

Session 57: Imp-ossible Negotiations: Xakarium is too wise (and charming) to have nice things

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Summary

After recovering from their harrowing battles within the Inscrutable Tower, the party emerged from the shelter of a magical extra-dimensional food pantry, rested and ready to press onward.

Xakarium was entrusted with one of the remaining geodes for future spell boosting, while the group debated their next move. Knowing the tower's elevators could carry them no higher than the sixty-third floor due to the massive breach above the Great Library, they weighed the risks of further exploration against the urgency of confronting the dragon. Ultimately, they resolved to push upward, spreading out to minimize the threat of the dragon's devastating breath.

Their first detour led them to investigate the tower's windows, which appeared from the outside as seamless, featureless obsidian but were fully functional from within. A rune etched into the windowsill, when touched, caused a shimmering mercury-like effect that slid the glass open. Tark squeezed through one of the windows and confirmed that the moment he crossed the threshold to the outside, the window vanished entirely from his view, hidden by a powerful illusion. Curious and methodical, he fired arrows at the invisible pane from the exterior until the glass shattered with a resounding crack — which immediately triggered the tower's defenses. Shield Guardians began descending the stairwells, and the party scrambled into the nearest elevator to escape.

They rode the elevator to the research floors, arriving in a sprawling alchemy lab that reeked of chemicals, its shelves and cauldrons brimming with half-finished concoctions and arcane ingredients. Exploring further, they found a scriptorium where magical quills scratched away autonomously at parchment, and a material storage room stocked with rare spell components behind a locked display cabinet that required a specific gemstone to open. The tower's magical security system proved frustratingly precise, limiting how many items each person could borrow

based on their intellect — a rule that left Xakarium, despite being an Academy member, permitted to possess exactly nothing, much to everyone's amusement.

It was in the scriptorium that the party made a startling discovery: a group of imps had been shackled to their desks for over fifteen years, forced to copy books long after the Academy's wizards had vanished. Their apparent ringleader, a sharp-tongued imp who came to be called Squishnix, was eager to negotiate. He revealed that Amaranthyst — the dragon haunting the tower — had once walked among the mortal wizards in human guise, serving as the director of the Amethyst Academy itself, all while concealing her true nature as an ancient ultraviolet dragon. Oiroa drafted a binding contract in the language of the infernal, and after some spirited negotiation over rest periods and rations, all the imps signed with the contract. A scroll of magical unlocking freed Squishnix from his chains, though the others remained bound for the time being, as the party lacked the means to release them all at once.

With Squishnix in tow and potions of flight distributed among those who needed them, the party ascended the tower's enchanted staircases — moving escalators that whisked them upward at remarkable speed. At the top of the intact stairwell, they stood at the edge of the breach: a yawning, 150-foot gap of obliterated library floors crackling with elder lightning and swirling with floating debris. Those who could fly launched themselves across at full speed, and though the elder storm lashed out with arcing bolts of arcane energy that struck several of the party, they made it through. On the far side, all four spiral staircases converged into a small central chamber dominated by a massive set of intricately carved double doors. Ned's Amethyst Academy rings caused the doors to swing open with a resonant click.

Beyond the doors lay the Director's Office — a grand circular chamber with a marble floor etched in the pattern of a complex planar astrolabe, iron candelabras flanking a sumptuous throne, and a slowly rotating chandelier of steel and copper rings depicting the movement of celestial spheres. Squishnix confirmed this was indeed the director's domain, though the director herself had been absent for a very long time. Two iron doors flanked the throne: one opened onto a shimmering force balcony that materialized out of thin air before Ned quickly shut it again, and the other led into a smaller circular laboratory.

The laboratory was a treasure trove of arcane curiosity. A hovering granite slab served as a worktable, covered in occult instruments and glass shells of arcane components, while a magical carousel of spellbooks lined the walls — books that vanished and snapped back into place the moment anyone tried to carry them out of the room. Two scrolls of immense power sat out on the table but similarly resisted removal. Most intriguingly, Tark managed to crack open a steampunk-style mechanical chest, revealing detailed schematics for a clock tower located somewhere within the ruins of Drakkenheim, along with an ancient delirium crystal preserved inside a glass sphere — one that appeared to predate the meteor strike entirely. The crystal was carefully retrieved using a conjured magical hand and tucked safely into the bag of holding.

