

# DCC: World of Iriolis

## Our Group

Player	Character	Description	Class
Bruce	Gallfred Weasel	Guild Beggar	Thief
Chris	Old Man Fish	Locksmith	Ranger
Ernest	Hemp	Weaver	Warrior
Matt	Mordecai	Gravedigger	Wizard
Patrick	Podrick	Squire	Warrior
Tim	Ned Wimbley	Beekeeper	Wizard

Tim joins the call. Nobody is there. He is bereft. Then *Bruce* joins to reassure him that other people still exist, and many of them have not been washed away in flash floods. *Paul* calls in just in time to find out that many ADHD and antidepressant medications all reduce heat tolerance. Of course, getting older and fatter will also do that – and that describes us to a T.

*Patrick* regrets his choice to log in when he does because the group has moved on to talking about Minecraft, Stardew Valley, Terraria, and the Sims. Aieee!

Everyone celebrates when *Ernest* shows up, at least until he starts talking about his “big beautiful bill”, which leads the others to suspect that he might be trying to transform into a duck. Or, less alarmingly, that he might be wearing a billed cap. In other news, yesterday he attended a gender reveal party and almost became the casualty.

We are all saddened that *Chris* is missing, owing to various family obligations.

## The Wizardly Competitors

There were originally seven competitors in the Wizardly Contest, including *Ned Wimbley*. Several of them have been... eliminated. They are (or were):

- *Renox the White Magister* was slain in a contest with Kasaca the Corrupter.
- *Kasaca the Corrupter* is an old woman with questionable dress sense and a disproportionately large belly. She is escorted by a heavily-armored Amazon and five spear-carriers.
- *Urzeth the Unbound* is, or was, just a flame in a robe. Ned Wimbley killed him in a street fight, and then recruited his lamia servant *Amathies*.
- *Illka the Fey* is an elf! She had twelve hooded men as her servants, all killed by the Servitors. She is currently suffering iron poisoning, inflicted upon her by Urzeth the Unbound’s servants.
- *Xander the Magnificent* is an old man with surprisingly few visible mutations, except for his head. Oh wait, that’s just his helmet. He carries a mid-length blade and has a very solid clay golem as a friend.

- *Alred the Harbinger of Fate*, a squat man who sweats profusely. Small frogs and salamander emerge from his body constantly. He is escorted by a single frog-man servitor who is also his apprentice and familiar. He notes that several of the characters have PER 13+. He hates them all.

Counting Ned there are five competitors remaining.

## The Tower of Illka the Fey

The characters head to Illka's tower. They have a simple proposition (as phrased by *Hemp the Weaver*): "You're all jacked up, your people are dead. You should back us in our fight against the Evil Monster King." They think this is an excellent case.

Unfortunately, when the group arrives at her crystalline tower they find that the gate is just a slab of crystal welded to the body of the tower. There is no visible keyhole or knob. *Galfred Weasel* tries humming, "And then the crystal cracked..." at it. This does not serve to open the lock. Ned Wimbley knocks. This produces a booming sound, but no other effect. *Luigiphon* does a 360° flight and reports that the only other visible windows or entries are up at the top of the tower. Right at the peak of the tower, there is an observation window. Amathies points out that her (now dead) assassin ally used that window to get access to the tower when he poisoned Illka. Everyone concludes that there is a high chance that Illka now has a claymore mine pointed at the window.

Ned writes a letter to Illka describing his interest in allying with her. He seals it, then hands it to an insect Servitor with orders to wait at the door until Illka emerges. The characters are pretty sure she will appear at night because she is scheduled to fight the (now dead) Urzeth.

## Maybe Xander Will Talk?

The characters' next step is to visit the ominous tower of Xander the Magnificent. Ned thinks that he might want to talk because he is visibly less mutated than most of the other competitors, and had expressed concern that he was not going to be allowed to use magical artifacts during duels. His tower has a heavy, metal, green door. Knocking on it produces a lot of noise and alerts the golem standing just inside it.

