

# EMBERS OF THE FORGOTTEN KINGDOM



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— EMBERS —  
OF THE  
FORGOTTEN KINGDOM





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# INTRODUCTION



## CRADLE OF THORNS

A constantly writhing flower of animated wood and thorns, beset in its heart is a glowing orb. Some sorcerers recognize this as Aderyn pearl, a focus for dark sorceries and blasphemous bindings.

## NOTE FROM THE CREATOR

I want to thank everyone who helped make this book a reality. I remember back when I first picked up *Dark Souls*, I almost immediately put it back down. It took me several months before I got back into the game again, after which I had followed the Extra Credits blind playthrough to finally understand how the gameplay worked and why people loved it. Even before I played the game, I was drawn into the lore of *Dark Souls*. Videos created by VaatiVydas, SilverMont, Hawkshaw and many others were of great inspiration to push me into creating the tabletop version of the soulsian epic.

Thank you for your support, especially our backers, and I hope you enjoy the book!

**ANDREAS WALTERS**  
CREATIVE DIRECTOR & PRODUCER

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# INSPIRATION OF EMBERS

## WHAT IS EMBERS?

*Embers of the Forgotten Kingdom*, or “*Embers*” for short, is our tabletop homage to the *Dark Souls* franchise. It consists of an interconnected web of characters set in a fictional region designed to be used in tabletop fantasy roleplaying games. In this book you will find only worldbuilding and lore, so the game is not tied to any particular game system or setting. This flexibility allows you, the GM (or inspired player), to use the contents of this book no matter the type of game you play.

If you’re looking for a rules-primer, we have a number of PDF-system companions that will give you a few mechanics ideas and stats for the characters and creatures within *Embers* to use in your campaign

## WHAT INSPIRED EMBERS?

The video game *Dark Souls*, produced by From Software and first released in 2011, is a pivotal inspiration to this book. In fact, the series has helped inspire a new genre of game, the “Soulsian,” or more commonly known as the “Souls-like.”

If you are new to *Dark Souls*, it is a near-apocalyptic western fantasy roleplaying game. You are a nameless undead with a forgotten past, marked by a mysterious curse. Upon being released from your prison, you set forth on a great adventure to fulfil a prophecy, and supposedly, rid yourself and the land of an undying curse. What makes the game unique is its “tough but fair” combat and its method of revealing lore to the player. In the way of combat, *Dark Souls* is fairly simple and all characters operate this way. Each attack has a wind-up and takes time, so each attack is a commitment, and making a mistake is nothing but your own fault. By dying a lot, the player embarks upon a repetitive cycle of learning, dying, retrying and mastering. And finally, my

favorite piece: the narrative presentation (don’t worry, no spoilers here). The game is passive in its presentation of lore, so much so that the player has to seek it out by interpreting architecture,

reading environmental clues, talking to non-player characters (NPCs) (often multiple times), and uncovering bits of lore hidden in item descriptions. What makes this presentation even more fascinating are the narrative gaps, which lead to the lore being “incomplete,” forcing the players to draw their own conclusions with the information they have collected.

If this sounds interesting to you, I would highly recommend giving the game a try. It’s best if done blind – but remember to take it slow. If you’re still having trouble like I did, then check out some of the streams or playthroughs (YouTube channel, Extra Play, does a great playthrough called *Dan Sucks at Dark Souls*).

## DEFINING THE SOULSIAN

Much how H. P. Lovecraft or Franz Kafka defined their own genres, *Dark Souls* did the same with its games, defining a new genre (the soulsian or souls-like, as mentioned above). There is some debate on how much a genre can really progress, based on how closely the name of the genre compares to its founder, but that’s a conversation for another day. When most try to describe what defines the souls-like genre, often the following aspects are given:

- Deliberate combat with action warm-ups, animation priority and stamina management
- Unknowable and obtuse story and lore (emergent narrative)
- Dropping XP on death
- Difficulty (usually due to the combat)

When it comes to a more thematic analysis, I believe it has been best distilled by Mike Rugnetta, host of PBS Idea Channel, who describes it as “a world on the brink, pervaded by difficulty and ruin, both: individual, societal and spiritual.”

## Individual

You and those who have survived are combating against all odds in a world that has only stagnated. As you die again and again, you lose sight of not only your purpose but your own identity as well. Some cling onto purpose or something else that is precious to them, but that only makes the mind last a little longer. Most have already succumbed to their madness either in totality or in cackling laughter, knowing that all is for naught.

## Societal

Government and society has, for the most part, crumbled. Although the castles and cathedrals may still stand, the groups of people that enforced and served these governments have all since fallen apart. Those who bore a namesake, a rank or a birthright may attempt to hold onto the past, serving their duty until the very end. Whatever institutions that once persisted may only be standing in stone, and any relevance to rank or birthright has been lost, only claimed by those who deem them worth persisting.

## Spiritual

The gods crafted this world and kingdom, ruling as righteous lords of light and justice. Ever since the onset of the curse, they have slowly disappeared from public view as everything turned to dust. Some loyalties remain, but faith has been lost, faith that one day the gods will return things to the way they once were — the gods have abandoned the land.

## CULTURAL INFLUENCES

*Dark Souls* lore is both “obtuse and unknowable,” rife with emergent narrative and plenty of narrative gaps for players to come to their own conclusions. The narrative gaps were inspired by Hidetaka Miyazaki’s childhood (the game’s director), where, in an interview he talks about reading western stories and fairytales, but due to his lack of English comprehension, the stories he was reading were full of gaps, and thus he filled them with his own imagination. When it comes to the structure of the stories, it’s not as obscure as it may seem. *Dark Souls* is a western RPG made by a Japanese studio, and thus the synchronistic view of Japanese beliefs that combine Buddhist, Shinto, Christian, and other religious and mythological concepts

are necessary to dive into the structure, symbolism and meanings found in the game.

If you’re looking to do some research of your own, I highly recommend picking up the *Handbook of Japanese Mythology* by Michael Ashkenazi.

## Quest for the Status Quo

In Japanese mythology, an act is committed that sets the story in motion, of which it is the hero’s goal to set things right and return the *status quo*, be it restoring honor or bringing balance. The status quo does not have to be good, it just needs to be restored. Heroes sacrifice themselves to restore order to society in these types of stories, unlike in western epics where they are the catalyst for a change to the status quo of a society. The idea that a right and proper functioning society is, or should be, the status quo is a very Buddhist ideal with aspects of the Shinto balance with nature.

## Perspective on the Soul

In Shintoism, it is believed that everything is connected together and each thing has a kami or a soul. The ocean has a kami, the rivers that run into that ocean have kami, the trees and rocks that it cuts through have kami, and even the tiniest pebble, insect and bacteria have a kami, but also an entire forest of trees has a kami. There are even kami for concepts like martial arts, superheroes, and even Japan itself. In many senses, it’s similar to a Platonic view of reality. Thus, even if the corporeal form is destroyed, the kami or soul can continue if there is even a small memory of the thing that once existed.

## Relationships and Objects

If everything is/has a kami then every relationship between every single thing is important, and the combination of kami via objects and their owners alters the story of each and every one in that relationship. Every soul is changed by their relationship, even the weapons and the armor worn by the heroes and villains. Illuminating the story of what has come before can be done by the objects themselves bringing enlightenment to the benighted.

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# MAKING THE SOULSIAN

Most video-game settings are inspirational, equipped with diverse mechanics, and full of memorable experiences, ones that any player would love to bring to the table. Unfortunately, this task is not that easy or as straightforward as we'd like it to be. Some video-game mechanics just don't work well in a tabletop group setting and quite often an eager gamemaster (GM) will fall into a trap attempting to retool their favorite tabletop RPG to fit every single game mechanic that exists in the video game. Although we encourage you to hack as much of the game system as possible, pushing it to its limits, we have found that players don't need all the mechanics in the video game at the table to feel like they're playing in the desired video game universe. Just a few notable mechanics is often enough for players to feel immersed in the world.

In emulating the soulsian, there are a few aspects that help to solidify the tone and feel of the setting. Not all of these concepts need to be implemented, so feel free to pick and choose what you think your group will enjoy the most.

## GMING THE SOULSIAN

As a gamemaster of a soulsian game, there are a number things to keep in mind as you try your best to inspire and draw your players into your soulsian world.

### *Discover As You Go*

Players are thrust into the unknown, attempting to make sense of the events that brought about the curse and trying to discover some way to undo it, or at least find a cure themselves from its effects. Conversations with characters will not reveal all information but rather provide a nuanced perspective.

We have made system companions of your favorite tabletop RPG systems, of which we go into more technical detail in working these aspects to your advantage while working within those rulesets.

### *Forlorn Thematics*

Soulsian characters are known for being survivors in a ruined, overlooked realm. Characters encountered in the realm are at the brink of insanity. Those who have persevered usually latch on to a single ideal or goal, for any waiver may lead them to forgetting their duty and who they themselves are. The land itself resembles that of a ruined romanticised medieval kingdom, featuring gothic "megalithic" architecture. Buildings will vary in wholeness but a majority of them will be traversable.

### *Storytelling Through Objects*

Soulsian games are renowned for their opt-in narrative where item descriptions provide some insight into the world and the events that occurred. Upon inspection or attunement, some items may reveal pieces of information for the players to begin piecing together various facets of the realm and its history.

## SOULSIAN MECHANICS

### *Death and Difficulty*

Although difficulty (and subsequently dying) is part of the core experience of soulsian games, this does not translate into a good tabletop experience.

Combat encounters are expected to be difficult and perhaps even punishing. Death, on the other hand, can really depend on the game system and group; however, we find the most enjoyable experience is keeping death to a rare occurrence, and this thus makes those specific deaths more meaningful.

### *Experience As Currency*

Instead of granting experience points and gold (or whichever in-game currency you're using), merge them into a single resource. Players can then use this currency to purchase gear, upgrades as well as leveling up. In Dark Souls, this is souls. Powerful individual souls may crystallize and persist even after their death, an opportunity for players to use as a higher-value currency (like a gem), or to consume if the experience is needed.

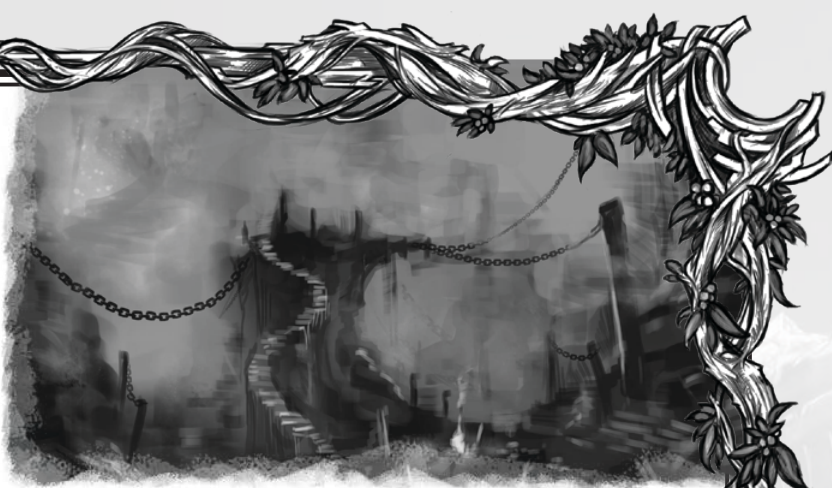
If the party ends up dying (which should be avoided for the most part), it's up to you to either have the players retain their experience or drop it where they died so they must recover it. Or even possibly the creature that killed them "collects" their experience.

### ***Growing Insanity***

The oppressive nature of the soulsian setting drives its inhabitants, who are often lacking in motivation or devoted to madness. This progression to madness can take the form of a thematic penalty that occurs after death or even as an occasional test of will, making the party "suffer" from pressuring hopelessness.

### ***Bonfires***

A symbol of safety and respite. These are locations that should be considered safe by the players. These locations should be places where the party can take a brief rest or even where player characters can make offerings to the fire for short-term benefits.

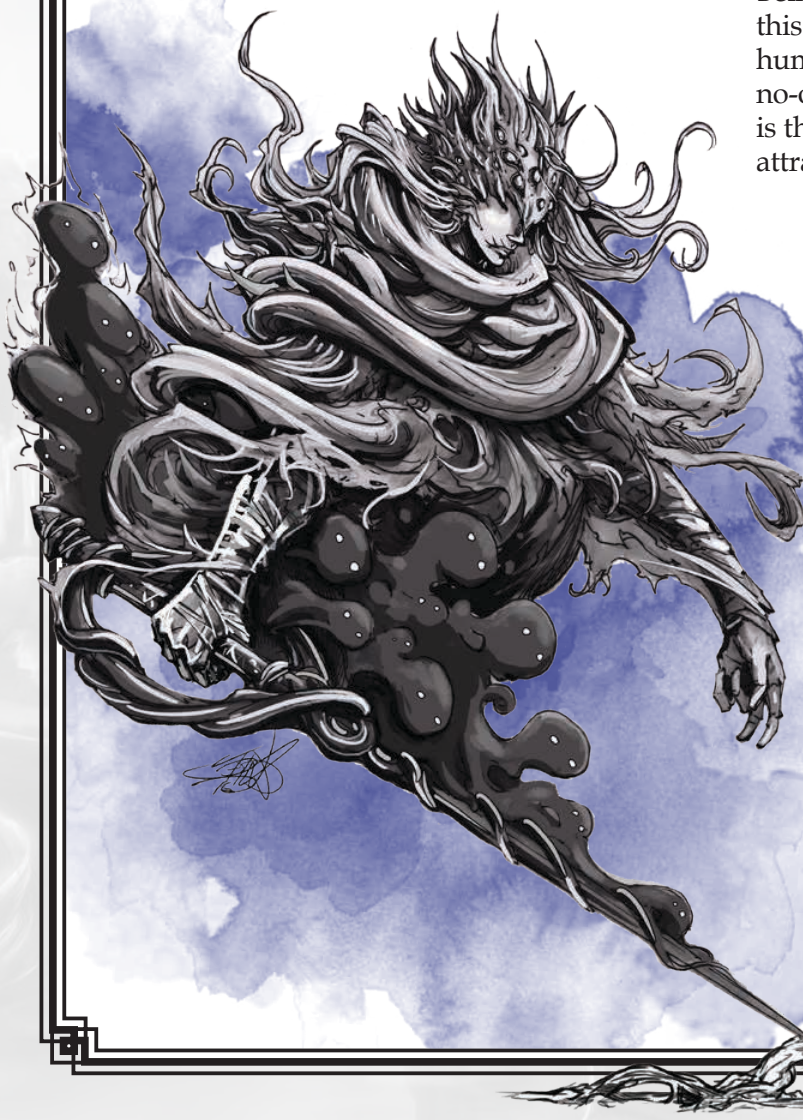


### ***Humanity***

Once part of the greater soul that was broken apart and given to humankind, *humanity* is separate from the soul, and not everyone has it. Consuming humanity can help remove the ailments of growing insanity, or even provide a temporary boost to the characters who consume it. Those who have consumed lots of humanity also tend to draw unwanted attention from those both within this world and those outside of it.

### ***Outsiders***

Beings from outside worlds are drawn to this cursed realm, some seeking to consume humanity, souls or something else entirely – no-one really knows. What is known for certain is that those with a lot of humanity tend to attract these beings.



# RUNNING EMBERS

*Embers* is sandbox setting, meaning that there is no specific way to run this book. Rather, the GM can start the players at any location or by introducing any character. We have organized the book so that you learn about the backstories and motives of each of the key characters so that you can use them best, and as you see fit. This, hopefully, should in no way constrain you from adapting, altering or making use of these characters or their stories in different ways. If you feel like you just want to use a single (or several) character concept in your campaign, we're happy to have provided you that inspiration.

## BOOK OF BOSSES

When we first set off on this project, the book of bosses was our first approach. We decided to expand the narrative and lore in order to create more interconnectedness and depth to better match the soulsian style we were aiming to achieve.

As for bosses, this book is all about the inspiration material, and there is a lot of it here! In this context, the lore and locations won't mean much to you; however, you will find great value in the Abilities, Motivations and Tactics sections for each of the **Core Characters**. **Major Characters** are also fairly fleshed out, but not as well-defined.

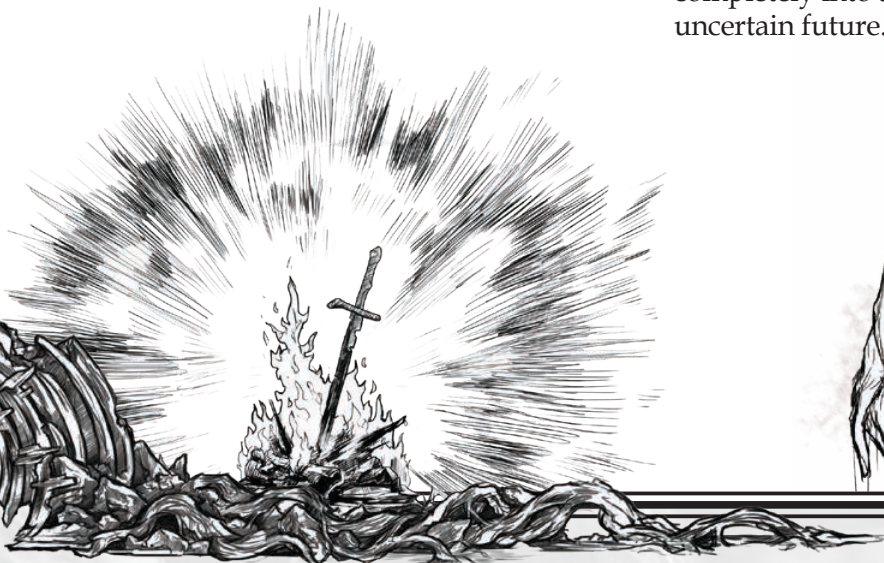
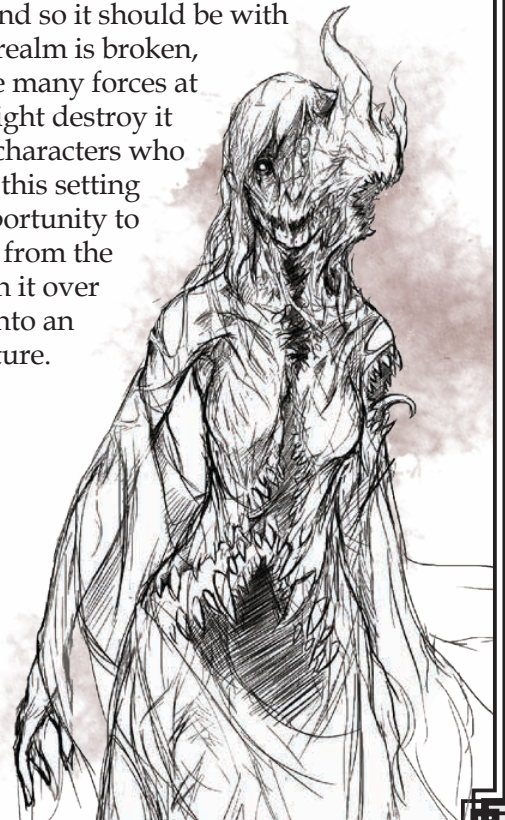
In addition, sprinkled throughout the book are some other illustrations that would make great encounters for your players.

We have listed them all here for your reference:

- Bartun the Bold (page 61)
- Gorwedd the Guardian (page 62/63)
- Stargazer Telanuon (page 90)
- Wayside Golem (page 91)
- The Stewards of the Luminous Circle (page 92)
- Kor the Many Voiced (page 93)
- Death Agari (page 101)
- The Brachyura (page 114)
- The Deep Ones (page 115)
- Satyr Mwars (page 123)
- The Drake of Marowlyth (page 124)
- The Bloodletter Fiend (page 126)
- Byrnhorn, Overlord of Steel (page 133)

## GETTING STARTED

As with many good stories found in novels, or roleplaying or computer games, the main characters arrive on the scene near a point of great change to the established setting. These characters are catalysts for change, or are even there to prevent it. And so it should be with *Embers*. The realm is broken, and there are many forces at work that might destroy it utterly. The characters who engage with this setting have the opportunity to bring it back from the edge, or push it over completely into an uncertain future.



## RUNNING THE REGION

The Realm of Ember is meant to act like a place in stasis, in which the player characters enter and change things in some fashion, for better or worse, or even take advantage of this stagnant realm, depending on their outlook. To this effect, a lot of important NPCs and even background characters are in some sort of prolonged or stasis existence, be that summer-cursed (being physically reborn after death, but coming back more corrupted each time), fae (long-lived beings), or undead (either as a physical undead or as a spirit). Some of these important NPCs are also in a place where their memory of events or their purpose is forgotten in some way, giving the possibility of the player characters interacting with those characters and enabling them to find what has been forgotten. In this way, it's the actions of the PCs that restores these NPCs, and this would give the PCs an ally or a source of information in Ember.

The book has a core story, a situation that might be presented to the player characters who enter this dark realm. This story outlines the reasons why the Realm of Ember currently exists in its current condition. The player characters can explore the realm and interact with NPCs, and start to piece together what has happened to Ember and to the key NPCs connected to this story. With this information, further investigation might occur into major NPCs and locations, and the PCs might eventually settle on a plan on how to address the problems at the heart of Ember. While there are a number of possibilities on how Ember could be "fixed," these are only suggestions, and you and your group might devise other interesting ways to address Ember's situation.

While there is a central story that can be resolved, *Embers* is also meant to act as a sandbox setting. It provides numerous ideas to help spark the GM's and the players' imaginations, from the history of the setting, to a range of interesting locations, characters, and opportunities that could be combat opportunities or roleplaying opportunities.

If some ideas don't click with the GM, discard them and rework them into something that does work for you or your group. Don't be afraid to change and tweak things. The ideas here are meant to provide any number of possibilities that resonate with your group.

### *Arrival in Ember*

There are a number of ways that the PCs come to be in Ember. They might:

- be shipwrecked on or near the Forlorn Cove
- be summoned magically by one of Ember's NPCs
- have journeyed across the border from another land
- already be a resident of the Realm of Ember.





### *Purpose in Ember*

What are the player characters doing in Ember? Their motivations might include some of the following.

- Survival (the PCs are shipwrecked in Ember and must survive their time there)
- Escape (the PCs must find a way to escape Ember from their summoning or imprisonment)
- A search for answers (the PCs are searching for answers for some other task and must journey into Ember for them)
- Help (the PCs see the tragedy of Ember, and those good-of-heart see a problem that must be overcome, or they are possibly even invited or requested to come to Ember and help at an NPC's request)
- Treasure (the PCs know of great artifacts within Ember and they seek these out)
- Power (the PCs seek to overthrow those in power in Ember in order to claim it for themselves)
- Revenge (the PCs hold a grudge against one of the key Ember NPCs and must find a way to bring their revenge against that NPC)

### *Lore in Ember*

Lore is presented in a way to give the base overview to set the scene. Additional elements of lore may be found later under different characters and locations. Not all lore is stringently defined, allowing gaps for the GM and players to fill in as needed. Some of the lore is meant to hint at possibilities that can likewise be tweaked into what fits for how this story is run by your group.

Certain elements of the setting of Ember are left vague, so they can more easily be dropped into a campaign you're already be running, or adapted as needed for your own group. For example, elements such as religion – the Pontifex as the leader of the religion and spiritual advisor to the king – but the details of the religion are kept vague on purpose.

Many elements of *Embers* are presented in an almost archetypal fashion and not altogether specific (the Forlorn Cove, the Solemn Graveyard, and so on). More specific names could be given, but it was thought it would be easier like this to tap into for different groups. As your group journeys to different locations in Ember, you might give more specific names to these places, to your particular version of Ember.

The “Opportunities” presented under each of the locations are a mix of story opportunities and encounter opportunities – some of these might be combat encounters, or roleplaying encounters, or treasure or trap encounters – basically suggestions for how these locations might be engaged with in some way.



## POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

There is no one way to end the story of *Embers*. A number of possibilities are indicated in the characters and locations—some more strongly than others—but there is no right or wrong solution in fixing the curse that has befallen the Realm of Ember.

The most obvious ending is through the restoration and death of Brenninn, the one who broke the land. But the Cycle may be restored (or destroyed) in other ways that you devise using the lore, history and characters presented within this book. Maybe Brenninn is given a true death, passing into the restored Cycle, and a new Summer King takes his place. Maybe Maeve is finally ousted as the Winter Queen and someone like Rhonwen or Ceidwen takes her place. Or maybe it is time for Ember to fall and a new kingdom to arise from the ashes.

Your story of *Embers* may end with the death of many of the key characters of the setting. Or perhaps through events of your story these characters are transformed into something else entirely.

The many possibilities are presented for you within *Embers of the Forgotten Kingdom*. Go forth into this dark realm and explore the forlorn.