The session drew to a breathless close when Tark, his sight sharpened by a powerful enchantment that let him perceive the ethereal plane, spotted something no one else could see: a hidden staircase near the throne, invisible to normal eyes. Ned stepped onto it without hesitation and was instantly swept downward hundreds of feet in mere seconds before the staircase reversed and

carried him back up. The party stood in the Director's Office, surrounded by unanswered questions — an ancient crystal of unknown purpose, schematics for a mysterious clock tower, a throne that had yet to be examined, and a secret staircase leading somewhere deep below — as Squishnix eyed the Director's throne with unmistakable interest.

Memorable Moments

Xakarium attempts to take a scroll from the scriptorium and is met with a polite magical chime informing him he has reached a possession limit of zero, as a non-Academy member.

The tower's automated security system cheerfully informs Xakarium he is allowed to possess exactly nothing, despite having come this far.

"You are not allowed to possess more than zero possessions."
— Tower Security System

The tower's magical security system coldly and politely informs Xakarium of his standing as a non-Academy member after he tries to take a scroll.

"Been here forever. We haven't been unchained in 15 years. So that's how long we haven't been going to bed at night."
— Squishnix

Squishnix and his fellow imps describe their miserable existence chained to desks, copying books, with no one to walk them to their beds since the wizards vanished.

Squishnix reveals that Amaranthyst, the dragon terrorizing the tower, was once the director of the Amethyst Academy, hiding her true nature as an ancient ultraviolet dragon among the mortal wizards.

The party learns the dragon they have been fighting is not just a monster but a former leader of the very institution they are exploring.

Inside a steampunk mechanical chest in the Director's laboratory, the party discovers an ancient delirium crystal predating the meteor strike and schematics for a clock tower in Drakkenheim.

The discovery raises immediate questions about the Director's secret projects and the significance of the clock tower to the tower's mysteries.

Tark uses True Seeing to spot a hidden ethereal staircase near the Director's throne. Ned steps onto it and is instantly whisked hundreds of feet downward in seconds before reversing course.

The discovery of a secret passage hidden from normal sight hints at deeper mysteries within the tower's upper reaches.

Tark fires arrows at the invisible window from outside the tower, shattering it and immediately triggering the Shield Guardians, forcing the whole party to flee into the elevator.

What began as a clever experiment to test the window illusion quickly turned into a tower-wide alarm, sending the party scrambling.

Scenes

Resting in the Pantry and Planning the Ascent

The party concludes a long rest within an extra-dimensional food pantry and discusses their next move in the Inscrutable Tower.

- The party completes a long rest inside a magical food pantry to recover from their previous battles.
- Ned receives one of the remaining geodes from the party for safekeeping.
- The group debates whether to explore the residence or research floors or head straight to the top of the tower.
- The party discusses the layout of the tower, noting that the elevators only go as high as the 63rd floor due to a massive breach filled with elder lightning and floating debris.
- The party recalls their encounter with the dragon in the Great Library, where it was struck by a geode lightning bolt and retreated.
- The group considers strategies to spread out across different stairwells and elevators to minimize the effectiveness of the dragon's breath weapon.

The Illusion of the Obsidian Windows

The party investigates the tower's windows, discovering they are hidden by illusions from the outside but functional from the inside.

- The party discusses the possibility of flying up the outside of the tower to bypass internal defenses.
- Syndle discovers that the tower's windows are hidden by an illusion, appearing as seamless polished obsidian from the outside but accessible from within via a rune on the sill.
- A rune on the windowsill, when touched, causes a mercury-like effect and slides the window open.
- Tark squeezes through a window to test the exterior illusion while tied to a safety rope.
- From the outside, Tark confirms the window becomes invisible once the plane is crossed.
- Tark fires arrows at the invisible window from the outside, eventually shattering the glass pane.
- The sound of shattering glass alerts the tower's defenses, and Shield Guardians begin descending the stairwells to investigate.

Ascending to the Research Floors

Fleeing the approaching Shield Guardians, the party takes the elevator to explore the research level of the Inscrutable Tower.

- The party retreats into the elevator as Shield Guardians close in on their position.
- The elevator activates, manifesting a prismatic floor and a wall of glowing runes and labels.
- Syndle attempts to access the Nexus and the Director's Office via the elevator, but finds that no floor above the 63rd is currently accessible.
- The party takes the elevator to the research floors, arriving in a large alchemy lab filled with bubbling cauldrons and chemical odors.
- The party explores the scriptorium, where magical quills are seen autonomously scribing scrolls at various desks.
- The party attempts to take scrolls of Fireball and Lightning Bolt, but they encounter a magical possession limit that restricts how many items each person can borrow based on their intelligence.
- Xakarium discovers that his ability to take items is severely limited, leading to a humorous confrontation with the tower's automated security system.
- Oiroa finds a storage area for expensive spell components, including a locked display cabinet requiring a specific gem to open.