The golem opens the door. Xander is standing just behind it, offset perfectly to allow everyone a good view of his magnificence, and answers in a gaudy and performative manner, "Welcome to the tower of Xander the MAGNIFICENT! Master of all things ARCANE!"

"We would like to parlay."

"Oh yes! Our conversation earlier was quite interesting!"

The first floor of the tower is sparse, with nothing but a firepit and an unused straw pallet. The golem clearly doesn't need to sleep. A spiral stairway leads up to the second floor, but sadly Xander doesn't invite the characters up there right away. The golem sets out a table so Xander can offer refreshments: sweetmeats and blood wine!

Ned tells Xander about his belief that there is no prize – that the Secret Masters of the competition want to see the competitors kill each other so they can then pilfer their magical secrets.

Xander looks around, then removes her false beard and hat. She admits, “I am not actually Xander. I am the famed thief, *Adena the Wolf*. I sought to enter this deathtrap in hopes of stealing the gemstones from the thrones of the Black Order. Little did I know that I would not be allowed to bring my spell scrolls into the duel. If you seek an ally against the Order, you have found one.”

Gallfred is quick to admit, “Yes! I have also desired those gemstones. We are natural allies!”

*Hemp the Weaver* is pretty sure that Gallfred is getting aroused.

Ned sputters, “I was about to say that I didn’t care about gemstones.”

*Adena the Wolf* offers, “I suggest a 50-50 split. I get half, you share half of the rest. But what plot do you think the Black Order is engaged in?”

Ned answers, “I don’t think there are any winners. And we could help you win your duels in a variety of ways. Say, by having an unseen servant push your competitors off the dueling arch to fall to their deaths.”

Gallfred suggests, “Adena, perhaps we could discuss some of your more famous crimes. In private.”

*Adena* brushes him off, “It is almost dusk, we have time to get acquainted later. But you saw how while the Servitors ate the bodies of Renox’s servants, they carried away the body of the fallen mage? You see that building with black smoke pouring from it? I think that’s the crematorium, and where they’re trying to extract power from the bodies of the fallen magicians.”

## Dusk – The Next Challenge

*Adena* reapplies her beard and disguise. Gallfred offers to help. By the time he is done, the others find it impossible to believe that she is anything other than an old, white-bearded man – in spite of the fact that they have seen her outside of her disguise.

*Hemp the Weaver* is absolutely convinced that *Adena* represents the perfect doomed romance for Gallfred: after the competition, she will leave him forever by departing to another dimension. Probably after she steals him blind. *Hemp* finds this both artistically and personally satisfying.

Nobody asks Gallfred for his opinion, but he totally agrees with *Hemp*. In all of the particulars. Doomed romance is his jam.

Everyone goes up to the Charnel Arch. Gallfred stays as close as he can to Xander/*Adena*. The Secret Masters of the Black Order watch from above, surrounded by fifty servitors bearing torches that burn with an oily black smoke.

When Illka appears, she looks pale and emaciated. Her eyes are unfocused, and she looks like she is on the edge of death. Ned approaches her and suggests, "I propose an alliance. We can speak more after the ritual of the duel."

"I do not know if they will even allow me to survive. We will know more after the Secret Masters speak."

Ned becomes uncomfortably aware that the Secret Masters are all staring at him.

Illka approaches and faces the Secret Masters. They rise as one. One speaks, "Urzeth the Unbound is no longer with us. Illka the Fey is victorious by forfeiture. Raise up her banner!" Servitors approach bearing a bone-white palanquin draped in sea-silk banners. They grab her up and place her inside, then carry her up to the Masters' thrones.

Podrick starts a half-hearted golf clap. A few others join him, confused. It becomes clear that there is little mechanism for transmitting gossip on the island, and several of the competitors are utterly baffled by what is happening. The Secret Masters' pronouncement that Urzeth was dead was the first they'd heard of the matter.

Then a Secret Master announces the next challenge: Ned Wimbley will face Alred the Harbinger of Fate.