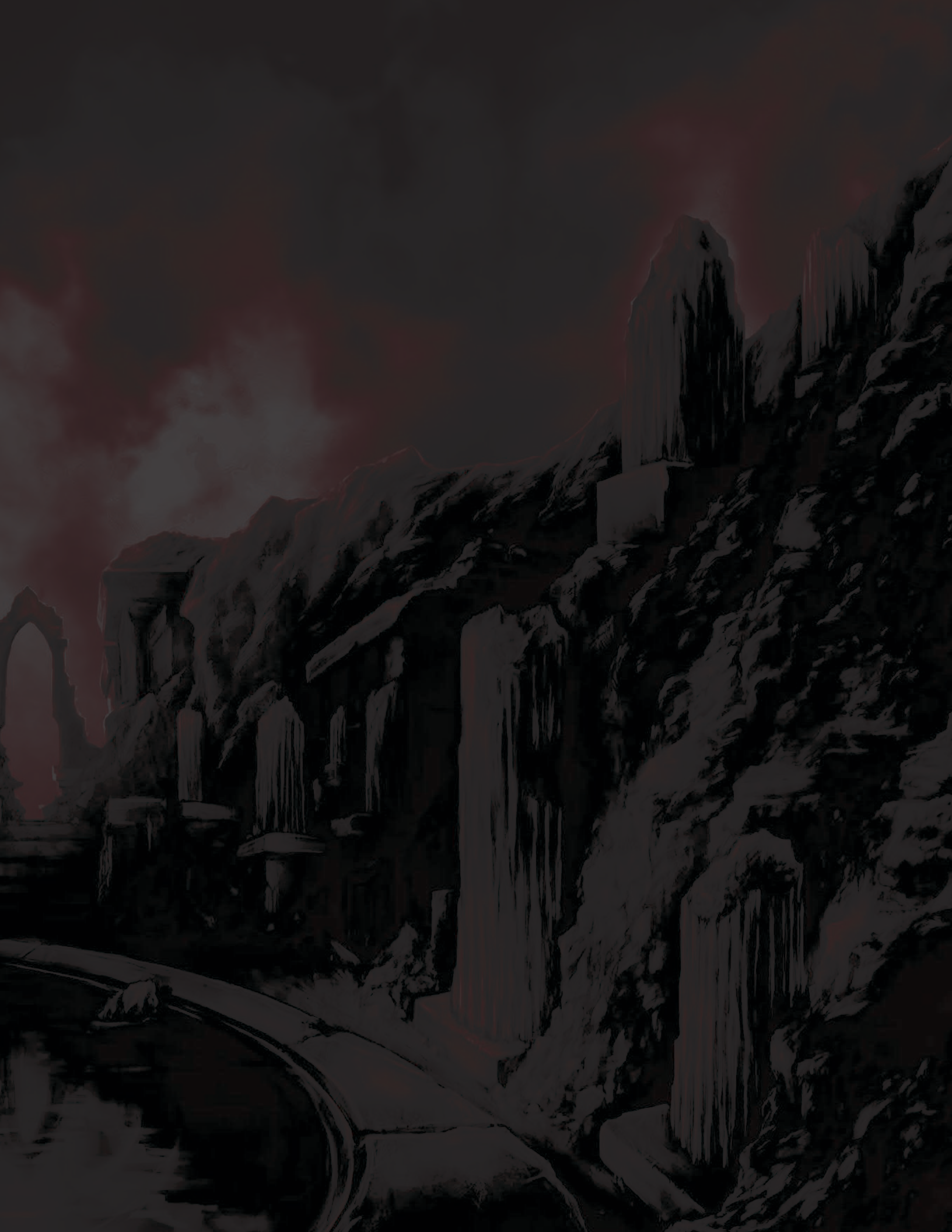


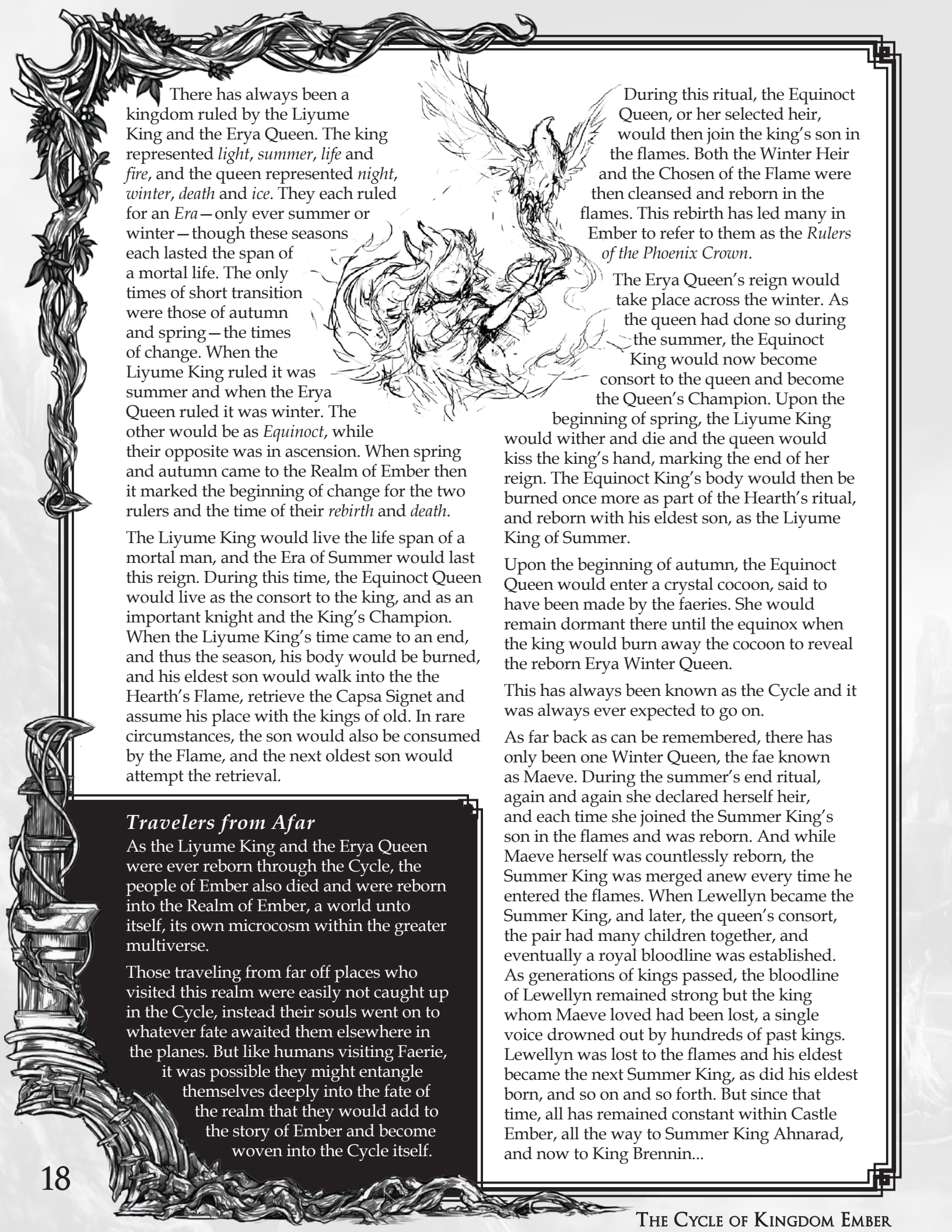
# THE CYCLE OF KINGDOM EMBER



## THE FROZEN MOON

A simple brooch shaped as a crescent moon and made from royal silver. It was said these signified the mark of the Queen's Guard, a noble rank to attain. It is also believed that the moon reflects the state of the queen's mind, but the brooch is now dull and cold to the touch.





There has always been a kingdom ruled by the Liyume King and the Erya Queen. The king represented *light, summer, life* and *fire*, and the queen represented *night, winter, death* and *ice*. They each ruled for an *Era* — only ever summer or winter — though these seasons each lasted the span of a mortal life. The only times of short transition were those of autumn and spring — the times of change. When the Liyume King ruled it was summer and when the Erya Queen ruled it was winter. The other would be as *Equinoct*, while their opposite was in ascension. When spring and autumn came to the Realm of Ember then it marked the beginning of change for the two rulers and the time of their *rebirth* and *death*.

The Liyume King would live the life span of a mortal man, and the Era of Summer would last this reign. During this time, the Equinoct Queen would live as the consort to the king, and as an important knight and the King's Champion. When the Liyume King's time came to an end, and thus the season, his body would be burned, and his eldest son would walk into the the Hearth's Flame, retrieve the Capsa Signet and assume his place with the kings of old. In rare circumstances, the son would also be consumed by the Flame, and the next oldest son would attempt the retrieval.

### *Travelers from Afar*

As the Liyume King and the Erya Queen were ever reborn through the Cycle, the people of Ember also died and were reborn into the Realm of Ember, a world unto itself, its own microcosm within the greater multiverse.

Those traveling from far off places who visited this realm were easily not caught up in the Cycle, instead their souls went on to whatever fate awaited them elsewhere in the planes. But like humans visiting Faerie, it was possible they might entangle themselves deeply into the fate of the realm that they would add to the story of Ember and become woven into the Cycle itself.

During this ritual, the Equinoct Queen, or her selected heir, would then join the king's son in the flames. Both the Winter Heir and the Chosen of the Flame were then cleansed and reborn in the flames. This rebirth has led many in Ember to refer to them as the *Rulers of the Phoenix Crown*.

The Erya Queen's reign would take place across the winter. As the queen had done so during the summer, the Equinoct King would now become consort to the queen and become the Queen's Champion. Upon the

beginning of spring, the Liyume King would wither and die and the queen would kiss the king's hand, marking the end of her reign. The Equinoct King's body would then be burned once more as part of the Hearth's ritual, and reborn with his eldest son, as the Liyume King of Summer.

Upon the beginning of autumn, the Equinoct Queen would enter a crystal cocoon, said to have been made by the faeries. She would remain dormant there until the equinox when the king would burn away the cocoon to reveal the reborn Erya Winter Queen.

This has always been known as the Cycle and it was always ever expected to go on.

As far back as can be remembered, there has only been one Winter Queen, the fae known as Maeve. During the summer's end ritual, again and again she declared herself heir, and each time she joined the Summer King's son in the flames and was reborn. And while Maeve herself was countlessly reborn, the Summer King was merged anew every time he entered the flames. When Lewellyn became the Summer King, and later, the queen's consort, the pair had many children together, and eventually a royal bloodline was established. As generations of kings passed, the bloodline of Lewellyn remained strong but the king whom Maeve loved had been lost, a single voice drowned out by hundreds of past kings. Lewellyn was lost to the flames and his eldest became the next Summer King, as did his eldest born, and so on and so forth. But since that time, all has remained constant within Castle Ember, all the way to Summer King Ahnarad, and now to King Brennin...

A tragedy has befallen Ember and the great Cycle has been broken. The realm is stuck in a perpetual Endless Summer, and life has run wild and cancerous as the king, who has revealed himself as an untrue king, has halted the Cycle and refused to die. Only with the death of the Summer King and the burning of his corpse and soul can the Cycle begin once more. Any who enter this realm can die, but instead of remaining dead, and being reincarnated here, their physical body is infused with the Life of Summer and arises again. Many who are weak slowly begin to warp and mutate into mindless monsters, living cancers who have gone mad.

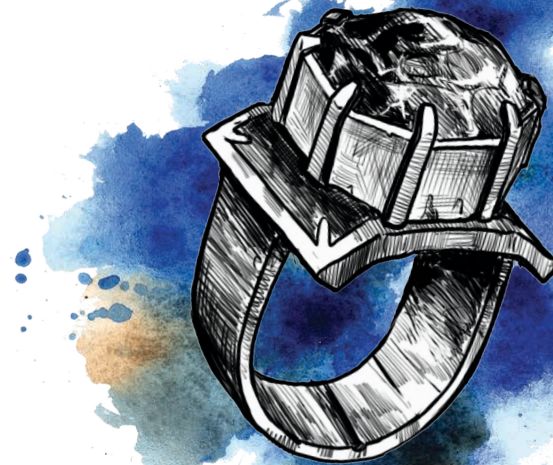
## THE TRAGEDY OF EMBER

Brennin was third in line for the throne after his uncle, father, and older brother. He never expected to rule as king and married a mortal woman he loved. He became known as Brennin the Bold for his ambitious works as an architect, designing some of the wondrous and innovative buildings across Ember.

It was early autumn, soon after Brennin's uncle, Ahnarad, had been reborn in the Flame. Ahnarad and Brennin's father, Eurwyn, and brother, Grufeid, went hunting, something they'd done hundreds of times before in the Kingswood. During the hunt, however, a massive white wolf – said to be Helyór, the ice wolf – attacked the party and killed Brennin's uncle and father. Grufeid was gravely wounded in the attack, but not before he drove off the beast. In order for the Cycle to continue, Grufeid was to become the Liyume King, and in haste, he entered the Flame. Perhaps because his wound had weakened him, or perhaps because the wolf's tooth was stuck in his wound, the Hearth consumed and destroyed him, leaving Brennin next in line to embrace the Flame.

Brennin, who wished to uphold the family line and restore the kingdom, took the Capsa Signet and stepped into the Flame to be reborn. Though instead of involving the queen and her chosen heir (Maeve herself), Brennin proceeded with his mortal wife, Brigid.

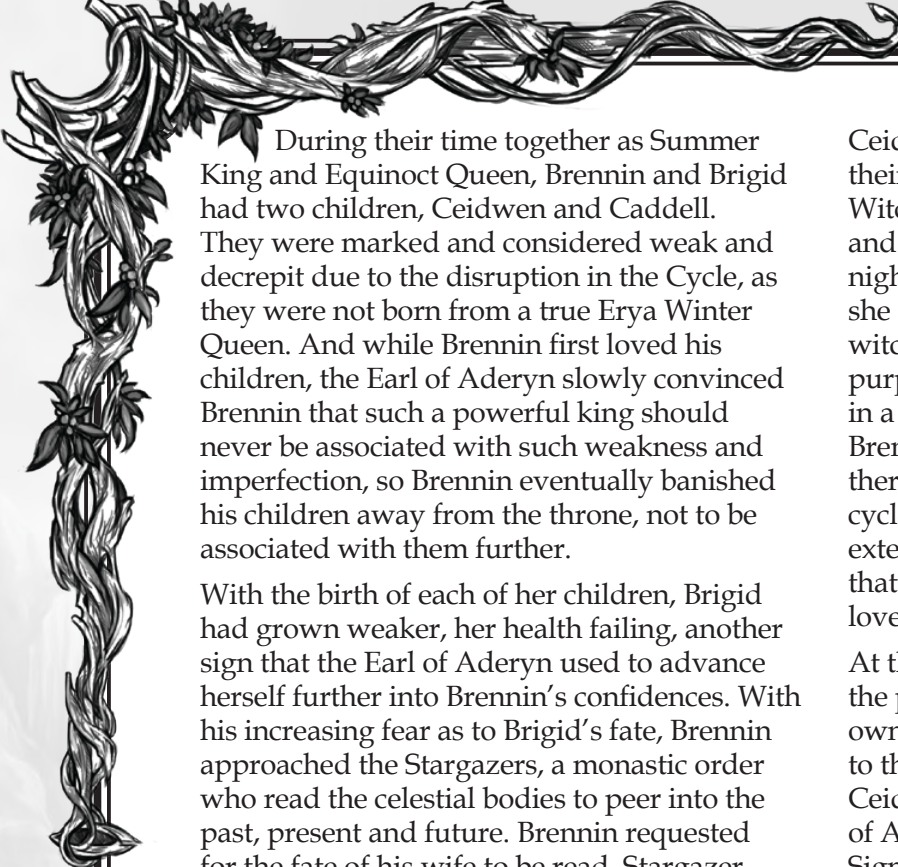
As these events unfolded, Maeve had already entered into her cocoon state, to be awakened at the end of autumn, but with Brennin having taken Brigid as his queen over Maeve, the Chosen of the Flame never released her.



And so the next winter passed unexpectedly quickly, and then spring began and Brigid, as the new Winter Queen, kissed the king's hand and Brennin was reborn in flames as the Liyume King of Summer.

Brennin ruled his Era of Summer for many mortal years, but during this time, feared his unorthodox queen would not succeed in becoming a true Queen of Winter. In the early days of Brennin's reign as Summer King, a foreigner arrived in Ember. Cliodhna, an earl from far off Aderyn, sought to rest her weary feet from years of travel and found her way to Castle Ember and its city, Yúla. There, she joined the city watch, and soon came to the attention of the Summer King himself for her martial prowess, earning ranking amongst the Tirithal Knights, the royal guard. In his growing self-doubt over his own ability to rule, and the worthiness of Brigid in the Cycle, Brennin found himself confiding more and more in Cliodhna. Taking advantage of these confidences, Cliodhna soon emerged as a prominent and trusted advisor to Brennin. And so she whispered into his ears time and again, manipulating his self-doubt even further.

During this time, the residents of Yúla, the capital city were namely unaware of these inner workings, but its inhabitants were simply pleased a new king and queen had stepped in to stabilize the realm.



During their time together as Summer King and Equinoct Queen, Brenninn and Brigid had two children, Ceidwen and Caddell. They were marked and considered weak and decrepit due to the disruption in the Cycle, as they were not born from a true Erya Winter Queen. And while Brenninn first loved his children, the Earl of Aderyn slowly convinced Brenninn that such a powerful king should never be associated with such weakness and imperfection, so Brenninn eventually banished his children away from the throne, not to be associated with them further.

With the birth of each of her children, Brigid had grown weaker, her health failing, another sign that the Earl of Aderyn used to advance herself further into Brenninn's confidences. With his increasing fear as to Brigid's fate, Brenninn approached the Stargazers, a monastic order who read the celestial bodies to peer into the past, present and future. Brenninn requested for the fate of his wife to be read. Stargazer Telanuon foresaw that Brigid would inevitably die, in all possible futures. Brenninn, unwilling to accept that fate, sought out the Fatesealer Witch Rhonwen and demanded that she build a phylactery to capture his queen's soul and protect her from being lost in the Cycle. Rhonwen had only ever done this to save mortal humans temporarily, never one so closely bound into the Cycle and the natural order of Ember...

Ceidwen and Caddell, previously cast out by their father had been taken in by Fatesealer Witch Rhonwen and taught the ways of Ember and the Cycle, until they came of age. One night, Ceidwen was to visit Rhonwen, when she overheard her father's command for the witch to construct the phylactery, and what purpose it would serve. The Cycle was already in a tenuous position, and Ceidwen knew that if Brenninn trapped Brigid's soul in the phylactery, there would be no queen to take up the next cycle, which would bring ruin, but to what extent she could never imagine. Ceidwen knew that above all things, above her father and his love for Brigid, the Cycle had to continue.

At the point of transference of Brigid's soul to the phylactery, Ceidwen arrived and slew her own mother, attempting to release her soul to the spirit realm. Brenninn fell into despair at Ceidwen's actions, and at this point the Earl of Aderyn made her move. Seizing the Capsa Signet for herself, it was that moment Ceidwen realized how deeply Cliodhna's actions had affected the realm. She could not allow Cliodhna to possess the ring, and so she severed the earl's hand, separating the ring from her altogether. Ceidwen fled at that point with the ring, and into the night.

Between the loss of Brigid and Ceidwen's actions, Brenninn was filled with grief, and in his continued weakness, he locked himself inside the Royal Sanctum within Castle Ember and thrust his own soul into the phylactery. But given his soul was tied to the Capsa Signet and the phylactery was attuned to hold Brigid's soul, something went awry. Brenninn's very self-essence became fragmented, and he is now both trapped in part in the phylactery while his other selves, other aspects, walk the Realm of Ember. This fragmenting of Brenninn's self, with his soul not being consigned into the Cycle, has brought about stagnation to the seasons.

And it is after countless repeated summers, the player characters enter this realm in stasis.



*Steward of the Luminous Circle*

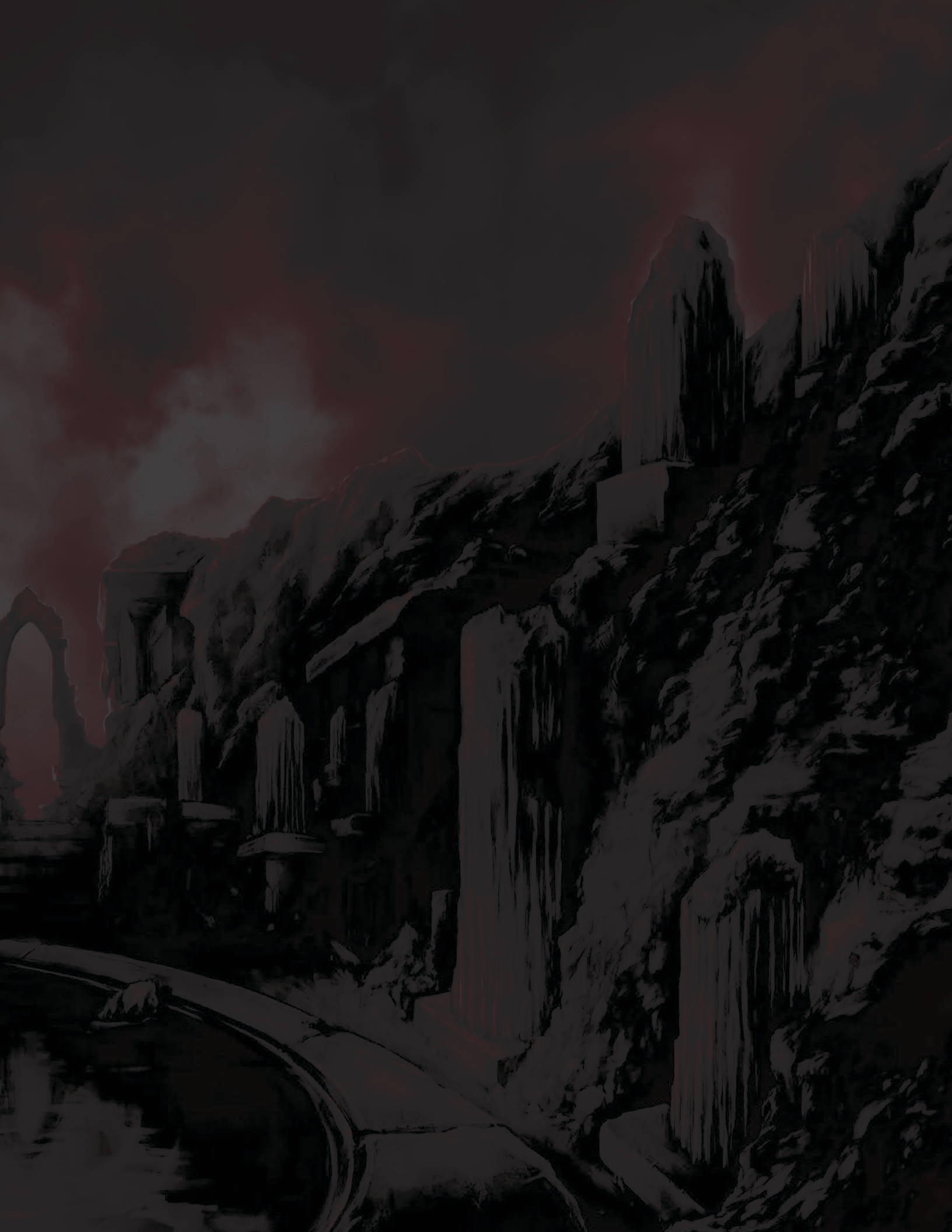


# CORE CHARACTERS



## EARL'S FEATHERED MASK

Aderyn warriors prove their mettle against the great beasts of their land. Some beasts are so great that it forever defines the warrior who brings it down. After the kill, the warriors fashioned armor to embody and resemble the beast that gave them such honor.





# BRENNIN THE LAST LORD

Brennin never saw himself as ruler of Ember and was content with this fact. His uncle was the Liyume King of Summer, and if anything should happen to him, it was Brennin's father and brother who were next in line to rule. Knowing this, Brennin set his aspirations elsewhere, to providing for Ember through architectural accomplishments. Before he fell in love with Brigid, he completed projects in and around Yúla, including the Sun Dome and the Royal Museum. And after he and Brigid married, the two of them had many more plans together to improve Yúla, their capital, none of which would ever be realized, due to the events of the ill-fated hunt that would render Brennin as the Summer King.

King Brennin is himself a prisoner within Castle Ember – albeit trapped in a prison of his own making. The king was poisoned by the whispers of his longtime friend, the Earl of Aderyn, who convinced him that his mortal queen would never be able to rule everlasting by his side, as she would eventually wither and die as all humans do. Enraged by the thought, Brennin commanded for a phylactery to be built that could contain Brigid's soul, and planned to protect his queen within, so that that they could remain by each other's side forever. Upon learning of his plan, his daughter, Ceidwen, killed the queen in an attempt to free her soul before it became imprisoned. In his rage and despair at the thought of having to live without his beloved wife, Brennin thrust his own soul into the phylactery instead. If he was forced to live a cursed life, so would the Realm of Ember.

It was this selfish act that began the Endless Summer. While the true Winter Queen has been forced into slumber, the Summer King rules a land in a broken cycle, a land now in eternal stagnation. The curse of madness that has overtaken Ember begins and ends with the soul of Brennin.

Fragments of the king's soul are now scattered across Ember, with part of it trapped inside the phylactery within the Royal Sanctum of Castle Ember. Without his soul, his body is but a husk, doomed to wander his cursed palace.

He surrounded himself with his five loyal Tirithal Knights, led by Gorwedd the Guardian, who continue to seek out enemies of the realm and protect their king. The inhabitants of Castle Ember, particularly those closest to Brennin, have become infected by Brennin's growing paranoia at the numerous perceived threats around them.


## MOTIVATIONS

The remnant of Brennin that stalks Castle Ember is a husk of the man he once was, both lost in misery and the desire to protect his kingdom. This version of Brennin is difficult to deal with, especially in the manner he has treated perceived threats to Ember, frightening off most of the surviving residents. This Brennin is very black and white, since he is not tempered by the complexities of the soul, nor especially by reason. His cold dead eyes sit in judgement. There are others, however, that this husk of Brennin will react to, those who have been closest to him: the Earl of Aderyn, Gorwedd the Guardian, and Brennin's loyal knights. The words of others fall on deaf ears.

But there are also other aspects of Brennin that exist within the Realm of Ember, each an idealised part of Brennin as he had once hoped to be, each of different aspirations from his life.

All Brennin had ever wanted was to live out a life with his family and doing what he loved, which was giving himself over to architecture and providing for the Realm of Ember. But it was a twist of fate that ensured that this would never happen. When he became the Summer King, Brennin started to lose his grip on his beloved family, first when Brigid grew ill and weak with each of her children, and then when Brennin was convinced his children were cursed. He held onto his love of Brigid above all else, and with





the thought of his children being lost to him, he only wanted to remain with her, thus leading to the series of events that have doomed Ember.

