BASILICA OF THE LEPER MESSIAH
written/drawn by Michael Prescott—concept by Andy Action—edited by Andrew Young

THE SITUATION
For centuries, Owlshade has dealt with the walking plague by confining its victims to a high-walled enclave. At its center is the Basilica of the Leper Messiah, ruled over by a lich, Husmanna.

The enclave survives because it takes in afflicted nobility. Husmanna’s tinctures stave off death, allowing the afflicted to continue directing family affairs. In this way, the enclave remains a powerful political force in the city.

THE ENCLAVE
The walls of the enclave (not shown) are tall, and enclose thirty ruined buildings.

A chained platform is lowered to allow parties in or out of the enclave, but only those with blue tongues will be allowed back out into the city. Roll on the Enclave Visitors table to see who is using the platform.

THE APPROACH
The Basilica is tall, a study in harsh vertical lines.

Enclave Visitors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>d6</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>d3 bailiffs bringing a debtor or petty criminal to the enclave as punishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shorn relative coming to use the Mourners’ Gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Noble house lawyer bringing documents for review (real estate, final wills).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Noble in mourning, secretly bringing the ashes of a deceased relative to be bound into a monolith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Liveried noble house factor, escorted by d3-1 armed youths. 1 in 3 chance of carrying a sack of gold to deposit in the enclave.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prefex
Six huge, gray pillars dominate the room, but a moment’s inspection reveals that they do not support the ceiling. They are gray monoliths, made from compressed ash of cremated lepers.

A unit of six Quietus blocks the entrance to the Nave—only those with black tokens from the Court of Petitions are allowed through.

Court of Petitions
A red-robed proctor with leprous skin hears petitions from visitors. d3 visitors will be here, waiting, along with 4 Quietus guards.

Powerful dignitaries, legendary figures, or generous donors will be given a black token so they might enter deeper to treat directly with Husmanna. Those on Basilica business are given blue tokens.

Narthex
d8 wretches await entry. Afflicted with the walking plague, but too low born to be given Indigo status, they will eventually be taken to the Hall of Purification.

A pair of halberd-armed Quietus guard the inner archway, allowing in only the wealthy- or healthy-looking.

Hall of Purification
Here, d8 Indigo tend unfortunate plague-bearers insufficiently wealthy or connected to be spared. d2 poor visitors from the Mourners’ Gate will be here speaking with them in the first pit.

When they (or Indigo) die, their bodies are cremated in the second, central pit. The ashes are refined and ground into a hole that brings on pleasant (but non-magical) dreams of deceased relatives (silver purse). Unseen undead in the mezzanine crowd with unseen undead. Any disturbance here draws thrown masonry.

Nave
A crude loggia protects visitors from the thrown stones of the unseen undead in the mezzanine. Any who leave the loggia without an Indigo escort are attacked.

Copyright © 2017 Michael Prescott — CC-BY-NC 4.0 — More at http://blog.trilemma.com
**HALL OF ASCENSION**

Three **Indigo** toil here, making ash bricks and assembling the Basilica’s 20th **monolith**.

A cavernous hole in the ground is used by **Ormina** to enter the sewers below the city.

**MOURNER’S GATE**

Mulpitus, a round-bodied husk of a monk with deeply set eyes, lives in this reeking alley and guards the second way into the Basilica.

His long tenure grants him the right to allow three desiring mourners into the **Hall of Purification** each day. He gives a blue token to those he admits, for use in the market.

Each morning, d20 mourners will be lined up at the gate, hoping to be selected. Some have been coming for months.

**QUIETUS**

Chain-armored skeletons with razor-sharp halberds act as guards. They sense without seeing, so their helmets completely enclose their skulls and shoulders in a smooth ovoid of polished steel. Quietus are dry and brittle—they break easily, but fight until smashed.

**THE INDIGO**

Indigo robes signify a wealthy plague-afflicted who remains here as a servant, their life extended by **Husmanna**. Their eyes, noses, and mouths are stained with refined blue-tongue paste to keep them alive. The newest are flisty or sad, retain their names, and advocate for their house. The longest-lived have had their affairs assigned to the proctor and are barely more animate than the Quietus.

**CHOIR**

A statue made of curved clay pipes emerges from the floor. Air hisses through them; its susurrus can be heard the unspoken wishes of everyone in the city. **Ormina** sleeps at its base, listening.