*Jeburai* the tall warrioress in her formed cuirass, bearing her long spear and shield, approaches the characters. They know her as the bodyguard of Kasaca the Corruptor. She demands, "Did you know about this? What happened to Illka and her companions? How did Urzeth fall?"

Ned suggests, "Urzeth's companions attempted to cheat. They poisoned Illka. So, we killed everyone in the zip code." He notices that she almost immediately glances at Alred the Harbinger – he obviously has a reputation as a potential cheater.

Jeburai rather earnestly tells Ned and Hemp, "Everyone knows that the Secret Masters will slay anyone who attempts to cheat."

Hemp scoffs, "People say a lot of things about the Secret Masters that aren't true."

Ned pries, "What do you think the Secret Masters seek?"

Jeburai says with high confidence, "They want a seventh member."

Ned is patient with her, "I don't think that is true. I think they seek bloodshed. They have hosted far more of these tournaments than there are chairs at that table. And have you noticed how they treat the bodies of the losers?"

Jeburai answers, "My lady does not care what happens to the losers."

Ned replies, "She should care more about what happens to the winners."

Jeburai rolls her eyes at the conspiracy theorists and walks off to rejoin her mistress.

In contrast, Alred the Harbinger of Fate isn't interested in hanging around to chat. He just glares at Ned and walks off with his toad-creature at his side.

## The Plots of Alred the Harbinger

Gallfred tails Alred the frog wizard and his hopping companion back to his tower. After the wizard gets far enough down the cliffside that the others can no longer see him, he stops to talk to his companion in a low voice. After that, he continues moving down the pathway – but the toad familiar does not. Instead, the creature finds a niche behind a building and hides behind it. Gallfred stays to watch the toad-creature.

The other characters come down the path. Hemp has persuaded Amathies the lamia to talk about her home. It sounds like it might be on the same world as the characters, but from a much warmer climate. She describes tropical villages and huge, sprawling cities. They walk right past the cluster of huts where Alred's familiar lurks. Once they move past, the creature scurries out to shadow them.

Gallfred decides that the familiar has unsavory motives. He moves out of the shadows and garrotes the thing, using a garrote poisoned with *lumphat extract* (which slows the victim's movement). He wounds it but doesn't manage to kill it. The hopping familiar attempts to swallow Gallfred whole, an attempt that very fortunately fails. Gallfred responds by cutting the creature with *shadeslayer*, leaving it on the brink of death.

At this point, Luigiphon comes in to try a grapple. The familiar evades the grab, then fishes out a vial of something and flings it at Ned. It bursts into a cloud of poisonous fumes with a 100' radius (which means that everyone, even the familiar, is affected).

### The Familiar's Poison Vial

The oily miasma seeps in past windows and doors, targeting all within a 100' radius. For 2d4+4 rounds, targets in the cloud suffer a -4 penalty to all rolls (attacks, damage, skills, and saves), take 1d4 points of damage each round, and must make a DC 20 Fort save when first exposed or be poisoned (-2d4 Stamina, duration 1 day).

The familiar dies of his own poison. Gallfred is very fortunate and avoids the effects of the poison. Most of the others are afflicted much more seriously. Everyone runs to get away from the gas cloud.

The characters continue down to Alred's miserable, slime-drooling hut. They reflect upon appropriate responses. Sadly, the dead familiar doesn't have a second vial of poison – because that would have been ideal. Infiltrating the house looks difficult: there are no windows, and only one swollen door, apparently stuck shut.

Gallfred poisons Alred's door with *nullbrain distillant*. Let's see how he does tomorrow at the contest with no memory.

## A Bit of Autopsy

The characters drag the body of the dead froggy familiar back to their tower where Ned (who is still feeling pretty upset over being poisoned) and Gallfred cut the creature apart. Ned motivates the thief by telling him that the thing might have swallowed gemstones. They find no gemstones. Gallfred is very, very disappointed.

### Nullbrain Distillant

200 gp Touch DC 20. On a successful save target becomes disoriented for 1d6 turns (acts randomly); failed save means complete memory loss.