When Brigid was lost, Brenninn decided *to hell with the rest of Ember*, and with that he cast himself inside the phylactery so that Ember would share in his suffering. But the transference went catastrophically wrong, and Brenninn was splintered apart. Brenninn now exists in a number of fragments throughout Ember. Beyond the physical husk roaming Castle Ember, Brenninn's ghostly aspirations can also be encountered:

**Brenninn the Husband**

An aspiration of Brenninn as his ideal husband and lover

**Brenninn the Father**

An aspiration of Brenninn as the ideal parent and carer

**Brenninn the Builder**

An aspiration of Brenninn as the ideal dreamer and architect

**Brenninn the Summer King**

An aspiration of Brenninn as the ideal noble and ruler of Ember

## ABILITIES

Brenninn has no particular abilities of note save for his physical prowess and the artifacts he possesses, and the authority he wields as the Summer King. As one of the royal bloodline, Brenninn is bound to the Cycle, and his personal fate has always had the potential to affect the Realm of Ember as a whole. Those of Castle Ember, those closest to Brenninn, still find themselves caught up in the king's authority, while the stagnation of the realm has slowly sewn distrust amongst the remaining subjects, distrust that their ruler is unable to protect them from the Endless Summer's curse.

## TACTICS

Brenninn was never one for the ways of fighting. While his father, Eurwyn, taught both Brenninn and Grufeid sword-mastery skills, Brenninn was always quiet and reserved during those sessions. Brenninn was always a tall, broad child and during his years as an architect and builder he grew into a bear of a man.

When Brenninn is forced into a fight, he uses his sheer brute strength to overcome an enemy, knocking them down, or forcing them into objects within the battlefield. He will use the effects of the *Sword of Ember* upon those he sees as a true threat to the realm, summoning the soulfire to terrify them, and in readiness to sever their soul from their body so that they never enter the Cycle to stain the realm with their perceived dark deeds. Depending on what mood one finds Brenninn in, if he is in a gloom with grief and despair, this weakens him, perhaps giving him more mercy than he might otherwise have. If one finds Brenninn in a mood of growing anger, he is often savage and merciless in his dealings with a foe.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### *The Earl of Aderyn*

Cliodhna grew into Brenninn's confidences over a long period of time, and what little of Brenninn remains in his fragmented state still trusts her. So close were they, had not Ceidwen intervened in Brigid's fate, eventually Brenninn would have taken Cliodhna as his next queen, furthering the Earl of Aderyn's own goals. Cliodhna still has the power to whisper advice to the husk of Brenninn within Castle Ember and direct his growing distrust to her own ends. Brenninn has been ever oblivious to the full extent of her manipulation and deceit, and if it were ever revealed, Brenninn would have a new focus for his anger. It suits Cliodhna at present for Brenninn to remain incomplete, so she does not concern herself with any other aspect of Brenninn but the husk in Castle Ember.

### *Gorwedd the Guardian*

Gorwedd stems from a long line of bannermen for the royal family, tasked with upholding the virtues of the royal family and their protection. Soon after Grufeid was consumed by the Flame, Gorwedd became bound to Brenninn, offering guidance to the new king, and their friendship quickly grew. While the Earl of Aderyn truly had Brenninn's ear, Gorwedd's advice helped to temper the king's decisions for what was best for the royal family and for the Realm of Ember.

## *Ceidwen and Caddell*

These two were born of Brennín and Brigid in the early days of Brennín's ascension as the Summer King. While initially Brennín was fond of his children, simmering underneath was a coldness, brought about by the growing weakness in Brigid as a result of childbirth and of Brennín's doubt that Brigid could be the Winter Queen. This divide was pried open by the Earl of Aderyn until the children were seen as defective and cast out by their father.

Ceidwen, in particular now, is especially despised by Brennín, and he burns with anger at his daughter's betrayal against her own mother, the very actions that took Brigid away from Brennín forever.

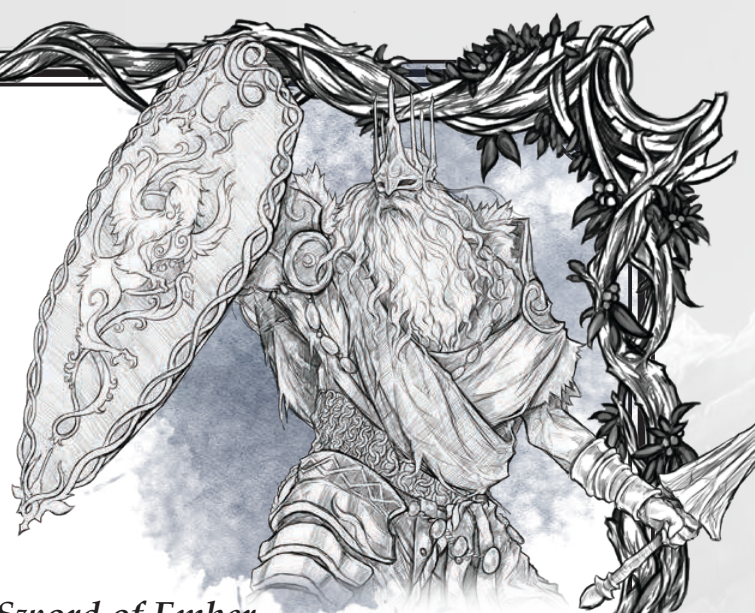
## *Queen Maeve*

Brennín was never close to his mother, the long-time Erya Queen. She was frequently consumed with the affairs of the fae and the running of the Realm of Ember while she was in ascension. Despite this distance, there was previously considerable respect and familial love between the two. That is, until Brennín became the Summer King, and events spiraled and twisted in such a manner that threatened the very fabric of Ember. Maeve now hates her son's weakness, and she seeks to find a way to deal with Brennín and restore the Cycle.

## UNIQUE EQUIPMENT

### *The Sinistral Phoenix Crown*

There are two crowns of Ember, both of equal weight and power, the *Sinistral Phoenix Crown* and the *Dextral Phoenix Crown*. The Summer King's crown has always enabled the king to project himself to an audience of his choosing, be it those gathered in the throne room or to a gathering in Castle Ember's courtyard. The crown enhances Brennín's appearance, the most subtle of illusions, and the crown projects his voice also, so that he commands the attention of all, if and when he wishes. This *Phoenix Crown* also protects the wearer from all sources of mundane fire and heat, the flames licking around the user to no effect.



### *The Sword of Ember*

This blade was forged in the earliest days of Ember and by the greatest blacksmith of that age. It is the finest blade to have been crafted and ever would be crafted within that realm. Its steel is darkened, almost as if tinged by the dying embers of a fire. The blade has only ever been reserved for use against the Ember's enemies, for rebels who have turned against the crown, and for the land's worst criminals. As well as having an edge keen enough to cut through stone, upon command, it summons a soulfire, roaring flames existing both in the physical realm and in the spiritual realm. The blade can be used to sever one from the Cycle, casting their soul adrift in the realm between realms.

### *The Shield of Lewellyn*

This shield was gifted to Lewellyn, first of the bloodline, by three of his loyal knights. After it was crafted, each of the knights sought a different blessing from a power of the realm in order to give it strength. The first knight asked for a blessing from the Guardians, those who protected the ruling family, but also those who observed and recorded the history of the family. The blessing was intended to instill the wielder of the shield with the wisdom of past rulers. The second knight requested a blessing from the priests of Saint Ebberynn—a revered figure known for his work toiling the fields while the people of the realm turned to decadence—so that the king would be tireless in his efforts to protect the realm. And the final knight sought the blessing from the Stargazers—a once thriving monastic order dedicated to their study of the celestial bodies—to protect the Summer King from all future threats to the realm.

## ROLEPLAYING BRENNIN

Brennin exists in fragments, scattered across Ember. The aspects are missing key emotions and memories, elements of Brennin's essential being and each should be played as a man incomplete. Each can be more easily reasoned or communicated with when conversation revolves around something linked to that particular aspiration. The ghostly apparitions can be "resolved" (either through *joyfulness* or *misery*) and cast back to Brennin and the phylactery, making him more complete, and perhaps not as single-minded as the husk within Castle Ember. If they are made to realize that certain aspirations have been completed in some way, or could never have been attained, then each ghostly fragment rejoins the greater self of Brennin. These aspects of Brennin are detailed further in the locations in which they appear.

## USING BRENNIN

Brennin is responsible for the Endless Summer's curse and all that has befallen Ember since, and the key to the restoration or damnation of Ember is in dealing with the current Summer King. Resolving the conflict across Ember, and the conflict within Brennin, may mean dealing with a mix of the king's ghostly aspirations, his physical husk within the castle, those who are close to him – the Earl of Aderyn, Gorwedd the Guardian – or those who have also played a part in Ember's downfall – Ceidwen and Fate-sealer Witch Rhonwen. Potentially, any who wish to solve the "puzzle" of the Endless Summer might have to either destroy the phylactery at the heart of the castle, or find a way to enter it and remove Brennin from it.

# BRIGID THE WINTER REGENT

## BACKGROUND

Brigid came from an old noble family of Ember, one dating back to the original houses present as the kingdom of Ember was founded. She grew up in an affluent home, and was the middle child of a family of seven siblings. Brigid watched as her elder brothers and sisters were used as bargaining chips in political arrangements and marriages, while her younger siblings relied on their parents' wealth and privilege. From a young age, Brigid was ambitious enough to decide that she would be defined by her accomplishments, and not by her nobility.

As a result of her upbringing, Brigid was well-educated in the arts, and found she had a predilection for painting and sculpture, an area in which she worked hard to improve. Determined to make a name for herself, she joined the Artisan's Guild, initially as a patron, using her family's money, though soon Brigid became recognized, both for her sheer talent and her shrewd business acumen, helping to guide the guild's finances. Eventually Brigid cut ties with her family altogether. After years working from the sidelines within the Artisan's Guild, she rose to the top, and became the youngest to serve as head of any guild in Ember. But this was not enough for Brigid.

Through her passion, she elevated the guild in both their business dealings and influence, dominating the guild sphere and making appearances to the royal court to handle daily contracts.

And always Brigid continued to work on her art, becoming known particularly for her bold sculptures, both popular within Castle Ember and the homes of many noble families, and on the streets of Yúla itself, in fountain plazas and botanical gardens.

As Brennín was just starting out as an architect, as ambitious as Brigid, he became heavily involved in dealings with the Artisan's Guild, in order to source materials, skill expertise, and labor. It was through these dealings that Brennín and Brigid encountered each other as they worked closely together on numerous projects in Yúla. It was Brigid who first pursued Brennín, since the young noble was doggedly determined to focus on a career as an architect. Brennín found himself relying on Brigid, at first for what she brought to his work, and then for her company, and the two spiraled closer to one another. After Brennín's success in the development on the port district of Yúla, he asked for Brigid's hand in marriage. And after they were married, as always between them, the two were equal, as business partners, and as husband and wife.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### *Brennín*

Brigid always set herself with fierce determination when she knew what she wanted. She was steadfast in her pursuit of Brennín, and won him over. Their love grew, strong, fiery, passionate. When Brennín had no choice but to become the Summer King, Brigid was there at his side, supporting and advising him all the way. When Brigid became ill after the birth of Ceidwen, then worse after Caddell, Brennín was by her side to the point of shirking his responsibilities as king.

### *Ceidwen and Caddell*

When Brigid thought there was no more room for love in her life besides Brennín, along came Ceidwen, and Brigid's inner fire grew brighter. But her pregnancy with Ceidwen was not without its complications, and she was surrounded with many court wizards and apothecaries, all working to save her life.

The birth of her first child weakened Brigid significantly, and this forced her to give up her position as Head of the Artisan's Guild, but this did not lessen the love she had for Ceidwen. Soon after Caddell arrived – a pregnancy that had been a gamble since she had not fully recovered from her earlier illness – Brigid became worse, to the extent that she withdrew from all social engagements as a result. At first, Brigid's illness did not stop her providing that foundation of kindness and love that still remains deep inside her children. But as she grew weaker in her illness, she began to withdraw from her family altogether. As she became vague and listless, sadly, she inadvertently became open to the manipulations from Cliodhna, a vulnerability that led to Brennín casting out their children.

### *Cliodhna and Maeve*

When Brigid was unable to help guide her husband as she became sick, and was caring for her children, she saw how valuable Cliodhna became to Brennín, and never suspected her of any malevolence. To Brigid, the Realm of Ember needed a strong leader, and Cliodhna seemed to have the kingdom's best interests, and Brennín's, in mind.

While they kept a cool, distant relationship, Brigid and Maeve always deeply respected one another for the leadership and insight they brought to their respective domains – the fae realm, and the guilds of Yúla.

## USING BRIGID

Brigid is dead, and her soul lost into the spirit realm, but her impact across Ember can still be felt significantly. Echoes of Brigid remain in some form: in the memories of Brennín and her children, the Royal Gardens, perhaps as pieces of her artwork – the paintings and sculptures found throughout Ember, even amongst the fae of the Vitreous Wood.

It is Brigid's memory that can still impact on many of Ember's Core Characters, notably Brennín, Ceidwen and Caddell. Brigid's kindness and love, and the memory of this, might be one of the keys to bringing many of her family out of the mindfog that has overtaken them.



# CEIDWEN REAPER OF ASH

## BACKGROUND

Ceidwen, first daughter of ash of the Lewellyn bloodline, fated to become a fire maiden, was born to the mortal queen Brigid and Brenninn the Summer King. She grew up happy and loved, but in the castle there was always a certain weight to the air, an unspoken, horrible truth upon her parents' shoulders.

Soon after the birth of her younger brother Caddell, Brenninn's demeanor darkened. The Earl of Aderyn had enamored herself to Brenninn as a court advisor, whispering into his ear, corrupting his mind and playing upon his fears – his children were frail and weak, not worthy of the royal Lewellyn bloodline.

Rife with the worry that the Stargazers' prophecy for Brigid's fate had lain upon him, Brenninn devised a plan. He asked his fated fire maiden, Ceidwen, to look into the Hearth. It had been said that fire maidens, and those fated, can look into the Flame and see the Hearth's Will, a glimpse of possible realities. Brenninn was still in denial about the outcomes the Stargazers foretold.

Wanting to please her father and protect the realm, Ceidwen agreed. In the Hearth, where all kings and queens must join the fire in order to pass into the next cycle, Ceidwen stared into the flames.

Entranced by the flickering fire, she drew closer to the Hearth, but in fear for his daughter's life, Brenninn reached to pull the girl away – she was to glimpse fate, not embrace death! In the king's folly, a fiery lash leapt from the pyre, burning the young maiden's face and blinding her. The Hearth marked Ceidwen, and so she was to become a daughter of ash. The king took this as an omen – the Hearth had rejected her nobility; the Earl of Aderyn was right.

Ever since the incident, Ceidwen was haunted by spirits, hearing their pain and final pleas. It wasn't long until the earl had convinced Brenninn that his children were ill-fated half-bloods and a blight

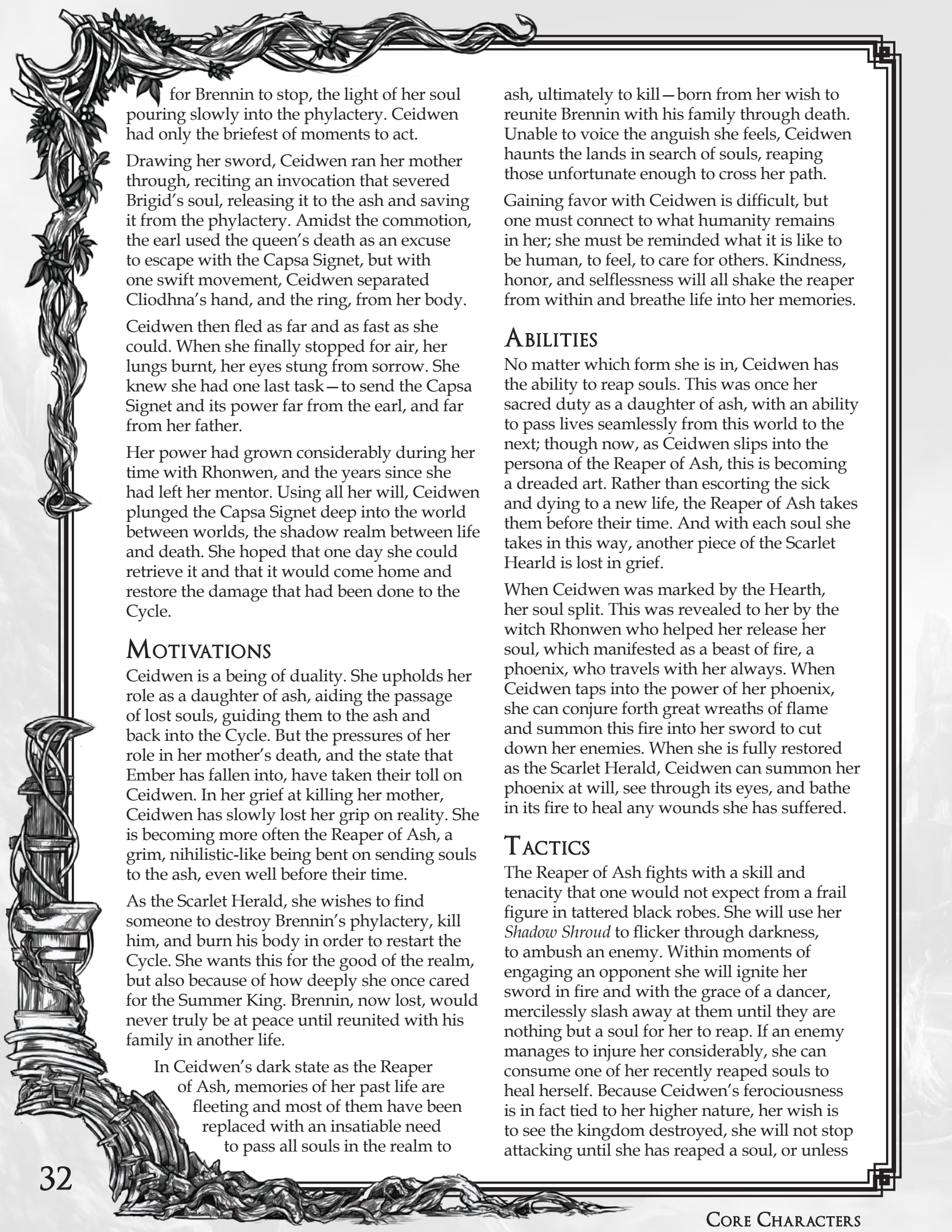
to the bloodline's purity. In an effort to keep the nobility of his bloodline, Brenninn sent his children away to Abbey Marowlyth, stripped of both title and honor.

As children of the abbey, both Ceidwen and Caddell were forced to live lives of the faithful under the care of the Stargazers. Learning the abbey's role in the Cycle, as well as the nature of souls, aiding their passage into the Hearth. As soon as the children were able to leave the abbey on their own, they took the opportunity and ran away, with only their wits to protect them against the brigands and the beasts of the wild.

Eventually, they were saved by Rhonwen, a witch who took the siblings in and cared for them. Ceidwen learned from Rhonwen how the Hearth had marked her. Ceidwen put her trust into Rhonwen and eagerly learned the magic arts, becoming a fire maiden. Years later, a mistake on Ceidwen's part forced Rhonwen to cast out the siblings, to find their own way in the world. Caddell left his sister's side to forge his own path. Ceidwen took to the road on her own, only to return years later.

Upon visiting Rhonwen one fateful night, Ceidwen heard of her father's scheme. Fearing Brigid's mortal death, Brenninn had forced the witch to create a phylactery for him to seal away her soul – thus removing Brigid from her impending fate. Having only discovered her father's grim plot on the eve of its implementation, Ceidwen rushed to the castle to dissuade her father from an act of such folly.

Ceidwen arrived at the castle to see her father performing the ritual that would contain her mother's essence in the phylactery. The Earl of Aderyn stood by Brenninn's side, holding the Capsa Signet, the noble catalyst of the Cycle. While Brigid had been ill and weak, her body slowly failing, part of her awoke in that moment of seeing her daughter. Brigid cried out



for Brennín to stop, the light of her soul pouring slowly into the phylactery. Ceidwen had only the briefest of moments to act.

Drawing her sword, Ceidwen ran her mother through, reciting an invocation that severed Brigid's soul, releasing it to the ash and saving it from the phylactery. Amidst the commotion, the earl used the queen's death as an excuse to escape with the Capsa Signet, but with one swift movement, Ceidwen separated Cliodhna's hand, and the ring, from her body.

Ceidwen then fled as far and as fast as she could. When she finally stopped for air, her lungs burnt, her eyes stung from sorrow. She knew she had one last task—to send the Capsa Signet and its power far from the earl, and far from her father.

Her power had grown considerably during her time with Rhonwen, and the years since she had left her mentor. Using all her will, Ceidwen plunged the Capsa Signet deep into the world between worlds, the shadow realm between life and death. She hoped that one day she could retrieve it and that it would come home and restore the damage that had been done to the Cycle.

## MOTIVATIONS

Ceidwen is a being of duality. She upholds her role as a daughter of ash, aiding the passage of lost souls, guiding them to the ash and back into the Cycle. But the pressures of her role in her mother's death, and the state that Ember has fallen into, have taken their toll on Ceidwen. In her grief at killing her mother, Ceidwen has slowly lost her grip on reality. She is becoming more often the Reaper of Ash, a grim, nihilistic-like being bent on sending souls to the ash, even well before their time.

As the Scarlet Herald, she wishes to find someone to destroy Brennín's phylactery, kill him, and burn his body in order to restart the Cycle. She wants this for the good of the realm, but also because of how deeply she once cared for the Summer King. Brennín, now lost, would never truly be at peace until reunited with his family in another life.

In Ceidwen's dark state as the Reaper of Ash, memories of her past life are fleeting and most of them have been replaced with an insatiable need to pass all souls in the realm to

ash, ultimately to kill—born from her wish to reunite Brennín with his family through death. Unable to voice the anguish she feels, Ceidwen haunts the lands in search of souls, reaping those unfortunate enough to cross her path.

Gaining favor with Ceidwen is difficult, but one must connect to what humanity remains in her; she must be reminded what it is like to be human, to feel, to care for others. Kindness, honor, and selflessness will all shake the reaper from within and breathe life into her memories.


## ABILITIES

No matter which form she is in, Ceidwen has the ability to reap souls. This was once her sacred duty as a daughter of ash, with an ability to pass lives seamlessly from this world to the next; though now, as Ceidwen slips into the persona of the Reaper of Ash, this is becoming a dreaded art. Rather than escorting the sick and dying to a new life, the Reaper of Ash takes them before their time. And with each soul she takes in this way, another piece of the Scarlet Herald is lost in grief.

When Ceidwen was marked by the Hearth, her soul split. This was revealed to her by the witch Rhonwen who helped her release her soul, which manifested as a beast of fire, a phoenix, who travels with her always. When Ceidwen taps into the power of her phoenix, she can conjure forth great wreaths of flame and summon this fire into her sword to cut down her enemies. When she is fully restored as the Scarlet Herald, Ceidwen can summon her phoenix at will, see through its eyes, and bathe in its fire to heal any wounds she has suffered.

## TACTICS

The Reaper of Ash fights with a skill and tenacity that one would not expect from a frail figure in tattered black robes. She will use her *Shadow Shroud* to flicker through darkness, to ambush an enemy. Within moments of engaging an opponent she will ignite her sword in fire and with the grace of a dancer, mercilessly slash away at them until they are nothing but a soul for her to reap. If an enemy manages to injure her considerably, she can consume one of her recently reaped souls to heal herself. Because Ceidwen's ferociousness is in fact tied to her higher nature, her wish is to see the kingdom destroyed, she will not stop attacking until she has reaped a soul, or unless



some part of the Scarlet Herald is awakened, causing her to hesitate. If she dies in either form, Ceidwen falls to a pile of ash, consumed by flames, only to be reborn, bathed in the twilight of a sun sinking below the horizon.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### *Caddell*

Caddell is Ceidwen's younger brother and she loves him deeply. When they both fled Abbey Marowlyth, before they were taken in by Rhowen, Ceidwen became Caddell's primary caregiver and their bond was cemented. Their extraordinary bond is shown best when they are both alone with one another, running, playing, hunting. As one acts, the other reacts, two seamless sides of the same coin bringing balance to one another.

### *Brennin*

Ceidwen has had a difficult relationship with her father. There were the years of love, the fiery ritual that marked Ceidwen, and then the years of abandonment. She has done everything for her family, and for him, but Brennin has given very little in return. Deep down, the Scarlet Herald knows her father is a vain, selfish man and yet there is still room in her heart for him. There is nothing more Ceidwen wishes than to see her father realize the error of his ways and make amends to the land he has so greatly wronged.

### *Rhonwen*

When Ceidwen was banished from Brennin's side and after she ran away from the abbey, her and Caddell were taken in by Rhonwen. The witch helped Ceidwen learn how to control her powers, wield magic, to deal with the dead, and to coax souls into the ash. At one point, however, Ceidwen foolishly betrayed Rhonwen's trust; she took Rhonwen's dark amulet and tried to wield its power. It swept her into a dark abyss to which no-one could find her for several days. When Ceidwen was finally found, its dark power had already warped her. As punishment, Rhonwen sent the siblings away. Howling wind, bubbling brews, hissing cats, all bring back fond memories for Ceidwen of the woman she once knew so well who danced with darkness and drank from the well of fate.

### *Cliodhna*

Ceidwen was initially ambivalent to the Earl of Aderyn's arrival at Castle Ember; she was merely one of many sycophants in her father's court. But soon she grew distrustful – with her father acting ever so slightly out of character at Cliodhna's advice – but this grew to hostility when she realized the earl had poisoned Ceidwen and Caddell's father against them. And now, with Cliodhna's role in Brigid's death, and the Endless Summer, Ceidwen only has a blinding, bitter hatred against the earl.

## UNIQUE EQUIPMENT

### *Veil of Sorrow*

The *Veil of Sorrow* allows the bearer to see a person's truest sorrows, and also has the potential to amplify or diminish these sorrows. Rhonwen inherited the *Veil of Sorrow* from a previous lover before her untimely death. This witch had crafted the mask for use in a form of psychological therapy, which she used for petitioners who sought out her services. As the Reaper of Ash, Ceidwen uses this to whisper doubts into the ears of her enemies. As the Scarlet Herald, she uses this to bolster others, to assure them that there is hope in the world.

