't getting a raft of henchmen to fight their battles–and, unless you are planning on transitioning to a different mode of play, they shouldn't really expect to anyhow. The various members will probably require some convincing or searching to get or come with complications (the Crusader usually doesn't let recruits leave once they sign on, etc.). But they should be assets to the players if they invest in them (as well as ongoing money sinks) for finding clues, plot-hooks, magic items and so forth.

You can present the players with various impending problems and let them send out the guildies to delay one of them. Perhaps even with a chance of resolving it, but a bigger chance to turn it into a catastrophe. The best thing about being part of a team is that they have something to threaten that aren't recoveries.

Blossia will wish to reunite the whole group, but the players shouldn't feel obligated to let this collect 'em all quest occupy center stage if they don't want to. They could cut ties with this group, rename the guild, and recruit some fresh blood–who will, of course, come with their own set of complications and hooks.

Blackrock Hall

The Glorious Legion guildhall was purchased when they returned triumphant with a king's–or at least a few princelings'--ransom after a successful early campaign some number of years ago. It it big enough to house all 100 members, and is a three story fortress built into the hillside in the Garrison district.

The third floor is partial, featuring a large balcony; inside are half a dozen or so small but private rooms for officers, and a Commander's dining table that overlooks the main hall on the second floor.

The second floor is the main floor, with a grand opening out onto the hill side. There is an entry hall, with an adjoining meeting room containing maps and trophies. The entry hall also leads to the main hall, which is overlooked by the Commander's dining area and could seat about 100 on plain benches. Two barracks take up the bulk of the room, there are also several junk/storage rooms, a kitchen, a spiral staircase, and a secret passage or two.

The first floor used to be a manor house and its decor is done in a slightly older style. It has an exterior exit also, on a different face then the second floor, which leads to the larder and servants quarters, as well as various rooms under renovation, secret passages, connections to the undercity, etc. Some of the guild members have various ideas of what to renovate this to, but since their disaster, they have had ample room on the second and third floors.

Following is some ideas of what players could use this space for, after an investment of time and money and a possible game effect. Bonus could be a +2, a temporary background, or a reroll:

- Library: Guild members get a bonus to research and social checks with visiting scholars
- Theater: Spread tales of the guild's exploits; a bonus on social checks with locals, especially middle class
- Tavern: Members gain a bonus on social checks with local riff-raff
- Dojo: Bonus to recharge rolls for all class powers after 1 encounter/adventure
- Study: Members gain a bonus to recharge rolls for magic items 1/adventure
- Ritual Chamber: Bonus to rituals performed here
- Reception Hall: Bonus to social checks with visiting dignitaries or nobles
- Well-stocked larder: Bonus to a physical check 1/adventure
- Infirmary: Restore a recovery between full heal-ups
- Herbal Distillery: Produces 1 appropriate tier Healing potion per PC per adventure
- Alchemical Lab: Produces 1 appropriate tier resistance/oil potion per PC per adventure
- Blacksmith: Can make any mundane equipment
- Rune Smith: Can produce 1 rune per adventure
- Workshop: Make tools or other mundane items
- Infiltrator's workshop: Bonus to disguise or stealth checks
- Monster pens: Safely hold captured monsters
- Cells: Securely hold captives
- Ambassador's quarters: Gain an icon point after inviting a specific icon's emissary
- Chapel: Bonus to a saving throw per adventurer 1/adventure
- Barracks: Low comfort lodging for fifty members
- Escape Tunnel: Connection to the Undercity
- Whatever else your players suggest

Many of these will only be useful depending on player creativity, and in fact might only facilitate things that would only require a bit of narration in a typical 13th Age game; however, the players will feel clever if they get use out of their investment and have, say, just the right type of grappling hook built in their very own workshop.