**ORMINA**

A horse-sized ermine with sleek, gray fur. She behaves like a cat, uncaring and lazy, but she is a demon brought back from beyond the **middle silence**. The construction of the monoliths is her project.

She moves backwards, following the tip of her tail like a bizarre, furred snake. Her head comes last, peering over her shoulder with a golden, lidless eye.

Anyone bitten by her is cursed—any attempt at speech comes out as gray smoke.

Occasionally she slips through the sewers into the city, invisible, to bring her plague to someone prominent chosen by **Husmanna**.

**THREE SILENCES**

The huge statues here represent the silence before creation, the silence after all has ended, and the middle silence: the death that comes for everyone.

Once potent idols, they are inert. Two centuries ago, Husmanna completed the ritual that brought Ormina, fulfilling the purpose of the silence cult that made them.

**HUSMANN THE LICH**

He stands among twelve identically robed skeletons; he uses ventriloquism to disguise which is him. The rest of his magic is gone, spent summoning Ormina.

Husmanna peddles influence and Indigo status for gold. (Bluetongue is made from sapphire, which is costly.)

He will happily use the influence he commands in exchange for large gold donations.

After two centuries cultivating this empire, he secretly fears the world Ormina’s monoliths will bring.

**THE GRAY MONOLITHS**

Assembled from thousands of bricks of compressed funerary ash, the monoliths stand 10 paces tall. The outer surface is a plastered with ash, then painstakingly embossed with rectangular runes.

The spell they form is repetitive, but powerful, apparently binding many spirits into a single being.

Most of the 19 complete monoliths in the Basilica are **dormant**, but when adventurers first enter a room containing monoliths, there is a 3-in-6 chance that one of the monoliths has reached **Stage 2**.

**THE SLEEPERS AWaken**

There’s a 3-in-6 chance the most alert monolith advances to the next stage whenever any of these things happen:

- A monolith is physically damaged (puffs of white ash and grit) for the first time
- A spell is cast
- An intelligent being is killed
- Ormina dies

**STAGE 1—DORMANT**

The monolith is a riot of terriﬁed, independent souls slowly pairing and combining into greater entities. As a whole, it is not aware of its environment, but it radiates powerful magic. Attempts to commune cause a harmful psychic backlash.

**STAGE 2—NEODEUS**

The dominant entity emerges and the entire psychic structure crystallizes, remaking itself. This produces an audible pop, and a psychic shockwave.

The monolith is now transcendentally intelligent and can:

- Launch and sustain psychic shockwaves
- Communicate telepathically with other alert monoliths and undead (e.g., the Basilica’s Quietus)
- Launch and sustain psychic attacks (which feel like having a boulder gently lowered onto your self-esteem)

**STAGE 3—ASCENDED**

Ascended monoliths are demi-gods. Torn between the temporal reality of the Basilica and their higher destiny, roll randomly for each action they take (see table).

**MONOLITH DESTRUCTION**

Monoliths smash in minutes with maces or similar weapons. Doing so sends a psychic shockwave that destroys d2-1 other monoliths in the Basilica.

The shockwave hits the living like an overwhelming identity assault. The players of affected PCs exchange characters (really). This reverts after d10 minutes as long as both PCs are still alive.

**d6 Actions of Stage 3 (Ascended) Monoliths**

- 1 Rise two paces up into the air and begin slowly rotating. The monolith emits an ozone smell and a static crackle.
- 2 Attack the ancestral host of Owlshade. This causes d10+10 ghosts to become briefly visible before being torn apart. Their essence is drawn into the monolith. If this happens 3 times, d2 demons arrive, sensing the weakness of the host.
- 3 Telekinetically slam into the nearest lower-stage monolith, absorbing its power. Anything caught between is crushed. If a large stone or metal object is in the way, then both monoliths are destroyed.
- 4 Catalyze a new spell from the void. The entire monolith flashes like lightning. Runes for the spell are flash-burned into all surfaces (including clothes, skin, and eyes) within line of sight. The monolith can now use the spell effect at will.
- 5 Emit a deafening, nauseating base hum. All distances inside the Basilica (heights, room width) multiply by d6. (In practical terms, it’s like the monoliths and living things all shrink.) The effect is permanent, but only inside the Basilica.
- 6 Teleport to its appointed place in the world, d10x100 leagues away, to begin displacing the regional deity. A portal to the monolith and its new surroundings can be seen (and used) for d20 seconds.