### *Shadow Shroud*

Ceidwen wears a cloak of pure shadow, gifted to her by some primal being in the abyss. The cloak allows her to walk between shadows and she may cast it over someone else to shift them, and herself, to any piece of darkness she can see.

### *The Phoenix Blade*

This blade was originally gifted to Ceidwen by the Grove Guardian in the fire maiden's early years when she still had her memories. This black iron sword draws out nearby sources of heat and hungrily consumes them. Ceidwen can also imbue it with the power of her phoenix and the Scarlet Herald; when not alight, it appears akin to a smoldering brack of charcoal and when set into flames, it burns with a terrible searing heat. The longer a person is in the presence of the lit sword, the more terrified they become, overwhelmed with the raw power of its fire.



## ROLEPLAYING CEIDWEN

Ceidwen is a solemn character surrounded by sadness, the burden of responsibility and an anger of betrayal. A deep sorrow pools around her, a weight in the air, intangible, powerful.

As the Reaper of Ash, Ceidwen preys on the infirm and weak, but more and more she is becoming less discerning. Those who are ill, or barely injured, may be visited by Ceidwen as the Reaper of Ash, bringing about their death too soon. Soft sighs echo through the chambers where she roams, the last sighs of each soul she has reaped before their death.

As the Scarlet Herald, when she remembers her goals, and her loss, she has regret at her actions. Her head tilts from side to side and her lips silently respond to questions no-one can hear. With her very being existing between two realms – the living and the dead – Ceidwen often forgets how to speak, how to connect and communicate with those in the physical world.

Ceidwen is able to speak through the souls she has reaped. When she wishes to verbalize something she summons forth a wispy ball of light, which will speak in the haunting voice of someone who has died. Each soul may speak only for a short time before it is pulled back into the ash; speaking to the Scarlet Herald is often to listen to a chorus of disjointed voices forming a broken harmony.

## USING CEIDWEN

Ceidwen has two forms: the Scarlet Herald – which is Ceidwen as she should be, possessing all her memories – and the Reaper of Ashes, the form that has forgotten all that she once was.

As the grim reaper of Ember, she moves about her solemn duty. If she gives over to the Reaper of Ash entirely, she would eventually end the Realm of Ember, passing all within into the Cycle, but a Cycle currently broken. When the player characters encounter Ceidwen, she will likely be the Reaper of Ash, but through their interactions with her, appealing to her better nature, she can become the Scarlet Herald once more. As the Scarlet Herald, Ceidwen acts as the character's guide through the lands and can help them to accomplish both their goals, and her own.

Ceidwen believes what her father has done is ultimately selfish and evil. If asked, she would prefer to see the Summer King and Winter Queen restored, with her father and mother's souls fully returned to the Cycle.



### *Severing the Soul*

*Embers* makes frequent mention of souls as the spiritual essence of one's being that leaves the body after death. There are many elements of the *Embers* setting in which a soul may be harmed, one of which is through Ceidwen's ability to sever a soul from its body. If such a thing should occur to a player character, what this means, mechanically speaking, will be up to the particular system in use. Perhaps it means that in matters relating to the spirit, willpower, or even sanity, that the affected individual is at some sort of disadvantage. In some systems, this might be just a different state of being, or an aspect, forced onto the character, and which can be used by the player or gamemaster in some narrative or mechanical manner. Given that this is likely to be a negative impact on the affected character, there should also be some manner in which the damage to the soul can be undone, either through someone with the power to affect souls directly (such as Rhonwen), or for an artifact to be able to knit a soul back together with its host body (such as some artifact found in the Garrison of the Dead or an alien item possessed by the Deep Ones of the Forlorn Cove). Separated souls may also be on a countdown to be restored to a body, before they are out of reach, readied to be absorbed into the Cycle in order to be moved on (though with the Cycle halted, this "moving" on into the next life may be slowed, or not happen at all in your version of *Embers*).





# CLÍODHNA THE EARL OF ADERYN

## BACKGROUND

Clíodhna hails from Aderyn, a distant land of rocky wastes where the strongest warriors prove their worth in battles against great beasts that were the original inhabitants of their land. She was banished from Aderyn upon attaining her majority, after the Queen's Oracle had foreseen that the girl would become an agent of chaos, disrupting any kingdom she settled in. Clíodhna took her family's heirloom scimitar and mask — artifacts of power — and swore to settle nowhere, thus averting the prophecy altogether.

As she traveled the lands in search of adventure, Clíodhna heard tales of Aderyn's wealth and prosperity that had grown in her absence, and she longed for home. That longing soon turned to bitterness and Clíodhna began to crave revenge. In her travels, she sought out dark sorcery and blasphemous rituals, coaxing the spark of anger that lived in her heart into an inferno, embracing her destiny as firebrand and radical and swearing to bring about the downfall of Aderyn. Eventually, Clíodhna heard of the power residing in Ember's Hearth, and so she sought it out, planning to obtain power she could use against Aderyn.

Clíodhna concealed her sorcerous ways and appetite for power and sought asylum in Ember, claiming to be the last scion of her house — the Earl of Aderyn — unfairly banished from Aderyn due to a romantic rival's machinations. She ignored normal diplomatic roles at first and lingered around martial officers and proved her skill, enough so to be assigned as a lieutenant in the city watch.


Clíodhna studied Ember and its rulers, distant at first, and slowly spiraled closer to the royal family. And then, she saw an opportunity to disrupt the Cycle as Ahnarad, Brennín's uncle, grew into power. Clíodhna would create the opportunities she needed to get closer to the

Hearth. Using forbidden rituals, she lured and enchanted the ice wolf, Helyór — amplifying his already fearsome prowess — to ambush the royal family during one of their hunts. She had specifically chosen a time when Brennín was not there, who she saw as more susceptible to influence. But when Grufeid survived, she cursed in frustration since he had already begun regarding Clíodhna with suspicion by this point. As Grufeid performed the ritual to become the Liyume King, next in line from Ahnarad, Clíodhna's twisted smile was the last thing he saw in the Flame as he died.

Time passed as Brennín assumed his role as the Summer King. Feeling adrift as a new ruler, Brennín was impressed by Clíodhna's unique skill with a scimitar and her deftness in combat, so he appointed her to the royal guard, the Tirithal Knights. The earl insinuated herself further into Brennín's good graces, until he trusted her above all others. She wove discord between him and his other advisors, his wife, and even his children. Clíodhna waited and plotted, and believed she found the perfect opportunity to steal the Capsa Signet, the keystone to access the Hearth's power, until Ceidwen intervened. Now, with Brennín more or less an absent ruler, the earl is mostly free to wield power as she sees fit.

## MOTIVATIONS

Clíodhna is currently seeking to consolidate her power in Castle Ember, but ultimately she wants the Capsa Signet, stolen by Ceidwen. If she were to acquire the ring, she would use its power to overthrow Aderyn, likely damaging Ember and the Cycle in the process. While the Capsa Signet seems out of reach for Clíodhna, she has started to dig deeper into Ember's history, looking for other sources of power, just as old as the ring, if not older.



Ceidwen is in Cliodhna's sights – she blames the Scarlet Herald for thwarting her plan, and is looking for a way to make her pay. With that in mind, Cliodhna is also searching for Caddell, not to put him on the throne as she claims, but to turn him against his older sister, and perhaps even to guide him towards fratricide. Those who feel Ember has fallen under Brennín believe Cliodhna is trying to create order by installing Caddell upon the throne; those who still believe in King Brennín's role as the Summer King, see the boy as an aberration who must be contained.

## ABILITIES

Cliodhna's long years of study of sorceries from various lands and cultures has led her to possess a range of abilities. Most notably, the earl can summon shadow creatures to fight at her side, and she can cloak her movement in both shadows and silence. She is well-versed in the art of dueling as well as guerrilla-style warfare.

The shadow creatures she can summon are in forms common to beasts of Aderyn. They are massive felines, sporting four tendrilclaws emerging from their backs, used to slash, hold and rend their prey. The creatures are insubstantial in shadow, although they can attack, and they are weakened in strong light.

Cliodhna has managed to restore the function of her lost hand through the use of an enchanted glove, but tends to favor her remaining natural hand. Something about the glove itches at her mind and makes it uncomfortable to use.

## TACTICS

Cliodhna is a skillful manipulator, preferring to move others into the position to defend or kill for her. But when words don't quite do the trick, she relies on weapons and magic. At her disposal in Castle Ember are the Tirithal Knights – Brennín's royal guard – and Gorwedd the Guardian, even the husk of Brennín himself. She's unafraid to confront others in face-to-face combat, and doesn't hesitate to fight dirty if that's what it takes.

Above all, Cliodhna is a survivor, and will often have contingencies in place for herself.

Cliodhna relies a lot on her speed and friendly facade to take opponents by surprise. If given the opportunity, Cliodhna will send her beasts in first in order to assess an adversary's weakness before putting herself in danger. She prefers to have the upper hand in any situation.

The Aderyn style of fighting is meant to allow small groups to bring down much larger and more powerful opponents, and Cliodhna delights in taunting her adversaries before she uses her scimitar to whittle them down, cut by cut.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### *Brennín*

At first Brennín was a means to an end, but despite herself, Cliodhna has grown attached to the king. She has convinced herself that using his power through the Capsa Signet is key to enacting her revenge on Aderyn. When Brennín turned to Cliodhna, desperate for a way to restore Ember by making her queen, it was the earl's hesitation that turned Brennín away and to seal himself in his sanctum, using the phylactery, and now Cliodhna blames herself for Brennín fragmenting himself across Ember. Cliodhna respects Brennín's previous devotion to his family, and harbors some jealousy over it. She works hard to hide her true feelings about Brennín from almost everyone.

### *Ceidwen*

It was Ceidwen who thwarted the Earl of Aderyn's plans, and brought them to a halt at her crowning moment. Cliodhna now hunts for the girl who crippled her, and who stole the item of power she desires for her revenge on Aderyn. Cliodhna is finding it increasingly difficult to track and bring down Ceidwen, especially with Ceidwen growing into the Reaper of Ashes. There is an increasing number of bodies that lay at Ceidwen's feet, hirelings who have fallen to the girl's fiery blade. Cliodhna pretends that she is looking for Ceidwen in order to protect her. She will try to paint Ceidwen as misguided and manipulated by unnatural forces, and claim that only reuniting her with her father will bring Ceidwen back to the right path.

## *Caddell*

Cliodhna plans to coax Caddell back to the court of Ember and use him as a prop ruler, and then against Ceidwen. While she initially had no particular attachment to him, something about the boy reminds her about the family she left behind in Aderyn. She would go to great lengths to protect him, arguing that it is actually to protect her plans to abscond with much of the realm's power, but Cliodhna will put herself at personal risk to protect Caddell. She knows Caddell would reject her if he knew of her plans, so she does her best to hide that from him. So far, Cliodhna believes that Caddell has remained oblivious to her machinations in Ember, and if he were to find out, this might spur him into any number of actions.

## UNIQUE EQUIPMENT

### *Mask of Occultation*

An heirloom of Cliodhna's family, handed down since the lands of Aderyn were first colonized. The mask is of some ancient bird-beast, brought down by Cliodhna's ancestors and infused with sorcerous powers. This allows Cliodhna to manipulate both shadows and silence with a great deal of precision.

### *Ring of Lunae*

This ring had been used for generations in Aderyn to aid in religious ceremonies until Cliodhna stole it for herself before she left her homeland. It allows the user an easier time in focus and concentration. In particular, the Earl of Aderyn uses it to help summon and control her shadow beasts. While she can call them on her own at great cost, using the ring allows her to forgo that effort.

### *The Umbran Scimitar*

A witch's blade, crafted in an unknown land. When a killing blow is dealt, the blade begins to shed a black fog, perhaps remnants from the souls it has consumed.

### *Bloodmoon Mantle*

Crafted by the earl herself, and considered by Cliodhna to be a necessary item to survive the harsh onslaught of Aderyn's beasts, this mantle draws in the spilled blood of her enemies. Blood shed in battle rises into the air and swirls about the wearer as they fight.

## ROLEPLAYING CLIODHNA

Cliodhna is charming and friendly during most interactions, even while engaged in combat. She exults when she finds a worthy opponent, and can turn cold in an instant if she feels threatened. She has a slight accent of another, far away land, and occasionally forgets seldom-used words. She is normally self-deprecating when this happens, although a close look will reveal a hard, calculating look in her eyes even as she laughs. Cliodhna will talk at length about the military tactics of her homeland, but grows sad and bitter when speaking of its people. She can be a shameless flirt when an individual catches her interest, but will take being rebuffed with goodwill.

Cliodhna will present herself as an ally with a knack for smoothing out difficulties. Those who view her as an enemy will hesitate to say so openly, since they never know when Cliodhna may be listening from the shadows.

Some people make the mistake of thinking Cliodhna is all talk, but that is quickly rectified by watching her morning practice or catching a glimpse of her training with the military officers. Cliodhna respects strength, but hates the subservience often desired as part of the military. She vastly prefers giving the orders.

## USING CLIODHNA

Cliodhna wants revenge against Aderyn more than anything and sees the Realm of Ember as a means to an end. She has become attached to some of the inhabitants, although she does her best to hide that weakness. Cliodhna is good at manipulating others, and she is not without power in the realm.

While Cliodhna is obsessed with the level of power she needs to bring down Aderyn, even if the Earl of Aderyn were to acquire all the power she wished for, she does not realize the extent of time that has passed with the advent of the Endless Summer... and that those who spurned her initially are long dead.

She will only aid the player characters if their goals align with hers. At the slightest suggestion that they might oppose Cliodhna's plans for Brennin, Ceidwen, or Caddell, she will do everything in her power to stop them.



# MÆVE QUEEN OF WINTER

## BACKGROUND

Her Royal Majesty, Queen Maeve the Fae, the Winter Regent, Mother of the Peerage, High Sorceress of Crystal and Lady of the Southern Marches is a complex individual.

Standing nearly 8 feet (2.4 meters) tall, her bird-like head ends in many feathery palms, though her body is very clearly that of a fit human woman with a dusky gray skin which deepens to a wine-colored purple at her hands and feet. Her eyes are a swirling nimbus of lavender fire, and her wings are four shattered panes of emerald crystal,

held in the air by an unseen force when extended. Her plumed tail often flicks, cat-like and reflective of her moods. The corrupt effects of her extended existence

in crystal are visible even in her projected form, as she has begun to gain more crystalline thorns on her hips and extrudes viciously pointed claws from her fingertips.

The line of Maeve stretches back to the dawn of recorded history within the kingdom, for there has only ever been one Queen of Winter. She is the source of innumerable faerie and human lines, the founder of countless houses including the Winter Peerage and first great grand-dame of the Luminous Circle, as the mother of all but the first Equinox King. Even the epithet of that initial Lord of Summer is lost in the generations, but all know and speak the name of Queen Maeve in hushed tones. To carry the blood of Maeve is to be touched by fae royalty.

The queen has always held a revered position within Ember, the fixed guidestar which led the traditions of the Capsa Signet and the Cycle, that is, until the coming of King Brennin. Before those days, she was known to be a cool, but loving and benevolent queen, one whose moods and temperament remained a source of reassurance for the people through any troubled times. Her long years of ruling and great wisdom meant Maeve could provide a


stability that kept the traditions and transitions smooth and also allowed generations to prepare in advance for natural disasters and long-brewing threats.

Before her involuntary sequester, Queen Maeve assisted noble clans in maintaining their family trees, even growing royal gardens to represent each of the houses and their family members. Another particular undertaking, given she has no need of sleep, was Maeve teaching specially selected circles of magi for 13 year intervals. Her interests focused on generational projects; the line of mystically augmented stallions she raised remains in demand by knights across the land.

## MOTIVATIONS

More than anything, Maeve seeks restoration as Winter Queen, or failing that, regicide. While her body lies within the crystal-tree sarcophagus at the heart of the Slumbering Court, Maeve remains able to manifest a phantom of herself within the forest for one night out of three. The permanence of this form is mentally and physically torturous, slowly destroying her, grinding away her mind like a knife against a stone.

It is clear she's attempting to find champions willing to serve her, even in her reduced state. While she genuinely loves Brennin as one of her sons and mystically as the Summer King, she knows unless he comes to some resolution with Brigid's death, or he is murdered and a new Summer King takes his place, she cannot escape her liminal state. She realizes if someone cannot complete this task soon, she may lose her grasp on sanity, becoming unable to fulfil her role, even if freed. Time is not on her side, and she needs someone to act against Brennin soon. To achieve this, her agents continue to seek potential champions from the markets and fae roads,



noting them to Atkond, who evaluates potential candidates and invites the best to meet with the Winter Queen.

Additionally, she appears quite interested in capturing Rhonwen and re-engaging the king's former spymaster, the faerie wizard, Tylwyth.

## ABILITIES

Maeve's primary power at this time is the ability to manifest as an avatar, a mostly solid projection, outside her crystalline coffin, to interact and engage with people. However, she is also capable of vast acts of sorcerous power, from manipulating nature to conjuring crystals to be used as veils or deadly weapons. Like most items of faerie manufacture, such weapons and trinkets crumble into dust and tears upon leaving her realm or if her whimsy dictates they should no longer exist.

As the true Winter Queen, Maeve possesses great powers over weather. This is limited while trapped, but for now, she can keep the meteorology of the Vitreous Wood as she likes, but beyond its borders, the weather must follow the natural course. She uses this to her advantage, attempting to delay or entrap agents from those considered foes.

## TACTICS

In combat, Maeve does nothing in half measures. Her first attack is as brutal as possible, driving to ensure the most decisive possible victory. She holds no targets as taboo, and would sacrifice loyal agents and subjects alike if it meant to ensure her rebirth. She has no qualms about those she destroys along the way, because, she posits, "How are they worth more than my children, my home, my people? They are not, and when we succeed, their loss will be mourned but justified by our victory."

When engaged, Maeve strikes out with her magically summoned panoply and follows through with fearsome spells to warp the mind and summon jagged shards of ice from the sky. She brings allies and chooses battlefields that tip the balance of favor in her direction. While capable of melee combat, she prefers to have a champion battle for her, and only takes to the field if a foe of equal status or greater has joined the fray.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### *Atkond*

Atkond is Maeve's oldest and dearest friends. He is Maeve's longest standing general but, because of his many "instances," he also happens to serve as an actual fae army should the need to use one ever arise. Maeve would lose herself with surprising speed if the duke were somehow eliminated. She relies on him heavily, and trusts him implicitly. She has no greater ally.

### *Brennin*

This is the most twisted relationship. On one hand, Maeve loves him as the Summer King; on the other, she hates what he has done to Ember. If he came to her in adherence of the Old Ways, she would take him. For now, she seeks his removal, which by all likelihood can really only result from his death.

### *Ceidwen and Caddell*

Only in secret has Maeve come to know the children of Brennin and Brigid, as she visited the court, the abbey and countryside of Ember in disguise, often to examine the state of things. On one hand, she could not blame Brennin for following his heart with Brigid and the children they wanted before the hunting accident that claimed her son's family, but on the other hand, she has been dismayed that Brennin refused to join with her in order to secure Ember's future. While she has remained relatively neutral to Brennin's children so far, she knows that it is one possibility that through them Ember can be restored. If she could engage them to strike down or replace Brennin, she would do so.

### *Rhonwen and Stargazer*

Weapons or tools, depending on how she can manipulate them, Maeve sees them as distractions or useful pawns, but not allies. Perhaps the only thing Maeve wants as much as a return to the Cycle, she wishes to learn what secrets Rhonwen knows about the Endless Summer's curse and exactly how it came to be.

## *Tylwyth the Crystal Sage*

Tylwyth had previously been a close advisor to Queen Maeve, but some time ago he decided to spend more time amongst the mortal world, becoming spymaster for the Court of Ember. The wizard's recent abandonment of the cause to save Ember saddens Maeve, but she understands his position in wanting to leave the realm, and this world, behind altogether. She does not yet know that the means for Tylwyth to leave Ember behind might in fact destroy her realm. If he were to rejoin her cause, she would be pleased.

## UNIQUE EQUIPMENT

### *Bite of Winter's Cold*

A shard of razor sharp blue-white sea ice organically and masterfully crafted into a sword. Those wounded by this blade fall prey to a bitter cold, freezing them in place or slowing them down. Those who truly deserve the worst of Maeve's anger might see spikes of frozen blood burst from their flesh moments later.

### *Glacier Aegis*

*Glacier Aegis* is a frigid, crystal shield preventing all fire from burning the bearer, and keeping them unaffected by their environment, pressure, or even a lack of air. Although the queen does not wield the shield for combat, she does bear it for ceremonial occasions.

### *Mantle of the Vitreous Wood*

The mantle is a fine, crystal-bark cloak granting wide magical powers over forest elements, from parting knotted trees and vegetation, to communicating with a range of plants or imbuing them with a temporary intelligence.

## ROLEPLAYING QUEEN MAEVE

When portraying Maeve, she should always use the royal "We" when referring to herself; for example, "We think your proposal has flaws. We would approach with Our allies from the south while sending several of Our trusted agents to create a distraction from the west and foment dissent from inside his court." The Winter Queen approaches each conversation with reserved politeness, attempting to discern the mettle of visitors while maintaining the old forms. However, there is a definite undercurrent of desperation, a ragged edge of

madness, of fear that she will descend into some corruption she cannot escape, and her legacy, her people, her very world, will suffer for the worse by it. That terrible fear bleeds into her responses when she grows frustrated or when conversations wander into mindless prattle or basic sycophantry. Her facade of polished nobility is many generations thick, but erodes faster with each passing year; the anger she feels towards Brennin sometimes bubbles through in a muttered curse at the Summer King's mention, or erupts into complete fury should someone defend or justify his actions without realizing the present company. While she wants to reset the Cycle and take her rightful place, her seething bitterness and fear occasionally sabotage her efforts, and scare off some legitimate allies before they can be secured.

## USING QUEEN MAEVE

Depending on PC motivation in your version of *Embers*, Maeve is possibly one of the most important characters as guide, ally, "quest-giver" and source of information about Ember and its history. Maeve needs the help of the player characters; ultimately, she needs outsiders who can break the stasis that currently besets Ember. Maeve is a strange combination of haughty arrogance and quiet desperation. Her position demands the Winter Queen act in certain ways to retain her royal station and its separation from either common citizens or simply those less powerful than her. Unfortunately, her situation absolutely requires she acquiesce, politely engaging potential rescuers. This involves a delicate balance, which she doesn't find contradictory, as she courts possible champions, but distinctly rebukes them if they begin to act too familiar or casual with such an august noble as herself. She does her best to work through proxies and trusted members of the Winter Peerage, attempting to orchestrate Summer's replacement and her own rejuvenating freedom.

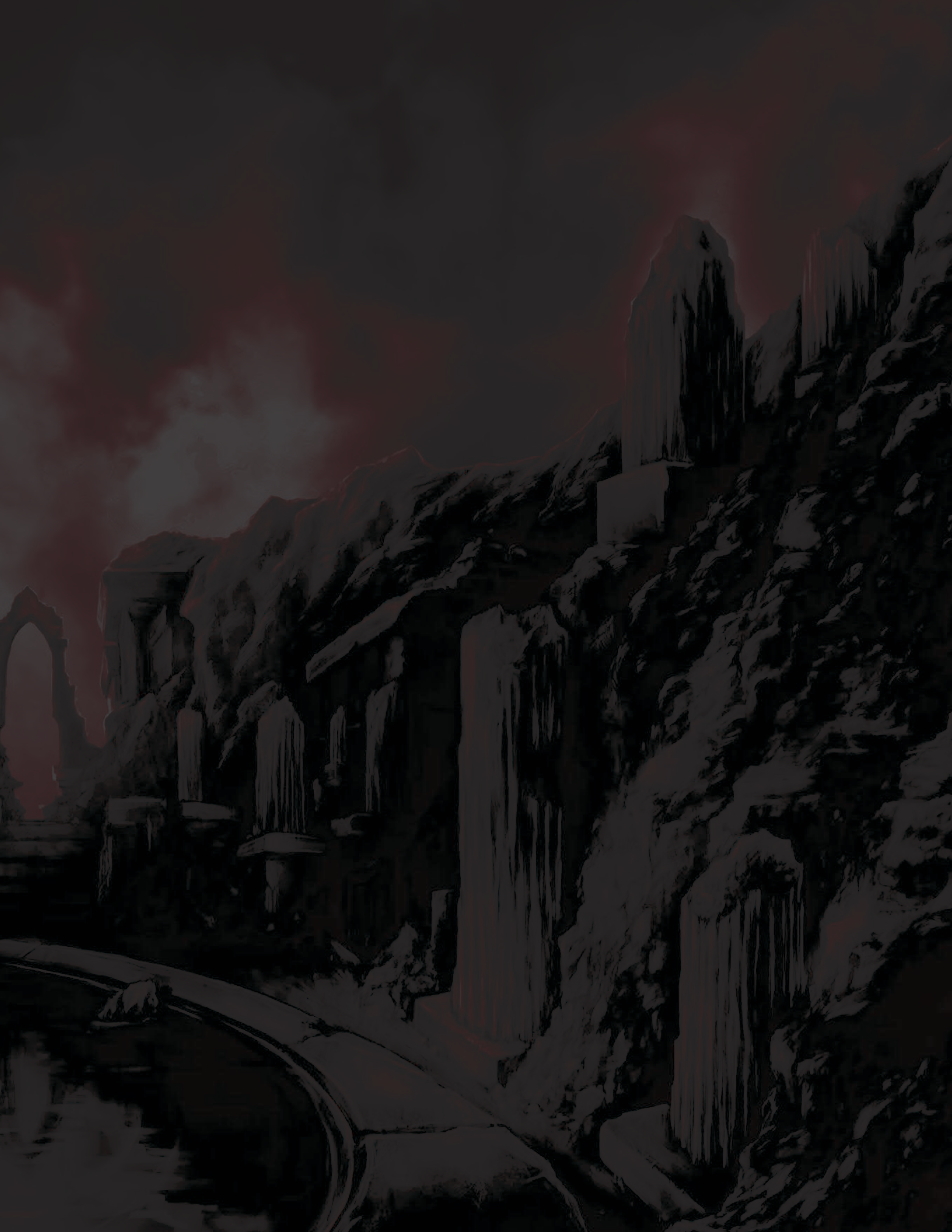


# MAJOR CHARACTERS



## ORB OF STARS

These ornate orbs were gifted to ranking monks of Saint Marowlyth to enhance their intellects. As the Endless Summer's curse set in, lesser orbs were scavenged by the surviving monks to aid their ailing minds.





