

THE FALSE ASCENDED

A Quickstart Scenario for The Ascended

A remote mountain settlement several days north of New Lanna spread rumors of an Ascended protector to keep bandits away. The lie worked—until the Church heard it. An investigation team arrives tomorrow morning. There is no Ascended protector... or so everyone believes.

LOCATION

The settlement lies in the mountains north of New Lanna, along a pre-Fall trade pass. Cold nights, thin air, and narrow approaches define daily life here. The isolation that once kept the settlement safe has instead drawn scrutiny. Distance does not mean safety in lands governed by the Church.

THE SETUP

Months ago, the settlement allowed a rumor to spread: that it was protected by an Ascended. The intention was simple—bandits fear Ascended power. Trade continued, violence stayed away, and life went on.

The Church noticed the absence of bandit activity, the silence of traders, and the rumors moving south. Tomorrow morning, a Church investigation team will arrive to determine the truth.

THE CHURCH INVESTIGATION TEAM

The investigation team is small, deliberate, and sufficient.

- Church Investigator — Gathers testimony, documents inconsistencies, and prepares the official report.
- Church Judge — Interprets doctrine, declares guilt, and authorizes escalation.
- Two Church Patrolmen — Enforcers trained in arrests, restraint, and execution.

ESCALATION TABLE

Escalation reflects the Church's response to uncertainty. Escalation is cumulative and rarely reversible.

Escalation Level 0: Observation

Calm interviews. No force. Patrolmen remain visible but passive.

Escalation Level 1: Suspicion

Triggered by contradictory testimony or visible fear. Patrolmen escort interviews. Curfews imposed.

Escalation Level 2: Containment

Triggered by interference or evidence of deception. Roads blocked. Public detentions begin.

Escalation Level 3: Judgment

Triggered by violence, confirmed deception, or Aetherion use. Executions may occur.

Escalation Level 4: Purification

Triggered by the death of Church personnel or confirmed Ascended involvement. The settlement is erased.

SETTLEMENT NPCs

Mara Kells — Settlement Speaker

Mara approved the decision not to correct the Ascended rumor. She is calm, exhausted, and pragmatic. Her priority is minimizing loss, even if that means sacrifice.

Jax Fen — The Believer

Jax genuinely believes the Ascended protector exists. He spreads the myth without malice and will escalate situations through misplaced faith.

Elin Ro — Tolerant Medic

Elin is Aetherion Tolerant and hides it carefully. Her existence is the true danger the Church would punish if discovered.

Tomas Hale — Settlement Guard

Tomas believes violence is inevitable. He wants to resist the Church openly and pushes the players toward confrontation.

Rin Kells — Child

Rin is quiet and observant. They notice more than adults expect and remember what the players do.

GM-ONLY TRUTH

Rin Kells is an unawakened Ascended. Their power manifests subtly through improbability, hesitation, and survival. The rumor was false in intent but accurate in outcome. The Church is early—not wrong.

SAMPLE PLAYER PATHS & OUTCOMES

The following paths are not exhaustive. They represent common directions groups may choose and illustrate how escalation, violence, and sacrifice shape the outcome of the scenario.

Path I: Defy the Investigation

The players choose to attack, capture, or otherwise neutralize the Church investigation team before a report can be made.

Outcome: The investigation team is eliminated. In the short term, the settlement survives. Within weeks, the Church returns in force. The settlement is erased completely during Purification. Survivors become refugees. The Church narrative declares Ascended involvement.

Path II: Expose the Lie

The players force a confession from the settlement leadership or present evidence that no Ascended exists.

Outcome: The Church Judge rules False Ascension. Lying about Ascended power is treated as destabilizing heresy. The settlement is destroyed as an example. The Church leaves no ambiguity behind.

Path III: Make the Lie Real

An Ascended character reveals themselves or deliberately stages a visible manifestation.

Outcome: The Church withdraws temporarily. The settlement survives under surveillance and restriction. The revealed Ascended is marked permanently and can never return safely.

Path IV: Evacuate Under Fire

The players choose to buy time through violence, sabotage, or distraction while civilians flee.

Outcome: The settlement is destroyed, but many people survive. The Church records the event as an Ascended escape. The location becomes forbidden ground.