## A Social Call on the Fey

The next morning, the characters go up to see Illka the Fey again. This time, she opens the door. The characters notice that she is accompanied by three tigers. Apparently, someone knows *summon animal*. Also, she is looking a lot better, crediting her recovery in part to the strange drinks the Secret Masters gave her. She describes how she was taken to celebrate with the Secret Masters and was given white wine to drink from a goblet carved from the skull of an elf. She did see their faces, but she didn't recognize any of them. She tells Ned, "We didn't have much time to speak yesterday. What have you learned?"

Ned offers, "Well, Alred is a cheater. He poisoned us, and he gassed an entire neighborhood of Servitors."

"Your note said you want to move against the Secret Masters, but why?"

"I am suspicious of their goals..." Ned explains his theories on the actual endpoint of the tournament, though he has no evidence – only suspicions and paranoia, just like any good wizard.

Illka is dismissive, "I am not captured by your convincements."

Language in her dimension is clearly a bit different.

She continues, "I spend my days and nights poring over rotting scrolls and ancient grimoires to find an advantage in this deathmatch. I speak to the skull of my old master, but nothing I have seen suggests that the reward for this contest is not as promised."

The others notice that her belongings are scattered around the chamber and that she has endless sheaves of old scrolls. The air is thick with incense.

Hemp asks, "Hey, are you from our dimension?"

Illka explains, "I am from the elf-lands. It is a place of the fey." She refuses to explain further, which Hemp takes as an answer of "no".

## The Crematorium

The characters take a side trip to the crematorium. It's a low blockhouse with no windows and only one door. Foul, black smoke gouts from a chimney at the back of the structure. There is no visible keyhole, so nothing much for Gallfred to do with his thieving skills. So, Hemp (enhanced with *enlarge*) kicks the door. A peephole slides open to reveal an insect servitor.

Hemp demands, "Lord Ned wishes to inspect the inside!"

The Servitor shakes its masked face no. The peephole slides shut.

Then *Podrick* remembers that the characters have *onyx teeth* that can render them temporarily immune to smoke and such. They also provide the ability to breathe underwater, which will become important later (foreshadowing!) Ned sends Luigiphon up to block the chimney. Soon enough, this prompts a crowd of insect Servitors to rush out the door and climb up the walls to see what's wrong with the chimney. During the confusion, Gallfred sneaks inside, right past two sentry Servitors armed with paired glaives. Hemp does his best to get the Servitors' attention by talking to them. He definitely distracts them, even if it is unlikely that they understand him.

Inside, Gallfred finds a guardroom, which he goes past. Beyond that, he finds the Slaughter Hall, which is stacked with corpses of slain wizards. The Servitors collect wizard skins in one corner to render into gelatin. In another, they process the wizards' blood and brains. A giant cauldron in the center of the room is used for rendering down the fats and trimmings.

Gallfred moves upstairs to find ovens and stoves where the products of the first floor are cooked into biscuits, candies, and sweetmeats, not to mention bottles of blood wine. Gallfred steals three of each and walks on out.

Soon enough, the insect Servitors are able to clear the blockage on the chimney. They might have some questions on why the characters are hanging around outside, but they cannot speak so they cannot give voice to their suspicions. Certainly, they don't stop the group from going back to their tower where Gallfred describes what he saw and shares his prizes.

Ned already knows that the sweetmeats increase his caster die size for 4 hours. He tries some blood wine. The various treats provide distinct bonuses:

- *Sweetmeats*: +1d to spell checks for 4 hours
- *Blood wine*: +1d to all saving throws for 4 hours
- *Bone crackers, smeared with a liver pâté*: +3HD to the PC's hit points for 1 hour

After feeding some wizard treats to Ned and negotiating with Xander the Magnificent, the characters have: 6 Sweetmeats, 18 Blood wine, and 5 Bone crackers

## Talking to Other Competitors

The characters go visit Illka the Fey and tell her about how the Secret Masters (or their Servitors) are butchering wizards and turning them into snack foods. She is convinced by their arguments but doesn't see a safe way off the island.