# CADDELL

## LAST PRINCE OF SUMMER

### BACKGROUND

Caddell was born some time after the initial turmoil that placed Brenninn as the Summer King, and shortly after his mother grew ill after Ceidwen's birth — an illness that worsened with Caddell. His father was always at arm's length from Caddell, but growing up this fact rarely bothered Caddell — he had his mother and his sister and their steadfast love supporting and caring for him as he grew into a young man. When his mother silently complied with his father's decision to banish the children to the abbey, Caddell grieved. Grief turned to acceptance by the time Caddell and Ceidwen were taken under Rhonwen's care. The witch's nurturing made up greatly for what Caddell lost, or perhaps never had. But eventually, too, Rhonwen would cast the royal children out, due to a mistake on Ceidwen's part. Betrayed once more, Caddell did away with the chivalrous dreams of his childhood and turned to mercenary work, honing his skill with a blade until he was the foremost warrior and assassin in the land.

He was drawn beyond the borders of his homeland as his services were requested by nobles and rulers from Ember's neighbors and beyond. Caddell hid his pain away, and while part of him hardened, another aspect of him searched for meaning in his life. Slowly, the young man became distant and detached, living from contract to contract. His only fear in all that time was returning home, lest his sister discover what he had become after leaving her side.

When Caddell heard of his mother's death he knew he had to return to Ember, if only to confirm that what happened to Brigid was true. Sure enough, he uncovered the truth of the tales — his father was mad, his mother dead, and worse yet his sister was branded a traitor to the realm. Caddell grew suspicious. Something was not right. Had not been right at Castle Ember for a

long time. He secretly traced the maddened steps of his father's days before the queen's death. He saw the Earl of Aderyn's hand in every action and his father's actions sloppy and desperate.

Hearing Ceidwen's name spoken like a curse between townsfolk set Caddell's heart alight. A feeling, something he hadn't experienced in years, burned deep within him. Rage. How dare his father? How dare the earl?

Caddell was unable to locate his sister, so instead looked for another once close to him. Caddell tracked Rhonwen to the Fate Marshes and requested that she help him against the earl, and the witch looked into the misty future and laughed. She sent Caddell to retrieve what she could forge into a powerful artifact — the Earl of Aderyn's hand, severed by Ceidwen, and still containing its owner's dark sorcery. Rhonwen imbued the hand with further power and taught Caddell how to use it. The hand would lead him to the person the earl betrayed deeply. To Caddell, that meant the hand would lead him to his sister, and together they would take revenge on their cruel father and Cliodhna.

Caddell hid in the family mausoleum, plotting against the Earl of Aderyn and King Brenninn, to find a way to end the summer curse. He began to gather resources and loyal followers, but something in the mausoleum went awry. Underneath the mausoleum, he lost his memories, and his purpose, step by step, thought by thought, until he was left wandering listless in the labyrinthine halls.

### MOTIVATIONS

Caddell has been trapped in the mausoleum for years. Battling the creatures in the deepest, darkest reaches of the labyrinth has consumed him, and taken him far from his original purpose. Breaking through to any semblance of the man he once was will help to awaken him.

If he is able to meet the people of his past and connect to the person he was before he set off on his own, it may restore the humanity within.

Awoken, Caddell is motivated to find his sister. Underneath his murky self, Caddell also burns in anger at the Earl of Aderyn's actions. If he is reconciled with Ceidwen, the pair of them can take revenge on Brenninn and Cliodhna for what they have done to the kingdom. In his years away, the prince learned of many ruthless tactics to bring down his enemies. The prince is willing to do whatever it takes in order to claim vengeance. That said, there is also a very small part of Caddell that remains conflicted: the loyal son.

## ABILITIES

Caddell does not possess any preternatural abilities, but it is his natural skills in combat and the way in which he has previously led other warriors into battle that lift him above the common man. Caddell learned numerous martial skills in his time abroad, many of which have never been seen before in Ember, so his techniques may easily surprise an opponent. He can change tact rapidly and adapt and improvise in combat as needed or if he has a more specific purpose in mind.

## TACTICS

Caddell is a trained assassin and brutal fighter. He is fast and decisive in melee, doing whatever he can to gain the upper hand from the outset. He will disarm an opponent, or cripple them, and weaken their ability to fight back. Caddell fights using his vicious blade, once known as *Promise* and now known as *Betrayal*. If he cannot overcome his enemy quickly, frustration gets the better of him and Caddell becomes a whirling berserker, an unstoppable avatar of rage and deadly skill.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### *Rhonwen*

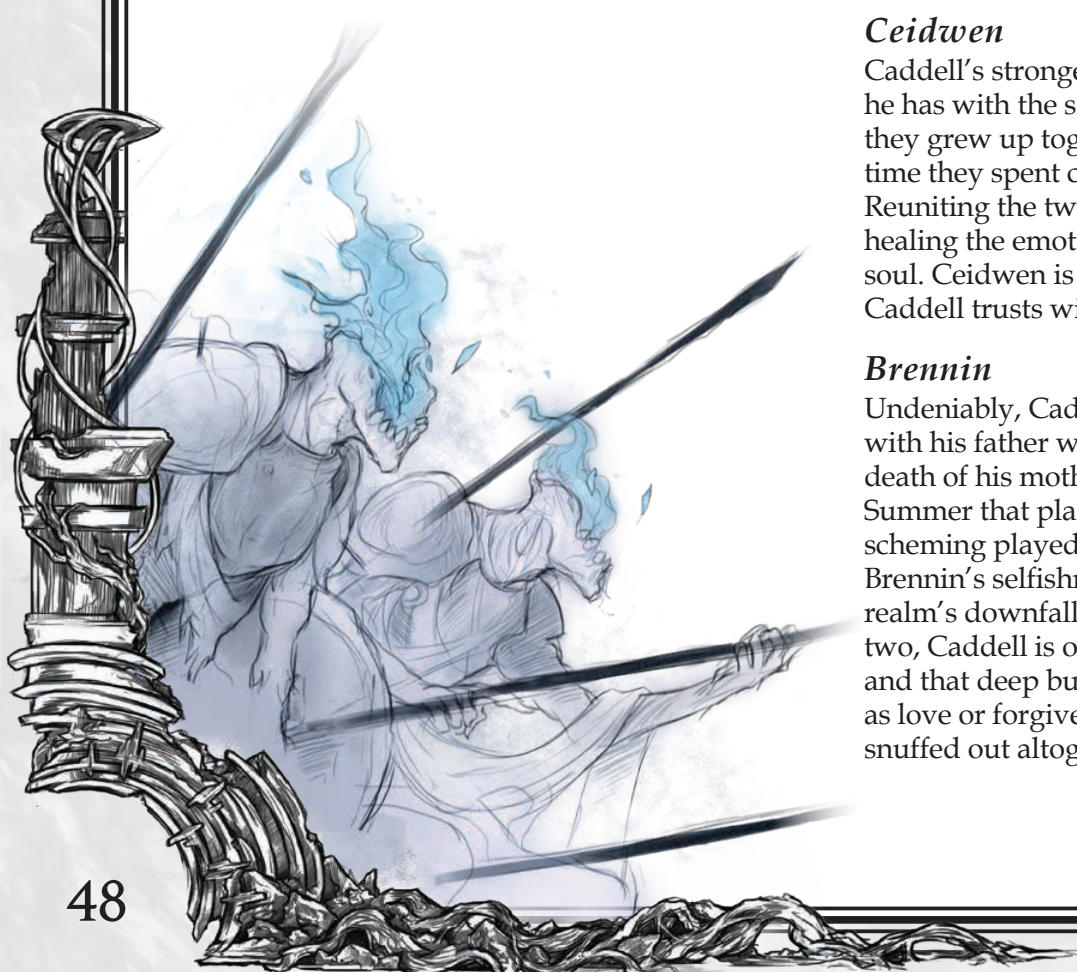
When Caddell was betrayed by his parents, particularly by Queen Brigid, who he thought loved him dearly, it was the witch Rhonwen who took him under her wing. Caddell was lost and bereft, but Rhonwen corrected the course, redirecting his sense of betrayal and abandonment into kindness. But this time was short-lived, as Ceidwen's mistake forced Rhonwen to cast the children out once more. Caddell has a lot to thank his surrogate mother for, and if not for Rhonwen's love, and Ceidwen's, he would have been lost long ago.

### *Ceidwen*

Caddell's strongest relationship is the one he has with the sister. The two were close as they grew up together and even closer in the time they spent cast out from Castle Ember. Reuniting the two will go a long way towards healing the emotional wounds in Caddell's soul. Ceidwen is likely one of the only people Caddell trusts without question.

### *Brenninn*

Undeniably, Caddell's worst relationship is with his father who banished him, caused the death of his mother, and created the Endless Summer that plagues Ember. While the earl's scheming played a large part in this, it was Brenninn's selfishness and vanity that led to the realm's downfall. Despite the gulf between the two, Caddell is often conflicted about his father, and that deep buried spark could be reignited as love or forgiveness, or perhaps it could be snuffed out altogether.



## *Cliodhna*

There are two sides to Caddell's relationship with the Earl of Aderyn. On one hand, once Caddell found the truth of her machinations, his resulting anger drove him to prepare to overthrow her from her position in Castle Ember. This burning hatred may once have broken Ember apart. However, at present, Caddell has forgotten his purpose against the earl, and this has opened him up to her manipulation, and Caddell has started to look up to her as another matriarchal figure. With the right words, the right touch, Caddell will be hers, as Brennin was once in Cliodhna's thrall.

## UNIQUE EQUIPMENT

### *The Earl of Aderyn's Hand*

Cliodhna's severed hand is now scrawled with arcane swirls and coated in a black wax. The hand acts as a divining rod, leading the way to those the earl has betrayed, and even having the power to enable safe passage to those people. Those betrayed by the earl include Brennin and Ceidwen, but there are so many others scattered across Ember – the nobles within Castle Ember, minor functionaries, members of the city watch, and even some of the creatures of the Forlorn Cove. But many of these people are now undead or summer-cursed. At present, Caddell has yet to remember the artifact's true purpose.

## *Betrayal*

The sword once known as *Promise* was a gift from the Duchess of Blades, a noble from a far off land leading an insurrection against a tyrannical queen. The blade once held the souls of those slain, and those souls could be briefly conjured forth to aid a determined wielder reach their aspirations. But now, the fabric of the sword has been twisted; its frosty sheen is tainted black, and the souls of its victims bubble up on the surface of the metal. They can still be conjured forth to assist the wielder, but this sometimes goes awry, and afterwards, they go their own way.

## ROLEPLAYING CADDELL

Caddell has hidden the pain of abandonment in different ways over the years. Ultimately, this led to him leaving his closest connections behind and searching for another purpose in his life. He is often the hardened warrior, calloused and distant, but within is still a sensitive soul, one aghast at the plight of Ember and its people. While currently his memories around the earl are murky, anger at the master manipulator may be rekindled. He is still saddened at the loss of his mother, and his emotions surrounding his father are frequently conflicted.

## USING CADDELL

Caddell has much potential, if one can find the right way to restore him, or direct him. The Earl of Aderyn has begun testing the waters, finding ways to manipulate him without evoking his anger, potentially restoring him to the throne of Ember, and to direct him against Ceidwen. If Caddell is reconnected to his true self, he has great purpose and knows what he must do, but he might also be directed in other ways. If the player characters become involved with Caddell's purpose, he'll be a strong ally. If he is somehow turned against the player characters, he is an enemy who will hound them to their grave.





# RHONWEN THE FATESEALER WITCH

## BACKGROUND

Fatesealer Witch Rhonwen once held a position of great power and prestige in the Realm of Ember. She was able to manipulate the fate of herself and those around her, allowing them to escape certain dooms. This ability was held in high regard by the Summer King, who often consulted with the Fatesealer before making any major decrees.

Rhonwen was at the peak of her renown and her abilities during the years she advised Ahnarad, Brennin's uncle, and his court. But the spymaster, Tylwyth, grew jealous of her, and had always seen her abilities as anathema to reality. Tylwyth began to whisper into the courtiers' ears and soon turned gossip against Rhonwen. The Fatesealer was shamed before the court, rumored to have been having multiple affairs with mortal and fae alike and even abandoning her bastard children at birth. She left her long-time home at the court and lived in the Lower City of Yúla for a while, though she remained in contact with those who she still had some favor with.

Brigid and Brennin had always been kind to Rhonwen, even after her fall from grace, for they especially did not give heed with court gossip. So when the king and queen's children, Ceidwen and Caddell, were cast out from Castle Ember, Rhonwen eventually sought them out and took it upon herself to guide them. Not only to help these lost children, but to repay a kindness to their parents.

When King Brennin was shown the future of his wife by Ceidwen, and that Brigid's life would end, he ran to Rhonwen to beg her to change his wife's fate. Rhonwen was unable, since the powers at work were far greater than her own. However, she had the ability to create a phylactery powerful enough to contain a soul in suspension. This would allow the king to save his wife's soul and, although her body would be destroyed, her spirit would live on.

In a twist of fate, the king used the phylactery to store his own soul instead, plunging the realm into the Endless Summer. Wracked with grief at her

hand in the curse, Rhonwen fled to the Fate Marshes, where she tried to tie together the strands of fate and keep them from unraveling, but it was too late. At first, Rhonwen worked closely with the Fate Witch Satyr Mvars to undo the damage to fate, but it became obvious that there was no cure for this. Over time, the pair both succumbed to the Endless Summer's madness, and grew paranoid, each suspecting the other of sabotaging their efforts. The witches engaged in a petty, bitter squabble and attempted to wrought and change possibilities against one another, which only increased the instability of fate.

Rhonwen now lives as a nomadic hedge witch, wandering through the Fate Marsh. It is unclear if she remembers who she is, or the part she played in the downfall of the Realm of Ember. The secret to destroying the king's phylactery and ending the Endless Summer lies locked in her mind, behind the madness that has overtaken her.

## MOTIVATIONS

As has befallen so many of Ember's most notable personalities, Rhonwen has become a shadow of her former self, in part to the madness that has swept through Ember, and due to the guilt over her own actions in the Endless Summer. Her mind has broken from the enormity of the fate that awaits Ember, as she has not been able to foresee any future but complete cataclysm. Rhonwen truly wants to restore Ember to its former place, but she is utterly at a loss as to how to bring this about. Some part of her mind clings to hope. She wanders through the marshes, peering into the ghostly futures she sees there, looking into all the myriad and changing possibilities, for just one stray thread she can use to help Ember.



Rhonwen currently plies her trade as a witch in the marshes, for those who seek her out. She knows many herbal remedies and potions that can be made from the natural materials found within the Fate Marshes.

## ABILITIES

Fatesealer Witch Rhonwen has studied at length rituals and spells that have been handed down through generations of arcane practitioners within Ember, and is also knowledgeable in herbalism, and to a lesser degree, alchemy. Her arcane powers have never been in any of the arts that could be used to harm directly, and often more to do with divination and enchantment than anything else. Her strength has always lain with her portents, and the ability to manipulate the threads of fate. One of the rarer forms of magic she has control over, but which she is still limited in skill, is soul-magic – previously used to tie souls to objects or places, to extend a mortal life, or even to coax back the spirit of a loved one, although briefly.

## TACTICS

Rhonwen does not have any physical prowess to speak of if forced into combat. Most of her magic requires lengthy ritual and various esoteric materials to perform, but in some instances she can change probability at the last second, so that her opponents fumble, their weapons strike a stone or tree that was seemingly not there before, or their blades arc through the air where she was a moment before, or perhaps had never been. She will use what magic she can, and the artifacts at her disposal, to obfuscate her whereabouts and escape to safety.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### *Brennin*

Rhonwen was heavily involved in Ahnarad's court during Brennin's younger years, and acted as a tutor to both Brennin and Grufeid, teaching them the history of Ember, and the forms of observance and rituals of importance within the land. While Grufeid seemed more interested in the physical skills – hunting and swordplay – Brennin was interested in the arts. It was, in fact, Rhonwen who encouraged Brennin's burgeoning skills in design that

led him to becoming an architect. The two have always respected one another greatly.

Rhonwen pleaded with Brennin not to request she use soul-magic, but the Summer King was blinded by his love for his wife. It was Rhonwen's loyalty to the king that forced her hand; she could not say no to her liege.

### *Ceidwen and Caddell*

With Rhonwen being forced to leave the Ember court long before Brennin became Summer King, Rhonwen barely saw Ceidwen and Caddell in their younger years. Though distant from the court, Rhonwen would always seek out those who frequented Castle Ember, so that she might hear of how Brennin and his family fared. Many times, Rhonwen even attempted an audience with Brennin, but the Earl of Aderyn was well-aware of Rhonwen and the trust Brennin had in her, so she found ways to make sure this never happened.

When the witch took Brennin's children under her wing, she quickly grew to love them, and became both their surrogate mother and teacher. Rhonwen gave Ceidwen and Caddell strict rules about where they could go and what they could touch within her home, so that they would come to no harm from the many esoteric ritual components and artifacts in Rhonwen's possession. When Ceidwen's curiosity led to her using the witch's amulet, Rhonwen blamed herself deeply, and she knew it was time to send the children out into the world to make their own way.

### *Maeve*

Rhonwen and Maeve have always been cold and distant with one another. The fae very much live in the *now*, and Rhonwen's fate magic allowed her to slip into and alter *what comes after*, which meant she was simply a void to Queen Maeve's attempts to scry on her. This meant the witch was *unpredictable*, for a mortal. Rhonwen has always been wary of the Cycle's reliance on the fae Maeve as the eternal Winter Queen. Rhonwen has always found the fae capricious and undisciplined, often meddling in mortal affairs they should not, and Maeve is the exemplar of her kind.

## UNIQUE EQUIPMENT

### *Shroud of Candlelight*

Most of Rhonwen's spells and abilities take considerable ritual to complete, including the time-consuming layout of candles, incense and arcanometric lines. The mantle she inherited from the previous Fatesealer helps to reduce preparation time of her rituals, effectively making Rhonwen a walking ritual circle. With the *Shroud of Candlelight*, Rhonwen can conjure forth any number of heatless flames, as small as a candle to as large as a bonfire.

### *The Smoldering Censer*

Within the censer is a primal shard of sandalwood, said to have been shaved from one of the first trees at the dawn of time. The wood was set alight and placed within the golden censer and has been burning ever since. Rhonwen can use it to summon incense, fog or smoke as she wishes. When Rhonwen has previously been threatened by ruffians, she found that she was able to swing the censer around, and summon forth its power, filling the area with a void-black smoke and obfuscating her movements until she was safely away.

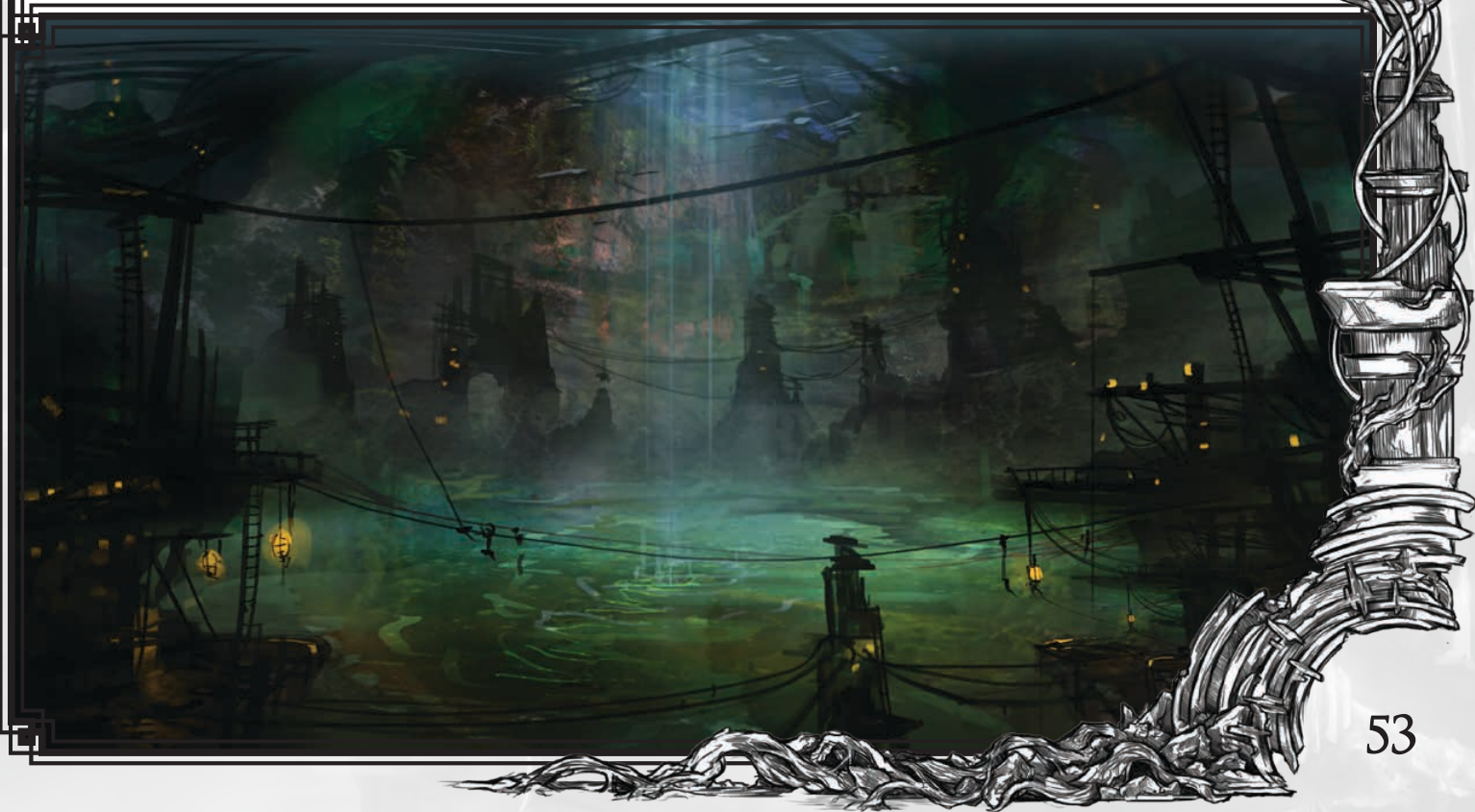
## ROLEPLAYING RHONWEN

At present, Rhonwen is quiet, listless and vague where once she was a forceful personality, a shining beacon of charm and elegance within the Court of Ember. She seems distracted, often glimpsing things in the misty marsh air, ghosts of the future, and she may even have conversations with them. If overheard, the information she reveals can be quite telling, or even shocking, particularly if it involves a future echo of one of the people listening in.

## USING RHONWEN

Rhonwen can become an indispensable ally to any character who wishes to help Ember, if only she could be made to come to her senses. The Fatesealer knows a great many secrets of Ember's past, present and future, and she also has considerable power that could be used to help and manipulate others. Before her mind was clouded over, Rhonwen had time to dwell on what befell Ember, and any who beseech her may learn the full story of how King Brenninn's actions led to the Endless Summer.

If a restored Rhonwen is given the courage to leave the Fate Marshes, this may lead to any number of encounters with Brenninn, Ceidwen and Caddell that might set Ember back on its rightful course. If not, then she still has advice and magic she can aid the player characters with.





# ATKOND THE SUNDERED DUKE

## BACKGROUND

The Faerie Host, Atkond the Sundered Duke, is both the great general of the Slumbering Court and himself the massive army of the Winter Queen. He fulfills these roles because, like an enormous copse of aspens, he is both a hive mind of individual instances and the great overlaying personality of Atkond. He has served the last fourteen generations of winter royalty, having discovered the ritual that permitted him to splinter his mind across ten thousand instances and comprehend the senses of each one simultaneously. His tree-like form reveals elements of this ritual; Atkond enjoys a direct bond with the Vitreous Wood, and has tied his life force to it in an act of both ascension and sacrifice. His individual selves each demonstrate their own facets of personality, slight variations of humor or diction, but all of them share memories, knowledge, and skills.

## MOTIVATIONS

The half-brother of Maeve and commander of her armies, he, more than any other member of the queen's inner circle, does not sleep when summer is ascendant. He works as his own elite band of warriors, enabling the safe hibernation of the Slumbering Court and securing the Vitreous Wood from those who think Queen Maeve's rest justifies any attempts to carve out their own strongholds. More than anything else, he is driven to carry forward the line and ensure the survival of the Queen's House, knowing that if she lives, the forest and even the fae nation which occupies it, will always reform around her. Atkond would dearly like to use his resources to venture from the Vitreous Wood to help the rest of Ember, but he is busy protecting the fae from themselves in the chaos of the Endless Summer, and from those other beings slowly intruding on Queen Maeve's realm. He has a particular aversion to undead creatures, finding them anathema to his powers, and often his knights falter in the face of their horror.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Atkond's love for his queen and the fae realm hardly needs mentioning. The duke absolutely hates Tylwyth, knowing what the former vizier intends and eagerly seeks him out in an effort to stop the wizard. Atkond believes his nephew, Brennin, is absolutely mad, having broken the proper succession of things, and spun the entire world into disarray. The duke admires Ceidwen, finding her a drifting vision of beauty and grace, like a campfire given form and voice. Finally, Atkond loves his knights as a family, and when one dies, he raises a toast to their sacrifice and becomes grief-stricken and stoic for weeks. He doesn't let this potential pain prevent him from ordering the warriors into harm's way, however.

## TACTICS

As a great army of individuals sharing a single mind, the Sundered Duke does his best to maximize the forest environment, utilizing his arboreal form to take advantage of its rich diversity of plants and lush settings. Operating in groups as small as three, or as large as one hundred, he sometimes lays among deadfall, blending in so he may ambush an enemy, or he stands in dense copses, becoming one of many thick trunks. His Grace is wily and persistent, fearless and relentless, and his countless charging instances ensure any invader or enemy finds the forest is the last place they want to stand, lest it become the last place they fall.