- Tark attempts to pick the lock on the gem cabinet but finds it requires a specific gemstone inserted into an indentation rather than a traditional lock mechanism.

The Bound Imps and the Contract

The party discovers a group of imps shackled in the scriptorium and negotiates a labor contract to secure their services.

- Syndle follows an unseen servant into a scriptorium where a group of imps are found bound by magical manacles, forced to copy books for over fifteen years since the wizards disappeared.
- One imp, Squishnix, reveals that Amaranthyst was once a director of the Amethyst Academy who hid her true nature as an ancient ultraviolet dragon.
- Oiroa drafts a formal contract in Infernal to free the imps in exchange for their service and knowledge of the tower.
- The imps negotiate for specific working conditions, including rest periods and food, before signing with their true names.
- Oiroa uses a scroll of Knock to magically unseal the manacles binding Squishnix, freeing him from his desk.
- The other imps remain shackled as the party lacks additional magical means to release them immediately.
- Squishnix informs the party that more powerful spells and spellbooks can be found in the upper levels where the wizards resided.
- The party gathers potions of flying and scrolls, distributing them among members who need them for the ascent.

Crossing the Breach

The party uses the enchanted staircases and magical flight to cross the massive gap in the tower and reach the upper levels.

- The party discovers the staircases are magical escalators that move with the climber and can split to accommodate two-way traffic.
- Upon reaching the top of the stairs at the breach, the party observes a massive gap filled with floating library debris and a crackling elder storm.
- Several party members consume potions of flying or use magical abilities to traverse the gap at maximum speed.

- While crossing the breach, the party is struck by the elder storm's arcane energy, with some members taking lightning damage.
- The group successfully crosses without attracting the attention of the dragon and reaches the upper library floors.
- The party finds all four spiral staircases terminating in a small central room with a massive set of intricately carved double doors.
- The Amethyst Academy rings are used to magically unlock the double doors leading to the Director's Office.

The Director's Office and the Ethereal Staircase

The party explores the opulent Director's Office, discovering magical research materials, a hidden ethereal staircase, and a mysterious ancient delirium crystal.

- The party enters a grand circular room featuring a sumptuous throne, a marble floor depicting a planar astrolabe, and a rotating celestial chandelier.
- Squishnix confirms this is the Director's office, though the Director is nowhere to be found.
- The party investigates a side chamber containing a hovering granite slab covered in occult instruments, a magical carousel of spellbooks, and two scrolls of Teleport and Force Cage sitting out on the table.
- The spellbooks on the carousel vanish and return to their shelves whenever someone attempts to remove them from the room.
- Tark successfully picks the lock on a steampunk-style mechanical chest after spending Yazzy's bardic inspiration.
- Inside the chest, the party finds schematics for a clock tower in Drakkenheim and an ancient delirium crystal preserved in a glass sphere, appearing to predate the meteor.
- The ancient delirium crystal is successfully retrieved using Mage Hand and stored in the bag of holding.
- Tark uses True Seeing to discover a hidden ethereal staircase near the throne, invisible to normal sight.
- Ned steps onto the ethereal staircase and is instantly whisked downward hundreds of feet in seconds before reversing course and returning.
- The session ends on a cliffhanger as Squishnix prepares to sit upon the Director's throne.

NPCs

Amaranthyst

An ancient ultraviolet dragon and former director of the Amethyst Academy who once walked among mortals in human guise. The imps revealed she was one of the original founders of the Academy, and that the dragon has gone a little crazy over the past fifteen years.

Shield Guardians

Mechanical constructs that serve as the tower's security force. They were alerted by the sound of breaking glass and began descending the stairwells to investigate the intrusion.

Mona

A half-constructed stone golem found in a workshop on the research floors, consisting only of a torso and arms. It makes moaning sounds and moves its limbs despite lacking legs.

Squishnix

A talkative and shrewd imp who had been chained to a desk in the scriptorium for fifteen years, forced to copy books. He negotiated a detailed employment contract with the party, including provisions for rest and food, in exchange for his freedom. He revealed that Amaranthyst was an ancient ultraviolet dragon who once served as the Academy's director.

Locations

Extra-dimensional Food Pantry

A magical storage space filled with a significant amount of food where the party took shelter to complete a long rest.