The characters decide that their next stop should be the Turret of the Corruptor, a jagged black stone claw thrusting 70 feet into the sky. They wish to speak to Kasaca the Corruptor. Kasaca isn't willing to emerge, but her bodyguard Jeburai does. Ned explains what the characters have learned, after one of his servants snuck in. She demands to speak directly to Gallfred, who confirms Ned's story. Jeburai seems to accept this. Ned makes his ask: when he and his companions act against the Secret Order, he wants Kasaca to act alongside them.

Jeburai agrees. And it seems like she actually has the power to sense lies.

## The Charnel Arch Takes Alred the Harbinger

The characters once again appear at the Charnel Arch. They recognize now that the remains of dead wizards are actually burned into the material of the arch. Again, the six Secret Masters appear, this time flanked by 41 Servitors. The characters note that Illka does bring her three tigers.

Ned Wimbley is forced to dismiss the *enlarge* spell he had upon himself and divest himself of magical items. Alred the Harbinger of Fate does likewise. The characters notice (to their disappointment) that he doesn't appear to have been poisoned into witlessness – he managed to make the DC 20 save against the *nullbrain distillant*.

Ned opens up with *magic missile*. Alred counters with *lightning bolt*. Ned's spell is stunningly effective, blasting right past Alred's defense. Ned shatters him into pieces. Alred turns into a cloud of tiny amphibians. They continue to pile off the archway as if he opened a portal to the plane of amphibians. There are piles of dead amphibians down at the bottom of the Charnel Arch. And Ned stands victorious!

The Secret Masters congratulate Ned upon his victory. They raise the banners for the next death match: Kasaca the Corrupter against Xander the Magnificent.

The characters decide that this is their moment. Ned casts *magic shield* on Podrick, giving him +4 AC for 10 minutes. Gallfred and Adena the Wolf climb up the sheer cliff to be able to watch the Masters at dinner. Hemp has a potion of *invisibility* ready to drink. Podrick is just very, very tough. And Amathies is a lamia.

## Dinner and Massacre with the Secret Masters

Ned climbs the long stairway up to the great stone table where six Secret Masters sit in their obsidian thrones. They offer him white wine, served in a goblet made from the skull of an elf. He drinks it, and gains +1d5 permanent HP (4) and +1d5 stat points recovered from spellburn (+3 AGI). They wish him good luck in his future duels and hope that he will join them in the future.

Then Gallfred acts. He garrotes a Secret Master, inflicting a lot of damage and poisoning the wizard with *nullbrain distillant*. Hemp (who had been invisible) yells, “Secret signal!” and shoots two Masters with the *blazefire bow*: the arrow goes cleanly through one Secret Master and into a second. Both are horribly injured.

Then the Secret Masters unleash *black bolts*. Gallfred is almost killed, while Hemp the Weaver evades with bullet-time level skill. Ned returns fire with *magic missile*, killing one of the wounded Masters then watching as Luigiroth clubs the other wounded Master to death. Then he surrounds himself with a crowd of *mirror images* because he is personally not fond of dying.

Podrick hears the disturbance. He runs up the stairs with Amathies at his side. They encounter a pair of insect Servitor Champions. A ferocious combat ensues. Illka the Fey follows them. She demonstrates that she knows *turn to stone* by partially transforming one of the Servitor Champions. The creature ends up unable to speak or attack and can only barely move. Then Podrick leaps up with *ulftheonar's wolf spear* and pins the second one to the ground. Amathies follows up with attacks that almost slay it. And her poison reduces its action die. Then Illka roasts the thing with a *scorching ray*. It dies in flames.

Hemp shoots another Secret Master, leaving the sorcerer burning (but still alive).

Unseen by the others (obviously), Gallfred and Adena the Wolf both hide in the shadows.

The surviving Secret Masters decide that they want nothing to do with the situation. They collect into a circle and start a chant. Ned recognizes that they are performing a ritual to teleport themselves clear out of this dimension. He thinks that they are showing a lot of faith in the ability of their insect Servitors to keep the characters at bay – a faith that might well be justified as two of the things clamber up to the clearing and head for Ned.