# TYLWYTH THE CRYSTAL SAGE

## BACKGROUND

Tylwyth readily admits he is a faerie traveler from a different reality altogether who fled as his world was destroyed in a war of the gods and their champions. He served on one of the losing sides and although the loss of his patron deity reduced his powers somewhat, he found Maeve's court and offered his services. After besting three of the Luminous Circle and the vanguard of the Tower of Sorcerous Warfare, he accepted a position as an advisor to the queen. Tylwyth excelled in his role, becoming a trusted confidant of Maeve, then furthered his reach into the Summer King's court, becoming one of its most capable spymasters.

## MOTIVATIONS

Deep down, Tylwyth is a coward; he truly believes Ember is a lost cause. He has seen a world fall before, and he now sees the writing on the wall for this one. The wizard wants to escape this world, even if it prevents the next age from ever coming to pass. To achieve this end, he uses his secret knowledge of various weapons of last resort: great, terrible creatures left to sleep in hidden lairs all throughout the land. Most notable of these beasts is a dragon who slumbers in an empty underground city, said to have its heart filled with poison. He plans to unleash these creatures in a vast ritual slaughter, and in doing this, he can complete the ceremonial magic that will allow him to travel to a new world. The weight of all his previous defeats and losses in the last world has destroyed something deep within his soul, and he no longer cares whether any part of Ember survives or manages to create something out of the chaos.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Tylwyth prefers to operate through proxies and subordinates; the habits refined over countless years die hard. The Crystal Sage utilizes the information gleaned from various operatives to manipulate groups of capable fae locals or young

mortal idealists he can lure into the Vitreous Wood. He convinces them to destroy the guardian creatures, which he presents as threats to the area, by striking the creatures with ceremonial glassy athamés, which cause crystals to thread throughout the beasts, slowing them down. Tylwyth has cut off communication with both Maeve and Atkond, those he most respected in Ember. He knows they will try to reason with him to stop his mad attempt at escape. The Crystal Sage once found a great deal of joy in his role of spymaster in the Summer court; his involvement with webs of gossip, rumor, deceit and social engineering brought him great glee. Tylwyth saw Brennin initially as yet another in the long line of Liyume Summer Kings, but recognized the early signs of his failings and selfishness that would doom Ember.

## TACTICS

A powerful sorcerer, Tylwyth knows many illusions and complex veils, capable of turning anyone invisible, altering portions of the landscape, changing appearances, even projecting his image great distances. He is a master of both scrying and earth magics and mystically controls and creates crystals, through which he can see and cast his spells. His silver-tongued persuasion is completely natural, but augmented by his magical abilities to alter what his audience perceives.

If forced into physical combat, Tylwyth fights by causing swords of crystal to erupt from the ground or walls, or even by plunging his claws into crystals he carries, mystically reaching through them and into linked shards stabbed into other creatures, then ripping into flesh from a distance.






# CASTLE EMBER



## FILIGREE RING

A ring of masterful craftsmanship, bearing a representation of the Summer King's shield. It was crafted for a lost son, who may one day return to claim his birthright.



*The grand, sweeping majesty of Castle Ember has fallen into ruin as those who once tended the castle and its grounds have succumbed to Summer's cancer. Unbeknownst to its residents, centuries have passed since the castle entered into the Endless Summer. There are few who roam the crumbling acres, and those who do only wish for an end to their stagnation. Above it all, King Brenninn gazes down upon the lands of Ember, lost in his own madness. Brenninn's knights – hollow shells of the noble warriors they once were – patrol the castle grounds, remaining alive only to protect their king. The key to ending the curse may lie within the walls of the castle, if anyone would dare intrude.*

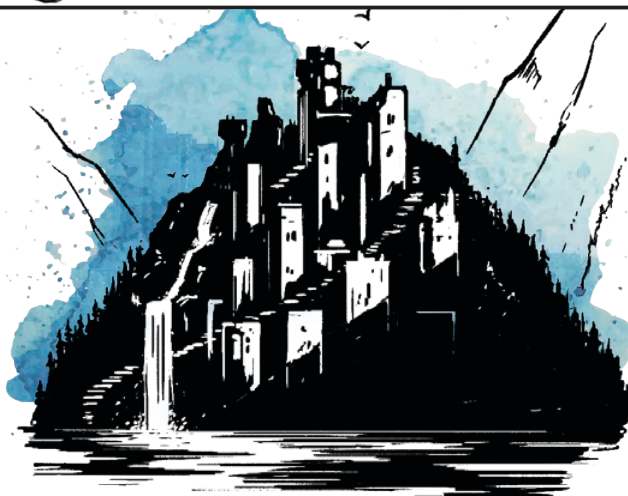
## HISTORY OF CASTLE EMBER

There was a time when Castle Ember stood triumphantly above the land, its towers spiraling into the sky, its pennants fluttering, all testament to the Realm of Ember and the power of its king and queen. Sturdy walls housed the king's most loyal knights, along with their squires, servants, and pledged men, and the castle served as shelter for the surrounding villages in case of invasion. Now, the walls of Castle Ember barely protect anyone, as the rotting sickness of the summer curse has chewed away at the sculpted stone until the walls bear only a passing resemblance to barricades. The once proud drawbridge that welcomed Ember's knights has now collapsed into the murky blackness of the castle's moat, where all manner of corruption-ridden beasts prowl the dark waters.

Castle Ember was built long ago, by the first King of Ember, and its hallowed halls have been passed down from one king to another for eons. The castle grounds have grown and changed over the years as new kings took ownership. As technology advanced, new stalls were added to the bailey, such as workshops, breweries and eventually even a clockwork shop. It was Brennin the Builder who added the last, along with improving the stables and reinforcing the inner bailey. The castellan in charge of the bailey was Herald Hardwin, an elderly but faithful man, who worked for the royal family for generations. Under his watch, the castle ran in perfect timing, with the royal family's every need immediately attended to. When the Endless Summer set in, and the curse began to take hold, that clockwork machine began to break down, filling Hardwin's heart with sadness. He took such pride in his work, and now it was falling apart around him. He began to lose hope and eventually took his own life. He was spared the worst of the king's decline, but his ghost still haunts the castle grounds.

The moat that extends along the outside of the castle was kept well-stocked with fish, a draw for predators that would make their home in the moat and scare off potential intruders.

Over the drawbridge and through the portcullis lays the castle grounds, a large, sweeping plain that holds the king's private farmland, hunting



grounds, gardens, chapels, stables, and all manner of necessary buildings. These too have fallen over time, and their castellans fell along with them – and who now haunt the interior grounds of the castle.

The bailey is used to house the castle servants, as well as their workshops, stores, barns, granaries, and bakehouses. Most stalls now lie unused, their accoutrement strewn about the floor. The servants still roam through the hall, re-enacting the activities that once consumed their daily lives, but they do so with no true purpose. Within the outer bailey lies the inner bailey, a structure designed to protect the castle's inhabitants in case of invasion or siege. The inner bailey presently acts as a prison for the terrible monsters being held there.

In the center of the castle grounds stands the keep, the large towering structure that holds the main rooms of the castle, including the grand ballroom and the throne room. This is where the hollow shell of King Brennin resides, shuffling aimlessly, pining for his lost Brigid, and cursing those who took her from him. Below the keep, the dungeons plunge deep into the ground, where the fate of criminals once housed there is worse than death.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Grand Ballroom*

By day the grand ballroom is bare and empty and decrepit. In the evenings, however, a spectral procession dances across decayed floors. The remnants of the nobles of Castle Ember – ghosts and the shambling dead – find themselves drawn here each night to experience a small reprieve against the horror of their existence. Sometimes Gorwedd the Guardian may be seen here, a flicker of the man he used to be, longing for his lost humanity.

### *The Autumn Tower*

There was a tower within Castle Ember often used by visiting dignitaries such as ambassadors, diplomats and nobles from far off kingdoms. When the Endless Summer fell across Ember, many of these guests became trapped within the castle, and would not risk harm by attempting to escape; they realized that they would become tainted by the curse if they were to die, to be reborn with the summer cancer, to become a ghost, or worse. They pooled their resources and magics in order to sustain themselves. The survivors exist in a kind of limbo within the greater limbo of Ember and have grown increasingly hostile to anything that might intrude upon their safety.

### *The Royal Gardens*

These gardens were a private place, meant only for the royal family and those who would maintain the plants there. This was one of Brigid's favorite places to seek solitude in her early days as queen, and she often brought her children here to play amongst the lush grass, and to hide behind the hedges and shrubs. The gardens are now saturated in Summer's curse, so much so that it is incredibly difficult to move about. Yet, despite the overgrowth, somehow there is still a beauty and peace to be found in the gardens. Some of the castellan ghosts swear they have seen some sort of apparition of Queen Brigid in the Royal Gardens, her face amongst the flowers, the sound of her voice amidst the birds chirping.

## CHARACTERS OF CASTLE EMBER

### *Bartun the Bold*

Bartun is a notorious, ambitious blaggard and criminal, once consigned to Castle Ember's dungeons, who has now risen up against his captors to take over his former prison, leading cursed monstrosities to secure his power-base.

Bartun the Bold was not born behind the safe walls of Castle Ember, living a life full of privilege like the royal family. He was born beyond the walls, in the wilds of the realm, alone in poverty and want. Bartun's parents died when he was but a boy, and he had no

## BRENNIN THE HUSK

Brennin, the broken Summer King, remains vigilant to threats to his realm within his throne room at the top of Castle Ember's keep. He guards his phylactery, and will not give it up without a fight. If it is stolen, rather than destroyed, he remains aware of its location at all times, and will pursue persistently until it is reclaimed. In increasing aggression, Brennin lets his knights and Gorwedd root out weaker prey in the castle – to imprison, to interrogate, and to the unlucky, to execute.



family to take him in. Faced with little options, Bartun became a brigand. He grew into a beast of a man, a tenacious fighter who remained unfazed in battle with any opponent. Whispers of his prowess became legends, and Bartun the Bold was born.

Bartun's crew seemed unstoppable, but their reach exceeded their grasp when they tried to steal from the king's larder. Bartun and his crew were apprehended and thrown into the castle's dungeons to rot. For decades, Bartun lived in the dank darkness of the dungeon, his wits crumbling as he stepped closer to insanity. When the Endless Summer fell upon Ember, there was very little humanity left inside of Bartun. He launched a coup against the former dungeon masters, and took over the prison himself, throwing his captors in the very cells he and his men once inhabited.

The dungeons have not been free from the curse, and the echoing chambers and claustrophobic cells are haunted by all manner of monsters. Bartun sees himself as the keeper of these monsters, and together they guard the dungeons from all who enter. Bartun is fiercely protective of his new home, and is quick to confront outsiders. The unlucky ones are thrown into a cell alongside the monsters where they will be kept until they too are driven mad, at which point they are allowed to join Bartun's new crew.

Bartun rules the dungeon alongside his lieutenants, the ruffians that once made up his brigand crew. Like Bartun, they grew corrupted during their time in the dungeons and have emerged as beastly creatures; unlike Bartun, they were not able to retain their personality. These monsters exist at Bartun's beck and call, and respond only to his commands. Bartun uses these monsters to hunt the dungeons for prey, sometimes searching for the crew's next meal.

Bartun has dug himself into the deepest recesses of the dungeon, protected by his followers. In combat, Bartun will rely on these monsters to flank his attackers so he can score heavy hits with his great-axe. Bartun may appear slow, but he is quick on his feet and well-trained. He can move around the battlefield with ease, using his monsters as obstacles to allow him time to reposition himself.

### *Gorwedd the Guardian*

Gorwedd the Guardian was a trusted and well-loved bannerman of the royal family. He was placed in charge of Brennin, the nephew of the king, and tasked with keeping him safe. When Brennin's family was killed, leaving him as the heir to the throne, Gorwedd stayed close by his side, offering the king guidance, protection, and friendship. After Brennin stepped into the flames and became king in his own right, Gorwedd was given the sacred duty of protecting the Summer King's throne room. He was granted the title "Guardian" and given a small team of men to command. He stood by Brennin and watched as his ward was driven mad with grief and rage. Gorwedd tried to stop Brennin from halting the Cycle and cursing the land, but the king was too far gone to listen. In his anger, Brennin cursed Gorwedd, turning the guardian and his men into a terrible abomination. But even after that betrayal, Gorwedd has still kept to his post.



In life, Gorwedd was motivated by loyalty, and it is that motivation that has cursed him with eternal life. Many have tried to invade the king's throne room, hoping to find the phylactery that keeps the king alive and end the plague of summer, but to do so they must first defeat Gorwedd in combat – a task that has in fact been completed by many brave souls over the years. The first time Gorwedd died, fallen to the blade of a skilled knight, he felt pain... he felt fear. But he was brought back, resurrected by the king's curse, doomed to die over and over again. Gorwedd has been slain a thousand times now, and he has returned a thousand more. Now, he feels no pain, or fear. In fact, he feels nothing at all.

Gorwedd cannot be turned from his duty. It is his sense of loyalty to the king that keeps him alive – Brennin was once his ward, and is the closest thing he had to a family. In death, Gorwedd knows no friends – the king's curse has taken that away from him as well.

He does not speak, does not breathe, does not eat, feels no hunger, has no need for sleep. He has become the quintessential guardian: immortal and forever dedicated to his task.

Gorwedd is a walking wall, a brawny beast with armored skin, unable to feel pain. His only weakness is his bulk, which provides him with vast toughness, but leaves him slow to react and turn. The armored plates that cover his body can turn most blades, but there are gaps between them that are exposed at precise moments. The bodies and souls of his men have become grafted onto his own form, and though he has little control over their movements, those amalgamated appendages will grab and claw at whatever approaches them.



*Gorwedd the Guardian*

## *The Tirithal Knights*

Castle Ember once housed five great warriors, both the royal guard and knights who quested across the realm and defeated monsters for the glory of the king. These knights, though noble, were not saved from the madness that befell the residents of Ember, and so they too became but husks, doomed to protect the grounds from intruders. These knights, Guille, Elis, Pawlin, Kitt, and Degarre, were each granted a magical weapon with which to protect the realm. These husked forms still carry these weapons to this day. A madness particular to these knights involves them trying to prove themselves to King Brennin above all the other knights. In this manner, while intruders may find themselves hunted by the knights, if they are lucky, the knights may actually end up interfering in each others' duty.

## *Herald Hardwin*

Hardwin spent his life serving the royal family, first as a stable boy, then a groundskeeper, and then as Royal Castellan, in charge of managing the castle's staff and royal grounds. When the castle fell apart, so did Hardwin. He had served the royal family his entire life, and wanted to die in their service. And so he took his own life, spilling blood as a sign of loyalty to Castle Ember. But death did not end his service.

## *Gethwine*

Once the Royal Chef for the entire castle, now Gethwine haunts the kitchens, trying, to no avail, to relight the fires and fill the bailey with the scent of baked goods and freshly cooked meat once again. With the servants at his disposal, Gethwine fervently sets them forth to retrieve anything at all that can be stockpiled as food. The castle larders are beginning to bloat with all manner of organic matter, from mould and fungi, to rat corpses and carved off flesh from any of the corrupted beasts that have escaped the dungeons below Castle Ember.

## *Edric*

Edric was one of the squires to the five loyal knights, and hoped to be one himself someday. That day would never come for Edric, as the curse struck when he was but a boy. He can still be found in the castle armory, trying to find the perfect fit for his ghostly masters. While Edric's loyalty to the knights keeps him attending

to their needs, he is not blind to the ways in which they have grown monstrous. Some small, innocent *human* part of Edric has escaped the madness blanketing the rest of Ember. If he sees a way in which he can strive to act nobly, perhaps to aspire to be like the knights he is so dearly devoted to, then he will give all of his heart to such a task.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *The Castellan Ghosts*

The castle grounds are haunted by those who once served it, led by the ghoulish Herald Hardwin, who roams the grounds, lost in misery. It is the only wish of Hardwin, and his ghostly brethren, to see the grounds at work again, to in some way continue their life's work supporting the castle. The castellans know many secret ways into the keep, so befriending them can be an asset. Any who appeal to the castellans and their nature in the running and maintenance of the castle and the grounds may drive to them providing assistance in some manner, starting with leading them through the servant's entrance.

### *The Deep Dungeons*

Below the castle keep lies the dungeons, delving deep into the ground, layer after layer of inhospitable cells, hardly more than holes in the wall. The dungeons are filled with the souls of the damned who were tortured and killed within its bounds. The dungeon itself is run by Bartun the Bold, and his army of corrupted beasts. Legends say that an ancient king held items of great magic buried in the dungeons, where he knew no-one would ever look for them. Perhaps those items still remain hidden in the depths.

### *The King's Phylactery*

King Brennin hides his phylactery, the urn that contains his soul, high atop the tallest tower of the castle. The only entrance to this tower lies within the throne room, which is under vigil from Gorwedd the Guardian. If Gorwedd can be bested, the next obstacle is to defeat King Brennin himself, as the mad king will not part easily with his phylactery. The urn is an object of great power, and its holder could potentially break Summer's curse upon the land.

# LOCATIONS IN CASTLE EMBER

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## THE BARREN KINGSWOOD

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### HISTORY

Just outside the walls of Castle Ember a dense forest stretches for miles. This forest, planted by the very first king of Ember, was meant to serve as the royal family's personal hunting ground. Every king to take the Flame has made their first kill in the Kingswood, where they were trained in the art of hunting and tracking by the Royal Huntmaster. It became a tradition among the kings – even King Brennín first learned the ways of the wild from within this protected wood. King Brennín's Huntmaster, Roland, was said to be the greatest hunter in all of Ember.

Training the royal family in the ways of the hunt was not Huntmaster Roland's sole job. The wood was a private reserve, meant only for the king, and poaching game within the Kingswood was an offense punishable by death.

Huntmaster Roland tracked down poachers, and many of those caught were killed on sight, their bodies buried unceremoniously in the earth, their flesh destined to be food for the Kingswood's trees.

The Kingswood did not remain safe from the Endless Summer for long. The souls of the dead poachers are like a rot, corrupting the forest from below. The trees are barren and misshapen, haunted by the souls of the dead, their branches writhing as if in pain, reaching out as they attempt to connect to what they are not – the living.

The ecosystem of the Kingswood has warped, changing many of the animal inhabitants. The natural fare of the woods has long stopped providing the sustenance needed by its inhabitants. The animals such as boar, buck, and hare have become predators instead, searching for something to quench their unstoppable hunger. In the midst of all of this, Huntmaster Roland still protects the grounds, tracking intruders with his faithful companion, Saw Yer the Hound. If you enter the woods, know that the Huntmaster is watching you, with corrupted eyes that pierce the darkness.



## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Hunters' Lodge*

In the middle of the Kingswood stands a dilapidated wooden lodge, its floors sagging in upon itself. This was once the home of Huntmaster Roland and was also where visiting hunters would gather before they set out into the Kingswood. The fires have long burnt out and the feast hall remains empty as years of exposure to the elements, and Summer's corruption, have eaten through the wood and rotted the building to its very core. But still, the huntsman remains, and the lantern hanging from the window is a sure sign that he is present, preparing his traps and tools for his next hunt. The sound of the huntsman sharpening his blades can be heard throughout the night.

The lodge itself is still a destination for Ember's hunters, like a beacon that calls out to them. The hunters shamble their way to the Kingswood to meet with King Brennin for a yearly hunt, not realizing that neither Brennin, nor any of the royal family, are present. During the hunts, their tactics have grown more macabre as the madness has set in, and they grow less concerned in swift and humane kills.

### *The Lich Tree*

Somewhere at the center of the Kingswood lives a tree with a reputation. The tree was planted atop a mass grave, meant to mark the victory that Lewellyn, first King of Ember, won over fallen enemies from a short-lived civil war. The gravesite was ripe with nutrients, allowing the tree to grow larger than any other in the forest. It became a spectacle and a landmark the hunters used to navigate their way around the forest.

When the curse of the Endless Summer grew over the Kingswood, the souls of the vanquished army choked the life from the tree, turning it into a withered and poisoned version of itself. These vanquished, buried beneath the tree, long for revenge against the people of Ember, and they use the Lich Tree as a conduit for their vengeance. The tree emits a dark magic, one that can control the bodies and minds of the recently deceased. These reanimated dead are sent out into the Ember in a facsimile of a long-past civil unrest in order to incite Ember's downfall.



*Saw Yer the Hound*

## *The Moon Pond*

The glistening rivers of Ember once flowed through the Kingswood, providing water to the game and allowing the hunters a chance to rest and refresh. As the world began to crumble so did the streams. Within one furrow can be found the last pool of water near the castle, a pond that managed to persevere. It is one of the most well-known watering holes of the woods. This water, however, cannot be imbibed, as it now glistens with toxicity instead of reflected moonlight. Ember's corruption bubbles up through the ground, polluting the pond and creating a substance acidic enough to burn through whatever it touches. As Ember's corruption grows, so do the putrid waters of the Moon Pond, slowly creeping ever outwards.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *The Huntmaster*

Roland the Huntmaster was an expert in his field, known across all of Ember for his experience in tracking and trapping. He has long been around, teaching skills of the hunt to Brennin, his father, and his father before him. It was these skills that drew him to Castle Ember originally, as the then king was willing to pay a mighty sum to employ the best. Under Roland's guidance, the castle was never in want for meat, and hunters would gather at the lodge to swap stories and drinks, and learn from the famed huntmaster. The summer madness has infected Roland's mind but it has not dulled his skills; he still yearns for the hunt just as he did before, but his soul is filled with bloodlust. For now, he hunts obvious trespassers and poachers within the woods, and sometimes the dead that the Lich Tree has brought back.

### *Saw Yer the Hound*

In life, Saw Yer was the faithful hound to Huntmaster Roland, acting as his eyes and nose when tracking prey through the thick underbrush. Saw Yer was well-trained, could sniff out prey from great distances, and follow wounded targets for miles. Saw Yer died after the Endless Summer began, a victim of the Lich Tree's undead. But in death, Saw Yer has returned as a twisted version of his former self, a creature made of darkness, with eyes that shine red like fire. He continues in the service of his former life, helping Roland track any prey that enters the forest.



*Ring of the Huntsman*

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Alpha Bucks*

The bucks which once roamed peaceful through the Kingswood have become vicious beasts, hunting in packs like wolves. They use their terrifying, twisted horns to gore their prey and their cloven hooves to trample. They are large, muscular, and incredibly dangerous. The bucks' prey has become any small and weak beasts of the woods, but with their numbers diminishing, the bucks may need to seek new prey.

### *The Poachers*

The souls of the poachers killed by the Huntmaster have found no rest. The Endless Summer has filled them with a new stagnant life, and they roam the wood in search of game. They can barely think beyond their hunger and where to find their next prey. They are relatively harmless on their own, or at their small scattered campsites, but some have begun to travel in large bands, which means it's better to avoid them than confront them head on.

### *The Cursed Hunt*

Gathering at the Hunters' Lodge time and again are a party of Ember's most skilled hunters — the cursed, the dead, the fae, those who have hunted before now hunt again, called by some primal drumbeat within the Kingswood. The Cursed Hunt begins at moonlight, the sound of a horn — and a shiver goes throughout the woods. The hunt chases prey through the woods — the twisted beasts, the poachers, and the dead. Newcomers must be careful not to be identified as prey...



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# THE LOWER CITY

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## HISTORY

On a winding path down into a valley lies a city under Summer's shadow. In eons past, Yúla supported the castle by providing produce, crafted goods, and workers, while the castle protected the city and ruled over the citizens. It was a symbiotic relationship, and the people lived in unity with their ruler.

The city was led by the mayor, but in reality it belonged to the Pontifex, the leader of the local religion and spiritual advisor to the king. The Pontifex was the one whispering into the mayor's ear, pulling the strings. It was the Pontifex who convinced the king to name his religion as the official one, and it was the Pontifex who made it illegal to worship other gods — punishable by death.

But the Pontifex, and the city itself, were among the first to suffer when the king plunged Ember into the Endless Summer. So many people crowded into such a small area, with tensions already high, and when the madness erupted, it caught on like wildfire — citizens were literally ripping each other apart in the streets.

Now, the city is dead and cold. The streetlights remain unlit, and the wooden buildings have long since rotted away, leaving only the stone structures standing — and even those have been pockmarked and chipped away with time.

The city belongs to the ghosts now, and they clog its streets at night. Anyone who enters Yúla in darkness will be devoured by the spectral mass, unless they can ward off the ghosts with a powerful source of light, strong enough to replicate the light of the sun and then send the ghosts rushing back to the shadows.

In the daylight, the city is occupied by scavengers from nearby settlements, searching for forgotten valuables buried beneath the rubble.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Lucky Tavern*

The name of this tavern is a misnomer, as nothing but horrid luck has befallen its owner, Plucky Edwards. When Edwards inherited the Lucky Tavern, it was the most prosperous bar in the city, set right inside the richest district in the city. It was also the first district to fall when the city began to turn on itself. When the riots started, they started inside his tavern, the result of a drunken brawl that escalated, costing Edwards an eye in the process. Now, the bar serves only the dead, but Plucky Edwards still stands behind it, keeping the glasses clean and the bar polished, even though the city has fallen into chaos around him.

### *The Windy Well*

The well provided drinking water to the city. Every morning, the community would gather around the well to draw water and gossip over the newest events. It was these frequent high tales, scandals and the gasbagging discussed there that earned the Windy Well its name. It was an accessible central location in which to meet and hold gatherings. It also proved to be an easy location to drown disbelievers, as the Pontifex whipped his flock into a fury, and they began to turn on those they believed to be godless, throwing them down the well.