The Great Library

A massive, hollow cylindrical shaft within the tower filled with shifting platforms, moving staircases, and endless bookshelves. A 150-foot breach exists about two-thirds of the way up, filled with elder lightning and floating debris. The party previously fought the dragon here.

The Great Lobby

A large hall within the tower featuring windows that look out over the city, though they are magically disguised as seamless obsidian from the outside. The party shattered one of the windows here, alerting the Shield Guardians.

Research Floors

A level of the Inscrutable Tower dedicated to magical study, containing an alchemy lab, a scriptorium with autonomous quills, material storage rooms, and various specialized workshops.

Alchemy Lab

A large chamber reeking of chemicals, filled with bubbling cauldrons, brewing concoctions, shelves of material components, and racks of potions in various stages of completion.

Scriptorium

A room within the research floors filled with tables where magical quills and shackled imps have been copying books for over a decade. The area around the desks is filthy from years of neglect.

The Breach

A massive, 150-foot-wide gap in the Inscrutable Tower where the structure has been obliterated, filled with floating debris and a crackling elder storm of arcane energy. The party crossed it by flying and took lightning damage from the storm.

Director's Office

A grand circular chamber at the top of the Inscrutable Tower featuring a marble floor with a planar astrolabe, a rotating celestial chandelier, a sumptuous throne, and two iron doors leading to a research room and a magical force balcony.

Director's Laboratory

A side chamber off the Director's Office containing a hovering granite slab used as a worktable, glass shelves of arcane components, a magical carousel of spellbooks, and a steampunk-style

mechanical chest.

Ethereal Staircase

A hidden, moving staircase visible only to those who can see into the ethereal plane, located near the Director's throne. It is capable of transporting travelers vast vertical distances almost instantly.

Items

Geode

A powerful magical object capable of producing a massive explosion or lightning bolt. One of the two remaining geodes was handed over to Ned for safekeeping at the start of the session.

Bag of Holding

A magical bag used by the party to store items. The party discussed the potential danger of opening it within an extra-dimensional space.

Scroll of Lightning Bolt

An arcane scroll found in the scriptorium on the research floors, claimed by Xakarium as one of his allowed possessions.

Scroll of Fireball

A powerful offensive arcane scroll found in the scriptorium, taken by a party member as one of their allowed possessions.

Potions of Flying

Magical elixirs found in the potion repository on the research floors. The party gathered several and distributed them to members who needed flight to cross the breach.

Magical Manacles

Enchanted restraints that bound the imps to their desks in the scriptorium, preventing them from leaving or ceasing their work for over a decade. They resisted mundane tampering and required a Knock spell to open.

Imp Labor Contract

A legally binding document drafted by Oiroa in Infernal and signed by Squishnix and his fellow imps with their true names. It outlines the terms of their service to the party, including provisions for rest and food, in exchange for their freedom.

Amethyst Academy Rings

Signet rings belonging to Ned that allowed the party to magically bypass the locks on the Director's Office double doors.

Scroll of Teleport

A powerful arcane scroll found sitting out on the hovering granite slab in the Director's laboratory. It resisted being removed from the room.

Scroll of Force Cage

A high-level arcane scroll discovered alongside the Teleport scroll in the Director's laboratory. It similarly resisted being taken from the room.

Ancient Delirium Crystal

A rare delirium crystal preserved inside a glass sphere, found inside the mechanical chest in the Director's laboratory. It appeared to predate the meteor strike that devastated Drakkenheim, making it a remarkable and potentially significant find. It was successfully retrieved using Mage Hand and stored in the bag of holding.

Clock Tower Schematics

Detailed technical drawings and assorted alloy parts found inside the mechanical chest in the Director's laboratory, corresponding to a specific clock tower located within the city of Drakkenheim.

Spells

Knock

Used via a scroll to magically unseal the enchanted manacles holding Squishnix, allowing the imp to finally leave his post at the scriptorium desk after fifteen years of captivity.

True Seeing

Cast on Tark, granting him the ability to see through illusions and perceive the ethereal plane. This allowed him to spot the hidden ethereal staircase near the Director's throne that was invisible to normal sight.

Invisibility

Used by a party member to remain unseen while levitating across the dangerous breach in the tower, helping the group avoid detection by the dragon.

Mage Hand

Employed to safely manipulate and retrieve the ancient delirium crystal from the Director's laboratory, successfully placing it into the bag of holding.

Guidance

Used to assist Tark in picking the lock on the mechanical chest in the Director's laboratory, providing the extra edge needed to succeed after an initial failed attempt.

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