Ned Wimbley sees an insect Servitor disturbingly close but prioritizes ending the Secret Masters over personal safety. His *magic missile* executes a Secret Master. Luigiphon crushes another of them. And Hemp's arrows kill the next to last of them.

Adena the Wolf pops up to stab the last Secret Master, blinding him and rendering him unable to act. Then Ned uses a barrage of *magic missiles* to kill the last Master and wound three nearby insect Servitors. Unfortunately, four more insect Servitors show up at the top of the cliff. They swamp Adena the Wolf, hitting her five times and killing her instantly! Gallfred's tragic romance becomes even more tragic.

## The Island Sinks!

Once the Masters are dead their hold over the insect Servitors is broken – one by one, they return to their hives. Also, the island starts to drop beneath the waves. This poses a huge problem for Gallfred, because each of the thrones has a huge gemstone on it. And the Secret Masters have their own treasures besides.

But Gallfred is confident – he has an onyx tooth so he can breathe underwater, and the *bracelet of swimming and climbing* to help him swim to the surface. He addresses himself to prying a giant gemstone out of one of the thrones.

Podrick races up the stairs, trying to keep ahead of the water. Amathies follows him. Illka the Fey runs off a cliff and casts *feather fall*. Nobody ever sees her again.

Hemp is able to loot one Secret Master – he grabs an iron crown and puts it on. It doesn't do anything, at least not for him.

Ned grabs the crown from another Secret Master. As he holds it, he feels the weight of destiny. He knows that if he puts it on, it will change him forever. He puts it on. His alignment changes to Chaos (no effect). He gains +1d5 INT (1) and +1d5 LUCK (1). He learns 1d3+1 (2) additional spells from the forbidden secrets flooding his mind: *detect invisible* and *fire resistance*. He loses his existing Patron relationship and all patron spells. As long as he has the crown, he cannot bond to any patron. He is also reviled by the gods – attempts to divinely heal him suffer a -2 dice penalty.

Hemp and Ned run through the Secret Masters, looting as many of them as they can. They collect:

- A bunch of iron crowns;
- 13 gemstones (100 gp each)
- 6 wavy daggers

Gallfred struggles and struggles to extract one of the massive gems in the Secret Masters' thrones. By the time he manages to get one free, the waters are almost at his feet. Ned has an easier idea: he casts *enlarge* on one and pops it out of its setting. Hemp manages to get another one out with sheer force. Each of these gems is worth (D7 x 1000) gp each!

Podrick and Amathies finally show up at the top, just ahead of the water, and swallow jade teeth. Podrick knows what the teeth do. Amathies just follows his lead. By the time they arrive, it is clear that there is no way to get to the port – that is long since lost under the waters.

Ned casts *animal summoning* to bring up a huge pterodactyl, a creature big enough to carry two people ahead of the flood. He and Podrick fly out. Hemp has a *levitation arrow*. He grabs Amathies and lifts both of them out. Finally, Gallfred gets taken by the waves but manages to pull himself out and swims to a single surviving black-sailed ship – a vessel that Luigiphon had freed from its moorings when the island started to subside. The others are already aboard and are mostly pleased to see that he survived.

## Returning Home

Deprived of its original masters, the black-sailed ship will obey an elf or wizard with suitable effort. After a while, Ned gains control of it and sails it away back home. Hemp asks Amathies if she wants to go to the characters' home dimension and help fight an evil wizard-king. She agrees to his proposal.

The three giant gemstones are worth 1000 gp, 2000 gp, and 3000 gp. Finding buyers for them may be complicated.

## The End of the Session

The session ends with the characters returning home. Everyone gains +1 LUCK, except for Ned who gains +3 LUCK. Each character gains 10 EXP, which leaves Gallfred 1 EXP shy of 5<sup>th</sup> level.

Each character gains 3 100 gp gemstones. Hemp hands Amathies one leftover gemstone, because she'll need money when she gets to civilization.