### *The Stained Cathedral*

This building was the largest of its kind across all of Ember, dedicated to an old, forgotten religion, the only memory of which are the images painted on its massive stained glass windows. It was from within these cathedral walls that the Pontifex weaved his schemes and poisoned his parishioners with rabid talk of heresy. Now, the same cathedral serves as his prison — the Pontifex cowers behind barred doors, a misshapen shell of what he used to be.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *The Pontifex*

The Pontifex oversaw the city's cathedral and acted as shepherd to the flock and spiritual advisor to the king. He used his role to gain power for himself, and for his religion, positioning himself as the potential High Priest of Ember. However, Brenninn placed himself into the phylactery before that position was



ever finalized. When the city went mad, the Pontifex abandoned his people. He fled to his cathedral and barred the doors behind him, letting his flock rip each other to pieces. The Pontifex was overcome by Summer's corruption, doomed to become a creature of darkness. He remains hidden within the Stained Cathedral, a giant spider-like creature weighed down by a heavy, holy amulet. The Pontifex has grown too large to leave through the cathedral doors, and now waits for prey to enter. Many of his former flock who sought shelter from the chaos of the city have long been devoured.

### *The Blind Beggar*

The beggar is neither ghost nor a living thing. She moves about the city's alleys, appearing during both the night and day. She rarely speaks to anyone, and when she does it is in hushed whispers. The Blind Beggar does not appear to be aggressive, she simply passes by, sometimes with a whispered hush in the ear as she does. It is said that the beggar knows of the hidden paths and nooks and crannies of the Lower City, places with caches of valuable food and resources, and that with the right words or gift, she might lead one there.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Scavengers*

There is still treasure buried in the city, for those daring enough to brave the ghosts who haunt its shadows, and the fearsome carrion-scavenging beasts who hunt in the streets. These scavengers come well-equipped, ready

to fend off any monster that might discover them, so they won't hesitate to start a fight if they believe they can win, or if they are strongly motivated by greed. Conversely, they will flee if intimidated, or if the target doesn't appear worth the hassle. If approached cautiously, the scavengers might parlay with strangers, providing them with information on the lay of the city, but only if there is a trade of information, goods or treasure that they would find useful themselves. With the right trade, or offer of help against the city's creatures, the scavengers might even provide shelter for a limited time.

### *Howler Packs*

The Lower City doesn't just draw in humans searching for valuables, it draws in animals as well, on the hunt for the next meal, sniffing out leftover carrion left to rot in the dark corners of the city. The wolf packs of the Kingswood have been displaced as the apex predators there, and have been corrupted by Summer's life. As they shifted their hunting grounds to the Lower City, they grew to become carrion feeders. These hulking monstrosities have claws as sharp as swords, and teeth that can pierce through armor. They cannot die, as the corrupted life force keeps them moving forward, but they can be wounded and dissuaded. One must be careful near these beasts, lest they lash out in order to protect the pack, felling the living, and waiting for them to rot before they feed.



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# THE POISONED PORT

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## HISTORY

The Castle Port was the first point of contact for many foreigners entering the Realm of Ember. Merchant vessels and cargo ships from across the world would anchor at the docks. The boardwalk was filled with colorful vendor stalls, with exotic merchandise available to peruse. Street performers would put on energetic acts in the streets, and music could be heard playing from the many taverns that lined the port.

Music plays no longer and the streets of the port lay silent. When the madness first took hold of Castle Ember, mobs began to grow violent, and the people took to the streets. Eventually, that violence spread over to the port. The ship captains, eager to protect what little they had left, began firing their cannonade into the crowd. When a stray cannonball struck a crate of alchemical concoctions destined for the royal apothecary, the port was suddenly flooded with a gaseous poison, one that killed anyone who came in contact with it. The gases have remained for years, turning the port proper into a no-man's-land. Wisps of the alchemical poisons still exist, green vapors curling off the surface of the water.

The port is hardly safe to pass through—even though the poison is no longer potent enough to kill, it still makes the air difficult to breathe and can cause lesions and rashes to appear on the skin. Those who need to move through the port must protect themselves in some way—covering their eyes, nose and mouth in particular or begin to fall prey to the poisons.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Ember Sunfish*

The flagship of King Brennin's royal fleet, the *Ember Sunfish* was designed and constructed by Brennin in his days as a builder. He christened the vessel and captained it on its maiden voyage. Unfortunately, that was the only voyage the *Sunfish* would ever undertake, since the king lost his mind shortly thereafter, and the ship never left port again. Now it lies half sunken into the bay, its hull rotted out, home to the many ghastly creatures that live in the dark depths.

### *The Warehouse District*

While operational, the warehouse district housed the many goods that were unloaded off the ships coming to port in Ember. Objects from across the world were stored in this district, waiting to be purchased, evaluated, or transported deeper into the kingdom. Most of those goods still remain, locked inside the endless rows of brick units that make up the district. The entire area has been taken over by a faction of Ember's military, led by Captain Graham, and those who wish to pillage for treasures must face them down.

### *The Ship Graveyard*

There were hundreds of ships moored in the port when the kingdom fell, and there those ships have stayed. Most of them, made of less sturdy materials than the *Ember Sunfish*, have long since sunk, their masts and bows sticking out of the water like gravestones. The bay is full of ships in this condition, which grants it its macabre nickname. The area is treacherous to navigate, so no outside ships ever attempt to enter Ember's port.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *The Dockmaster*

Carl Hemings was a hard, bitter, angry man. He ran the docks through a combination of fear and extortion—just a small step above organized crime. When the riots hit the city, Dockmaster Hemings fled in fear for his life. This fear was well-warranted; when the mob reached the docks, they were chanting for Carl Hemings' head. When they hung Carl from the mast of a ship, they cheered. When Carl rose from the dead, they screamed. Carl is still tethered to

the mast of his ship, floating in the harbor, and what little remains of Carl still orders his ragtag crew to continue their dirty works around the port.

### *Mad Clayden*

Mad Clayden came by his nickname long before the real madness hit Ember. He was a sailor first, serving in Ember's expeditionary fleet, a position that took him far beyond the realm's borders. Officer Clayden led a force that tried to sail around the world, but something met them in the murky distance beyond Ember. Whatever it was, it killed most of Clayden's crew, and left him mentally unhinged. He came back to Castle Ember raving about monsters in the water and poisoned air – a mental state that got him banished from the fleet. Clayden wasn't done with the seas yet, and so he assembled a crew to man his ship, the *Hateful Pillager*, and began making trips back to that distant place. Every time he returned, Clayden and his crew had drifted further and further into madness. Now, that madness has come to Ember and it clings to them like stink. In the early days of the Endless Summer, before other places knew to avoid Ember's waters, Mad Clayden and his crew preyed upon ships that drifted too close. But no ship has come near the port for a long, long time...

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Creatures of the Deep*

In the deep waters beneath Ember dwell creatures far more terrifying than those on land. They were infected by the king's madness, and by the alchemical poisons that fell into the waters, and these things have not only driven them insane but have mutated them into more horrific versions of their living selves. These creatures are trapped in the water, but many have long tentacles or other mutated limbs that can reach the shore, to wrap around helpless victims and drag them into the deep.

### *Graham's Crusaders*

Captain Graham led a platoon of soldiers in Ember's army, stationed in what is now known as the Garrison of the Dead. When the garrison fell, Captain Graham managed to lead a skilled group of veteran crusaders out of the garrison and down to the nearby port. Once there, the Crusaders claimed a territory for themselves, centered in the warehouse district,

## BRENNIN THE BUILDER

This aspect of Brenninn is more ambitious and cunning than any other soul-fragment. He has given everything to his architecture, and to improving the way of life for the inhabitants of the city of Yúla. This Brenninn can be found analysing different areas of the port and making notes on possible improvements as he plans to make the port a world-renowned center of trade and commerce. This soul-fragment of Brenninn can be resolved either through realizing that his works will have lasting impact on Ember (*joyfulness*) or that they are ultimately meaningless in the face of his choices that doomed Ember (*misery*).

and defended that claim against all comers. Eons have passed, and the Crusaders are not the shining force of light they once were. Many have died and since come back – their injuries healed over by the cancer of summer. They have been corrupted, and all that remains are dismal shells of once great men, still clinging onto their sacred territory. Perhaps one could find a way to reignite the spark of light within the Crusaders, and direct them towards tremendous deeds once again.

### *The Tavern Nomads*

Whilst the Endless Summer has left Ember in a miasma of time, with warped, cancerous creatures and those prevented from passing on due to the broken Cycle, there is a small group who have somehow made lives for themselves. Using the port taverns as their homes is a band of survivors, neither undead, nor summer-cursed, a mix of foreigners and Ember half-bloods who have lived generations under the Endless Summer. These people live like nomads, moving from tavern to tavern, hunting and gathering resources as they go. They've learned to seal the taverns from the worst of the poison, and trained themselves to ward off, and if need be, fight off the horrors of the Poisoned Port. These nomads could become allies in the right circumstances, or at least offer a safe haven or local knowledge to anyone who finds themselves in the Poisoned Port.



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# THE GARRISON OF THE DEAD

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## HISTORY

The garrison housed the conscripted footmen, servants, and squires of the knights not famous, or honorable enough, to be housed in Castle Ember. The garrison was overseen by Watcher Aelbeht Wulfrum, who had retired from military duty as one of Ember's most prolific captains. He oversaw the day-to-day operations of the garrison alongside his steward, Esegar. Many brave warriors were stationed at the garrison, including Captain Graham and his Crusaders, a holy unit of warrior-monks. After the Endless Summer began, the garrison was attacked by angry mobs and the walking dead, and it was Captain Graham who cut swathes through the hordes, rescuing his men from their predicament. Unfortunately, Watcher Wulfrum, along with Esegar and many other innocents, were left behind to suffer when the dead finally broke through the garrison's doors.

Watcher Wulfrum mounted a tremendous defense, and the stories say the dead were piled in stacks as high as the garrison walls before Wulfrum's defenses finally fell to the onslaught. Wulfrum survived the attack, and remains somewhere in the garrison, locked behind a protective spell cast by Esegar moments before the steward met his fate. The spell saved Wulfrum from death, but not from the effects of time, or the madness permeating from King Brenn.

The garrison belongs to the undead now – the indefatigable skeletal army that now reinforces it. Weapons and armor straight out of legend still exist somewhere within the bastion, including the Crusader Armaments that Captain Graham was forced to leave behind.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Armory*

Perhaps the most sought after treasures of the garrison lie in the armory. When the fortress fell, the armory was closed and its contents were left behind. Included among these

are the Crusader Armaments, sets of armor and weapons designed for the Holy Crusaders who used to fight for Ember's light. These armaments cover a wide variety of designs and sizes, since the Crusaders were meant to be a multi-purpose unit. Captain Graham has a personal set of weapons that he was forced to abandon in the rush to battle the undead in the streets of Yúla.

### *The Cabin*

Not far from the garrison is a shantytown where some of the poor and destitute of Ember once lived. Within the shantytown, an ominous presence can be felt, a tangible darkness. Somewhere amongst the decrepit shelters is a small cabin, previously the home of Eadwine, the Matriarch of the Departed – the necromancer responsible for the attack on the garrison. Within her cabin lies the trappings of black magic – ritual circles, spell books, anatomical sketches – as well as her alchemical supplies. The cabin carries with it a sense of evil and dread, as this is where the pact between Eadwine and the darkness was made.

### *The Artillery*

High atop the garrison's walls, a full suite of artillery weapons can be found. These weapons, mounted to the stone, were used by Watcher Wulfrum in his defense of the castle. These defenses are meant to strike outwards, at invading armies, but with a few engineering tweaks they should be able to fire down into the garrison courtyard as well, and might be enough to clear the larger throngs of undead – that is, if you can get to them. The only way to reach the artillery is through the winding staircases that circle through the garrison's towers, which are likely full of undead.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *The Matriarch of the Departed*

Eadwine, the Matriarch of the Departed, is responsible for the outbreak of undead that laid waste to the garrison. Before the madness, Eadwine was already a practicing witch, studying the ways of dark magic. She was exiled when the truth of her research was discovered by her fellow practitioners. Since magic of that nature was forbidden by the king, her punishment was swift. Eadwine was forced to live outside of civilization, and she found herself a small cabin in the shantytown,



where she remained anonymous and unseen. There, she focused on her powers, vowing to use them for revenge against the Realm of Ember. There, she grew stronger every day, but the particular talent to revive and control the dead was beyond her ability – that is, until the king trapped Ember in the Endless Summer. Suddenly her powers increased ten-fold, fueled by the destructive energies around her. She became something more than human, feeding off of the dark magic until she resembled a gaunt, morbid caricature of a human, a lich. With her new necromantic army in tow, she assaulted the garrison, and now uses it as her seat of power as she sends her minions against other important landmarks and consolidates her influence in Ember, and develops her arcane power even further.

### *Watcher Wulfrum*

Watch Wulfrum was trapped behind the protective field that his steward, Esegar, had cast for him. This field kept him safe from the Matriarch of the Departed's forces, but he had no food or water to sustain him. The protective field was only meant to be temporary, to keep the watcher safe until reinforcements could arrive, or until Captain Graham could take back the garrison. But the Crusader captain had no intention of returning to the garrison, and help never came for the watcher. And so Wulfrum suffered a slow, painful death, perhaps worse than what the matriarch had in mind for him. While he suffered, his mind twisted and drove him mad: he split into multiple personalities – one being that of Esegar, his fallen steward. Wulfrum still waits, somewhere in the garrison, behind one of its many locked doors. If the protective ward was to be broken. Wulfrum could prove to be a strong ally against the dead... or he could be more dangerous than ever before.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Reprieve from the Dead*

The key to ending the undead occupation of the garrison lies in defeating the Matriarch of the Departed. However, reaching the matriarch, much less killing her, is quite the feat. The garrison itself is said to be impenetrable – it took an entire army of walking dead to conquer it – and, if a force were to get in, they'd be surrounded by vicious skeletal terrors armed with swords and axes. If the skeletal army could be managed, and the matriarch could be lured out, it is possible that mundane steel weapons would have no effect on her. She is powered by black magic now, and legend says only a Crusader's weapon, wielded by the truly worthy, can separate her from her power.

### *Restoring the Watcher*

Watcher Wulfrum is trapped within the garrison, a cracked and broken semblance of a human being. There may be a way to reach him, and to restore him to his former self. Deep down, he still wants nothing more than the protection of Ember, and if he is made to realize his position, and the full extent of the threat to Ember coming from within the garrison, he may yet offer help. Wulfrum knows many secrets: those of the garrison and the tunnels beneath, and of the powerful weapons still within its walls.

### *The Eldritch Armaments*

As well as the Crusader Armaments, there are other artifacts within the garrison: those wielded by heroes of old, and those once wielded by ancient threats to Ember, secured deeply away in years gone by. The artifacts within the garrison may be used to fight back the dark and cancerous things that have arisen in Ember since the Endless Summer began, or increase one's personal power, or they are simply there to be looted and sold in another land for great profit.

Items of power rumored to be hidden away within the garrison are the *Soulwork Needle*, the *Yesteryear Tome*, the *Quill of Everbinding* and the *Pensive Blade*, the last in particular which was used in the decades-long war against a race of vampiric beings who once plagued the land long before it became the Realm of Ember.



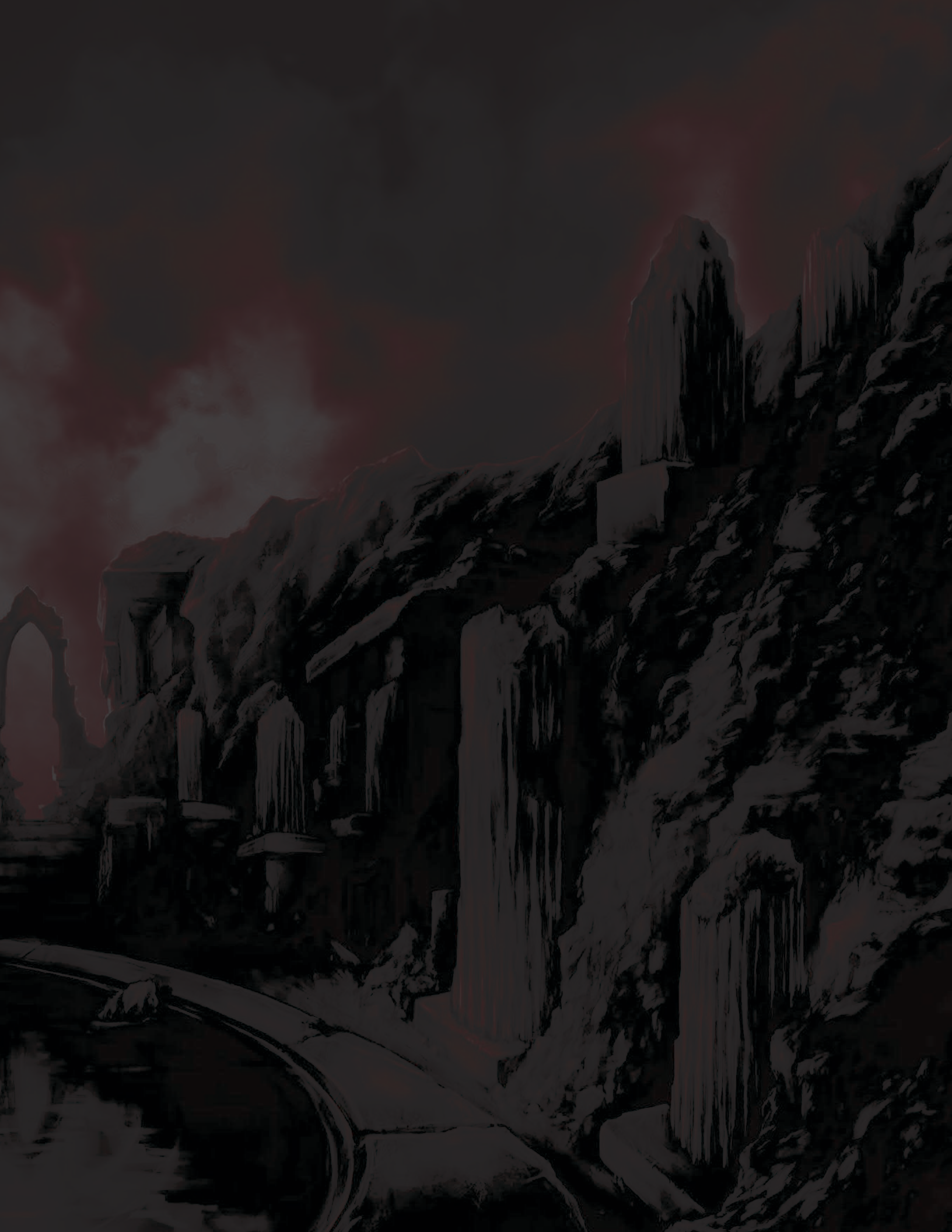


# THE VITREOUS WOOD



## EMPYREAL ORB

A matrix of faerie magic and soul-ash devised by the Crystal Sage, one part of his research in the effort to finally escape this realm.



## HISTORY OF THE VITREOUS WOOD

The woods were the historic demesne of the Winter Court until King Brennin refused to join with Queen Maeve in the traditional union of mortal and faerie. Now it has become a dark and foreboding place, stagnant and foul. Its queen lies trapped in a dreamlike state as the realm festers, and she desperately attempts to find ways to undo Summer's curse.

Said to have stood tall and full when the world itself was young, the Vitreous Wood has gone through many cycles of growth and regrowth. It has always been, and it will always be, although it has never been as sick as it is now. Visitors often find the very concept of the Vitreous Wood backwards, since in summer it retreats and withers, but grows and builds as it waits for winter to arrive so that it might burst gloriously forth, releasing Maeve back into the world as the Winter Queen. It is crèche, grave, and glorious monument for the previously uninterrupted line of kings and queens of Ember.

The forest itself is noticeably thick and lush, but nearly all of the plants also incorporate some elements of crystalline growth into their forms. Sometimes these are full crystals growing like branches or extruding from trunks; in other instances, the plants have leaves of thin, pale green glass. It is not unusual to see whole branches consisting of living crystal as one goes deeper into the Vitreous Wood. When the breeze blows, the air carries the distinct hint of ozone, and it often sounds as if the whole region is awash in the distant song of wind chimes. The crystals remain flexible when still connected to a tree or shrub, but when separated, they can crack or shatter like glass, making the forest floor dangerous for anyone running with unprotected feet. In places where fire has ravaged parts of the wood, lonely crystal spikes stab into the air, surrounded by soot, saplings and a carpet of heat-blasted glass. Travelers and residents have been known to regularly harvest bits of crystal, for trade or to incorporate them into anything from weapons to artwork.

While the Vitreous Wood stretches for hundreds of leagues in every direction, distances can be magically warped, changing travel times without



notice—a legacy of the wood's connection to Faerie. Certain elements are always the same: the Seasons' Trod begins in the north-eastern edge of the forest, and sometimes keeps to the edge of the wood, while other times it seems to plunge into its very heart, but only when the time is close for winter to begin. This makes interacting with locals an absolute necessity, as they know where the Trod currently goes, and whether it leads to the Slumbering Court, somewhere deep in the Vitreous Wood, or only skirts the forest. While many faerie communities exist throughout the region, the most sought and most persistent remains the Goblin Market, discoverable for the last 237 years, and recorded in histories for the last 941. The skies over this roaming town-sized market are perpetually a star-studded sheet of black velvet, tinged with the glow of torches and luminescent crystals. Its stalls and vendors sell anything from dragonfly mounts or homunculi, to the dreams of mortal and faerie alike.

Occupying the towns, markets, and glades, numerous varieties of faeries live and practice trades, interacting with mortals and acting out stories. There are flocks of pixies, copses of dryads, packs of redcaps, tribes of industrious and cunning goblins or gnomes, pools of nixies, kelpies, and lorelai—some in groups of their own kind, others in heterogeneous communities. Lone, curmudgeonly vodyanoi harass crossings, bands of lustful satyrs and fauns hold raucous celebrations in broad glades, and will-o-wisps and slough haunt old battlefields and unmarked graves. Nearly all of them currently suffer some mark of the corruption affecting Ember, the cancerous overgrowth leaving almost nothing in a pure and unblemished form. Sometimes this pollution manifests visibly, through alterations to the forms of faeries; in other cases, it can be seen through a cruel and bloodthirsty nature that dominates all other behavior.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Lonely Village*

Within a wide glade where the Vitreous Wood is at its thickest is what seems to be an abandoned village. It has a dozen or so stone houses, an inn, a stable and a baker. A close look inside any building reveals that something does not seem right. There's no sign of life, no sign that anything ever lived in the village at all. The few human and fae statues scattered in the houses and the streets are eerie, the only sign that something of artistic value has ever been placed within the village. If anyone should spend too long there, they become drained and sluggish, and eventually become part of the village itself, petrified. In truth, under the earth is one of Tylwyth's beasts, a great hermit crab-like creature and both the village and the ground underneath are actually part of its shell. Any who spend too long near the beast risk being turned to stone and becoming part of its facade village.

### *Brennin's Estate*

Shortly after they were married, Brennin and Brigid moved into a small estate—designed by Brennin himself—far from the politics of the royal court and guilds of Yúla. While still involved in their various circles, Brennin intended for the pair to have a place they could retreat to in order to have peace when they desired it. The manor was modest in size at first, though Brennin made extension after extension, with Brigid's studio eventually becoming his core focus. Many of Brigid's early artworks and drafts, never intended to see the light of day, can be found within the estate, each possessing an eerie, realistic quality unseen in many other artworks across Ember. This estate truly is a retreat from the danger and chaos seen elsewhere in Ember, and some property of the manor wards off threats to the inhabitants, particularly from the undead. It is in this estate that one of Brennin's aspects can be found, that of Brennin the Husband.

### *Rebel's Redoubt*

On the border of Autumn and Winter's Trod are a series of giant crystalline seed pods, fallen from an immense and dazzling tree that no longer exists. These seeds once awaited the right conditions to grow again into the gemheart tree, but many have now been

co-opted as part of a series of hideouts for rebel fae, fed up with Maeve and Brennin and the state Ember has fallen into. These fae seek to restore balance to Ember, even if it means toppling Maeve as their queen. The crystal pods have been hollowed out, and formed into small forts for the slowly gathering forces. These fae are masters of hiding themselves both physically and from scrying and have so far remained hidden from Atkond's many selves. While the fae know what they want, as of yet they have not taken action against their own kind, due to the indecisiveness of several factions within the rebels. One particularly cunning brownie, Mariond, recently had the idea to bring in mortals amongst their group, in order to shake things up, for whenever mortals are involved, things are ever much more urgent than with the fae alone.

## CHARACTERS OF THE VITREOUS WOOD

### *Maeve, Queen of Winter*

The tale of Maeve, the Winter Queen of the Unseelie and mother of Brennin, has been told before. Now she waits for the coming of winter, so she may come alive again and take her place beside the Summer King. In previous cycles, she gave birth to Brennin, his brothers, and a tightly kept secret.

### BRENNIN THE HUSBAND

This aspect of Brennin is more loving and passionate than any other soul-fragment. He is the ideal husband to Brigid, abandoning all other personal pursuits in order to care for her, provide for her, and enable her to reach her higher self. This Brennin has a fiery gleam in his eye, as he makes improvements for their estate at the edge of the Vitreous Wood, particularly to Brigid's studio, or as he hunts and gathers meat and herbs to bring back for the stove. He acts oblivious to the cold hearth, unaware that Brigid is nowhere to be seen within their home. This soul-fragment of Brennin can be resolved either through realizing that he has loved Brigid with all his heart in some way previously (*joyfulness*) or that it was ultimately his selfishness that destroyed Brigid before her time (*misery*).

This fiercely held confidence remains known only to her and Atkond; Brennin has a younger half-brother, held in the fae court beneath the waves as a hostage and guarantee of peace. Should he return, this sibling could take the Summer Lord's place as Equinoct King. She is not ready to reveal this to anyone, at least not just yet. As she grows less stable, who knows what might be said in the heat of the moment as frustration and anxiety frays what remains of her sanity.

Beyond her brief visitations, the Winter Queen reserves her energy to manifest each full moon, to commune with Atkond and learn the state of the Vitreous Wood and her people. In these situations, she holds court, awards those who may have won a Waiting Tournament against her knights and champions, and attempts to keep the Old Ways. Maeve dearly treasures these nights and will hold a grudge against any who might subvert them.

### *Atkond the Sundered Duke*

Some instance of Atkond can be found at just about any location within the Vitreous Wood, though whether these are active or in hibernation is another matter altogether. Gaining Atkond's attention may take some effort, depending what else he is busy with, though drawing his attention is easy if one's actions directly threaten the fabric of the woods or the Slumbering Court itself. One of Atkond's favored locations to concentrate himself at is the Looking Glass Aerie, a series of glass and crystalline buildings held aloft on a copse of giant ash trees. There, the duke's many forms engage in philosophical chatter with one another, or if there is an immediate dire threat to the court, the dukes may be tending to the Aerie's crystal garden, growing new weapons with which to arm themselves.

### *Tylwyth the Crystal Sage*

Tylwyth crosses back and forth the Vitreous Wood as he detects the various creatures he seeded across the centuries and as he prepares his great ritual. Not all of the beasts are where he remembers placing them, and not all are alive at this point. He believes there are just enough of them for his plans. When in need of rest, or as the spark of an idea takes him, Tylwyth frequents his Quicksilver Tower, hidden and concealed by layers of illusion.

Most levels of the tower are taken up by all sorts of laboratories and his experiments, many of which would have been his next generation beast to grow somewhere in Ember.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *A Dream Vendor Calls*

An old, white-haired man wearing deep, starry robes approaches the characters, asking if they have anything to sell. Calm, but genial and quite serious, Terrac explains he seeks stolen or forsaken dreams acquired from the Slumbering Court to buy or sell. And if the player characters don't have any in hand, he is more than happy to commission them, while offering a secret path into the innermost corners of the Faerie Queen's entourage. He most covets the dreams of those central to Ember's current condition—Brennin, Clíodhna, Ceidwen or Caddell. Perhaps these dreams might tell of how the curse of summer fell over the land, and perhaps they tell of a way to undo the damage.

### *The Hunt, Interrupted*

As the player characters heads through the Vitreous Wood, they come upon a group of faerie warriors stalking a satyr or a dryad. It seems as if they are just about to attack the lone creature and murder it. However, this is normal for them, all part of a game which has been repeating for decades. Should the characters disrupt the game, both parties turn on them and attack. Should they somehow add to the game, the faeries offer a small boon to aid the travelers.

### *Pawned at Market*

Several important items are burgled from the player characters over the course of a few nights, and, at last, the culprit is captured with their hand in a pack. A faerie rogue has taken the items and sold them to a variety of vendors at the Goblin Market. The creature is willing to provide the names and locations of the buyers, but there's no guarantee the merchants are willing to sell them back, and the thief used the money to pay hostage fees for its cousin. However, if the player characters are willing to perform a few tasks, perhaps they can barter...

# LOCATIONS IN THE VITREOUS WOOD

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## SEASONS' TROD

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### HISTORY

The long road extending from the north-eastern border of the Vitreous Wood shifts from flagstones to raw dirt to sunken trees, and boards through bogs and swamp. The trees along the length begin as bare claws raking the sky at the northernmost point, gaining crumbling brown leaves that grow bronze and gold, then pale green and finally deep verdant emerald as one approaches the Slumbering Court. Many communities and notable sites have grown along the Trod; there are inns, villages, and monuments amidst other strange landmarks. It is rarely possible to go more than a day on the road without some sign of mortal or fae presence.

The Trod is a transitional road, as ever-changing as the different weather-pockets within the Vitreous Wood. Depending on the weather, one might find themselves on the chilly Winter Trod, sweating through the baking heat of the Summer Trod, surrounded by the dappled-leaves of the Autumn Trod or under a pleasant light rain of the Spring Trod.

By traditional decree, the Equinoct King must travel the Seasons' Trod before requesting the Winter Queen's hand. While Brenninn did perform this procession twice, he did not propose marriage to Maeve; while the letter of the magical law was followed, the spirit was not. Magic has always been finicky and devious. This adherence to the semantics of the great bargain seemed sufficient, but the deception was not without its price.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

#### *Field of Penitents*

Once a group of King Brenninn's soldiers rebelled against their sovereign and his weak grip on the throne as the Summer King. While the king commenced his tour of the realm, the conspirators plotted their assassination. As the procession arrived in this field, bordered on one side by a bog, the other with a sparse field of saplings, the collaborators sprang their ambush. A great battle raged for 13 days and nights, destroying what little remained of the forest in the field and pushing back the woods a full bowshot as loyalist fought traitor. Outnumbered by the faithful legionnaires, and betrayed at the last moment by an overeager youth who acted too soon, the conspirators fought to the last score of troops, surrounded and were encircled at spearpoint. They refused to relent, and stayed defiant even as the Tirithal Knights disarmed and restrained them.

Brenninn felt they could not be pardoned, and given their recalcitrant attitudes, he declared they be made examples. They were impaled on the remaining saplings as the king uttered a Royal Curse, binding their spirits and bones to the trees until pardoned. Their ghosts appear when properly called, and on the anniversary of the attack, fighting out the last moments of their ill-fated gambit, only to die as the sun rises.

#### *Sapphire Retreat*

Wide, calm, and surrounded by ancient oaks and an immense, 80 foot (24 meter) tall standing stone, the reflecting pool known as the Sapphire Retreat possesses no outflow or inflow, and no matter what season, it possesses a thin layer of transparent ice over the surface. The pool and surrounds remains occupied by a troupe of nixies and lorelai; a few of these attempt to lure the unsuspecting out where they might break through the ice and drown, trapped and unable to find the place where they fell. Some of these victims survive the cold, who the faeries





then sell to vodyanoi or rusalka as wives. The water faeries are a cowardly lot and flee to deep cavern lairs when attacked or pursued. Those who manage to be captured offer all kinds of treasure for their ransom.

A secret lives beneath the ice. Sometimes thought to just be a thick fog forming over the water when a warm spring breeze passes through the clearing, this heavy cloud-like phenomenon is actually Euroclydon, a mist dragon. The dragon has not yet started demanding tribute from those using the Seasons' Trod, but she has stopped several groups to question their very surprised and nervous members, requesting news from abroad and asking them for where they were bound.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *Lord of Ravens and Thieves*

Muginn, a 4 foot (1.2 meter) tall raven clad in feathers dusted with emerald crystal, lays claim to the title of "Lord of Ravens and Thieves." At least a half-dozen murders of crows and ravens serve the great corvid, and Muginn refuses to offer any fealty to Maeve nor any other member of the Slumbering Court. Nor does he bow to King Brennin and the nobility of summer. However, he does seem to have an affection for ripe cherries, and willingly barter for them with polite petitioners. The Sundered

Duke occasionally pursues the "Thief-King of the Trees" for sport, yet he has sometimes also engaged Muginn as a spymaster. Ceidwen has had several encounters with the Ravenlord's crows, and Muginn is known to have a strong dislike for the Summer King's estranged daughter. This emotion is so strong, that he has sent murders of crows to shadow and reveal her to hunters when she travels near Muginn's territory.

### *Euroclydon the Mist Dragon*

Lairing in a hidden cavern beneath the great standing stone of the Sapphire Retreat, Euroclydon the Mist Dragon is a relative newcomer to the Vitreous Wood. Curious and slow to anger, Euroclydon lived for centuries in high mountains and then on secluded, rocky coasts before shifting her home near the Winter Court. This constant change of home meant she did not suffer much from the corrosive effects of the curse affecting Ember. Or perhaps this was due to her primal and arcane nature as a dragon. However, with this latest move, the Mist Dragon has started to become more curious and greedy. She has begun to openly threaten those who fail to answer her questions, and escalates situations to near violence before intimidating targets into submission. Thus far, she has not yet needed or committed violence against travelers. Euroclydon's vaporous form can shift from a long, sinuous, draconic juggernaut to a hazy fog in a span of heartbeats.

Only time will tell for certain whether the dragon's mutable nature will harm, hinder or help those traveling along the Seasons' Trod.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Commerce Rolling*

Approaching from the opposite direction, the player characters observe a train of strange wagons, carts and mules. Driven by grimacing men and foul-tempered goblins, the group appears to be taking a number of goods to the Goblin Market. Some of these items may be components or trinkets desired by the player characters. Can they convince these rough merchants to stop their caravan for a short period and make a sale? Or will the goblins take advantage of the situation and attempt to waylay a smaller group?

### *Knights Errant*

The Sundered Duke's most elite agents are the Order of the Icicle, a group of faerie knights mounted on crystalline drakes and dragonflies, or immense black destriers that snort clouds of snow when made to stop and heed their masters. These warriors wield great crystal weapons which leave terrible lingering wounds, and they rarely tolerate disrespect from mortal or even fae. Most faeries hustle for cover when knights of the Faerie Host approach. What will the characters do when a trio of these high-ranking cavaliers come to question them about a recent raid on a fae community? How will they respond if the knights don't believe their claims and decide to arrest them?

### *Room for the Night*

More than one abandoned town exists along the Seasons' Trod, its population mysteriously whisked away in the middle of the night without a sign. At one such town, the only occupied structure appears to be a faerie inn, fully staffed and already receiving many visitors. Amidst the inn's inhabitants, for one night only, is a motley assortment of agents from all across Ember, there in order to glean information from one another. Fae, mortal, summer-cursed, Deep Ones, or yet other strange and arcane beings of Ember hide their true selves as they gather knowledge, and the arrival of yet more visitors to the inn may upset the delicate balance between them all.

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# THE SLUMBERING COURT

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## HISTORY

With trees more crystal than hardwood, but undeniably growing, the Slumbering Court lies at the heart of the Vitreous Wood. It is a lush grove of towering plants softly glowing with a spectrum of colors. The thick trunks of the Royal Grove are arranged in a tiered parliament fashion and primarily consist of enormous crystals sheathed in patches of bark; inside each crystal lies a member of the Slumbering Court in hibernation until Maeve is awakened by the Equinoct King. When this happened in the past, the trees gloriously burst forth light and glass, releasing the faeries so they could take their places as the Winter Peerage. Now, the nobles and faerie courtiers dreaming within these heavy trunks remain physically trapped, but possess the ability to leave as ghostly echoes, capable of solidifying for short periods ranging from a few minutes to a full evening. They may project themselves anywhere in the Vitreous Wood, and use this ability to further their machinations. By manifesting anywhere in the forest, they bribe, cajole, and trick mortals into completing tasks they need completed; although these projections are completely tangible and capable of using magic or even killing, any harm done to the faerie specters does not seem to transfer to the fey in their crystal cocoons.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *Feast Unending*

A short distance from the Royal Grove, beneath a gossamer canopy, lies the vast table of the Feast Unending. This constant offering of food is the celebration meal waiting for King Brennin to propose to Queen Maeve and complete the ceremony of union. Tended by a small army of goblins and sprites, it is managed and supervised by the Keeper of Cups, a heavily muscled old man who carries an enormous mithral urn on his back with a spidersilk harness.



### *Royal Hosts*

In a half-dozen sites throughout the Vitreous Wood, between vast, half-glass oaks, stand clusters of the seed pods of the Royal Hosts. With over hundreds of instances of the Sundered Duke sleeping at each location, these pods protect the armies of the Winter Queen until she or Atkond needs them to mobilize. The pods themselves measure 8 feet long by 4 feet wide (2.4 meters by 1.2 meters) and 3 feet (1 meter) thick with a dense, fibrous shell, immune to damage from mundane materials; each contains an instance of the Sundered Duke in his well-known crystal panopoly.

### *The Shattered Glade*

Starting in the central southwest of the Vitreous Wood, and pressing northeasterly to the edge of the Royal Grove, there exists a wide swathe of blasted glades, full of jagged crystalline trunks and young saplings burgeoning through the broken, glassy debris. This is the Shattered Glade, where previous generations of the Winter Court reincarnated from their crystal chrysalises. A few spirits of mostly-forgotten faerie nobility linger here, like the Earl of Frostbite and Lady Borealis, willing to impart archaic secrets for those who invoke the proper forms and bring appropriate gifts to sate their long ignored hungers and desires.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *Keeper of Cups*

A mortal man, the 25th generation of his family to have served the House of Winter as the result of an insult to the queen. The Keeper of Cups' position was once a curse, but it has now become a valued and trusted role, offering a mortal perspective to the Unending Feasts guests' requests. Known simply as "Keeper," he is an expert in goblin and sprite culture and behavior, and holds the staff of the Feast Unending in line through a combination of intimidation and respect. He has a fondness for sweet pipeweed, but never partakes in the course of his responsibilities. Weighing heavily on his mind is the fact that he is the last generation sworn to serve the queen; after his death, the now hereditary position may be considered a matter of whim, rather than the ironclad bargain it is now.

### *Champion of the Royal Grove*

The embodiment of the genius loci of the Royal Grove, the Arborescent Champion is a spirit that occupies and animates a specially grown crystal tree form standing 45 feet (14 meters) tall. As an intangible spirit, it presents no gender. The champion has pointed quartz crystals at its joints, and heavy steel tower shields have been nailed to its form, creating a sort of scale armor protecting it from many sorts of attack. Its voice is rarely heard, and many believe it to be some kind of statue, rather than the fearsome defender it is. A cautious strategist, it often advises the slow, deliberate path, saying, "I do not expect you to understand, having lived for such a short time and having never died." If provoked, the Arborescent Champion is brutal and terrifying, attacking with great vigor until all present enemies are vanquished.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *The Waiting Tournaments*

The Sundered Duke's knights are just an elite cadre of the many who serve the faerie nobility. All of these warriors await the commands of their absent lords and ladies, and the great Betrothal Tournament, which only happens with the release of the Winter Queen. To pass the time, they arrange Waiting Tournaments, challenging one another in feats of martial prowess and courtly skill. Winners gain titles, magical weapons, and glory amongst the faeries of the Vitreous Wood, and perhaps even their tightly-held secrets.

### *Take a Joke*

A large group of mortal travelers has come to the Royal Grove, hoping to compete against the faerie knights, or to converse with members of the Winter Peerage. Strangely, members of the entourage have begun disappearing, leaving piles of bloodless clothes and no signs of a struggle. It appears they have fallen victim to the Rhyming Jester, a powerful redcap who turns those who fail to answer his riddles into small forest animals, which he then chases into the Vitreous Wood. If his skull-topped scepter can be acquired, then it can return victims to their natural form, presuming they haven't fallen prey to some hunter.

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# THE GOBLIN MARKET

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## HISTORY

The full name of the Goblin Market is “Her Majesty’s Fair and Noble Celebratory Market” and it is enchanted to roam the Vitreous Wood. Everyone simply calls it the Goblin Market, and it tends to be found at random sites along the southern edge of the forest. By decree, the only authority of the market is Queen Maeve and her duly designated representatives, which have been the Sundered Duke and the Goblin Knight—a covetous tyrant who spends much of his time sampling the various food vendors under the pretense that the queen may arrive at any time.

Despite all of this, the market is extremely popular with anyone seeking the unusual, the rare, or the illegal. If it is lost, stolen, or hard to find, chances are decent you can acquire it, or find someone who can acquire it, at the Goblin Market—you may not like the price demanded, that’s almost always guaranteed. The layout of the market itself changes each time it appears, but a few things are consistent. It will always be surrounded by a wrought-iron goblin-made fence, topped every 33 paces by the skull of a bull or a stag. It will always have the dream vendor’s pavilion, and the Shrouded Willow will stand inside near the southeastern-most corner. Bargains made within the Goblin Market are binding. Those who break them gain a magical mark of shame until the deal is restored; those bearing the mark have no rights or protections in the Vitreous Wood.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *Dragonfly and Moth Kennels*

A tall, gauzy tent occupies the northeastern corner of the Goblin Market. It has no sign, just a model of a dragonfly and a moth perched on either end of large metal rod that spins atop the tentpole. Inside the tent, the air is warm and humid, even if snow or rain thunders outside. A pair of dryads run this business, selling 3 foot (1 meter) long dragonflies as messengers or hunting beasts, including one variety that can

paralyze its prey and sew its eyes and mouth shut. A score of small, potted trees occupy the tent’s floor. From their leaves hangs the grey-red chrysalis of flesh-eating moths, capable of stripping corpses in an hour. The dryads don’t explain how to capture or kill the moths once released, leaving that task to the new owners.

### *Misplaced Dreams and Lost Potentials*

A small ebony pavilion stands alone in the Goblin Market, surrounded by tents and stalls all around it. Its doors are nothing more than thin sheets of blue satin threaded with small gems. A well-painted sign in a flowing script over the southern gables reads “Misplaced Dreams & Lost Potentials.” It is run by a mortal named Terrac, and his small cadre of very professional goblins. They sell a variety of knick-nacks and gew-gaws, claiming them to be the physical embodiment of both mortal and faerie dreams, nightmares, hopes, aspirations, and goals. Those who are inside claim that if one looks back through the doors as someone else enters, one does not see the Goblin Market, but a starlit sky and a city street populated by all manner of unusual creatures. However, anyone departing the store always seems to return to the Goblin Market, even if they arrive on a different street from the one they entered.



### MARK OF THE STATE

Officials were given this mark of unification to symbolize the carrier’s role in stately business. Sadly, though, the strong arm of the people became the arm of a tyrant.

### *Shrouded Willow*

This landmark of the Goblin Market is known for the silk-wrapped tents of forsaken travelers and lovelorn broken-hearted who sell themselves into eternal, dreamless sleep to hang from the branches. Some bargain with the Spiders of the Willow to pay debts, others to forget to their pasts. The most forlorn of the dreamers are snatched in the dead of the night to hang in the spider's larder, amongst the highest branches of the willow. At the tallest point of the Goblin Market, the Spiders of the Willow weave fluids and memories from the dreamers to sell to those who don't care how the merchandise was acquired, and the faeries of the Vitreous Wood are often happy to purchase them.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

#### *Terrac the Dream Vendor*

With bone-white hair and a clean-shaven face, the human wizard Terrac may be the third most famous mortal in the Vitreous Wood, after King Brennin and the Keeper of Cups. Always clothed in a robe of fuligin black, studded with pinpoint stars that drift by when he turns, Terrac supposedly lived in multiple worlds and vouched for the veracity of Tylwyth's arrival tale.

Consummately polite, "until it's time not to be," he runs *Misplaced Dreams* and *Lost Potential*, claiming, "It's not the worst venue to do business, at least you can bargain with goblins." The full extent of his magic is not known; no-one has been foolish enough to test his temper.



*The Goblin Knight*

## *The Goblin Knight*

With Atkond so frequently away on business, this “stately” goblin sees himself as the true beating heart of the Goblin Market, and its official governor. The goblin has had many titles over the centuries: Marquis, Archduke, Chief and Grand Count, and has currently settled just for “Ser Knight,” but is colloquially known as the Goblin Knight. He oversees many of the evening-to-evening functions of the Goblin Market, settling disputes, spruiking the vendors, and arranging real estate for new stalls to be set up, all of which he does, but at the cost of his “goblin tax” – samples of food, trinkets and baubles, many of which he ferrets away in his hidden palace under the market.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Tylwyth Calls*

The Crystal Sage approaches the characters with a request; he needs a quartz shard plunged into the floor of a large cave. Unbeknownst to the characters, buried under the cave is a massive serpent – one of Tylwyth’s magically engineered beasts. This cavern lies deep in the Vitreous Wood in a collection of ancient hills. The cave is guarded by a group of large ogres, who seem very intent on killing anyone approaching the dark void. The ogres fling

stones and hurl tree-sized spears, fearfully pursuing the characters into the cave, should they do so. Once inside, the ogres refuse to cross the small, slow moving stream inside, but await in the shadows, attempting to take the characters prisoner when they return. Should the ogres succeed and capture them, Tylwyth may appear, slay the brutes, and free them, that is, if they’re willing to do another task for him...

### *The Company of the Burning Tower*

This band of goblin rabble constantly seek employment, having been blacklisted by the Winter Peerage. After they (rightfully, by most accounts) killed their last fae employer for breach of contract, they put her sanctum to the torch. Their ranks include the traditional crazed alchemists, worg riders, and vulture knights, and their records legitimately document their service with distinction in over 47 campaigns over 219 years, when they pressed their first historian into their ranks. There is currently divided loyalty within their ranks, and the company’s factions squabble amongst themselves, meaning that even if they acquire a contract, it might be some time before they get around to it. These factions argue over the company’s charter, and whether they should fight for honor, money, or fame.


## BRENNIN THE FATHER

An entrepreneurial hobgoblin named Nax, formerly apprentice to Terrac, has been exploring beyond the Vitreous Wood in order to bring back odds and ends to make a tidy profit at the Goblin Market. In his travels, Nax came across one of Brennín’s aspiration fragments, and bound it within a jeweled decanter. This aspect of Brennín can be found in or near *Misplaced Dreams* and *Lost Potentials*, wandering in a dreamlike state as if trying to remember something. While Nax has had some difficulty keeping the binding in check, he is currently looking for a buyer, believing his big payday is around the corner.

This aspect of Brennín is more caring and doting than any other soul-fragment. This is the Brennín who was able to care for Ceidwen and Caddell, even as Brigid grew weak from childbirth, and before the Earl of Aderyn poisoned Brennín against his children. This Brennín can be found in the markets, buying delightful toys to gift to his children, sourcing materials to build them a playhouse, or discovering stories as told by the market’s inhabitants with which to captivate Ceidwen and Caddell. This soul-fragment of Brennín can be resolved either through realizing that his love has shaped his children in some way to who they are today (*joyfulness*) or that he abandoned his children at crucial times in their lives (*misery*).

There is potential for other physical embodiments of the Core Characters’ dreams, aspirations and goals to be found at the Goblin Markets – for the right price. These could be used by the player characters against other characters within the setting, to make a bargain with the original owner, or to unlock the secrets that may help restore or ruin Ember.



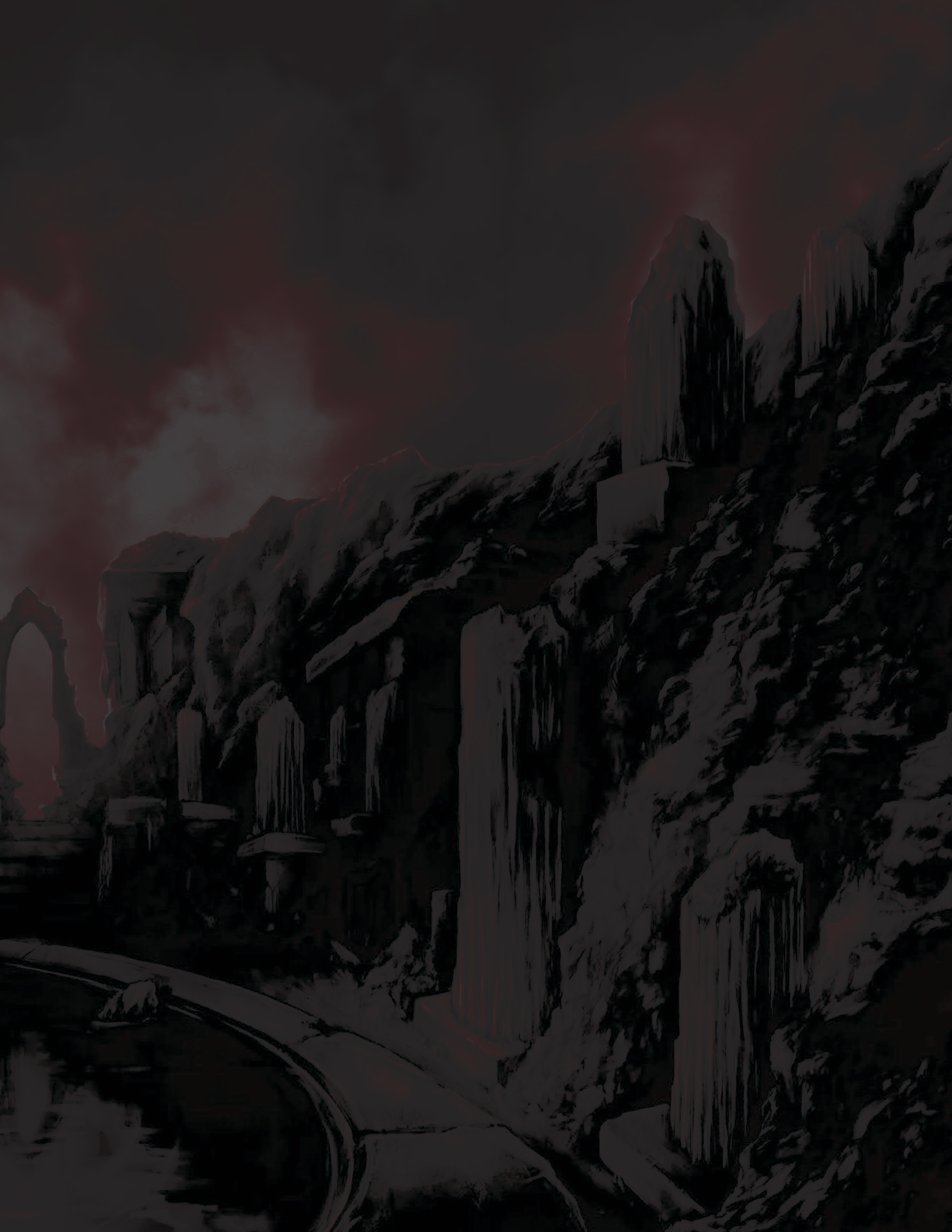


# ABBNEY MAROWLYTH



## ASHEN ROT

It is the duty of the daughters of ash to facilitate the movement of souls to the Hearth. But when they are unable to fulfil this duty, a rot can begin to take hold, leaving a corrupted, mindless beast with a broken soul.



## HISTORY OF ABBEY MAROWLYTH

In the chaos long before time began Saint Marowlyth stole the moon and gave it to humanity. The sun blazed for years on end, with no reprieve from the heat for the scorched earth and the life growing in-between the cracks of the world. The gods, greedy and selfish in nature, kept the moon to themselves, only sending it into the sky above their domain when they wished shade from the sun's rays. One day, a young faerie, Marowlyth, saw how the humans suffered under the unending heat. As she studied them, she found the humans to be much weaker and less hardy than faekind, and so Marowlyth flew up to the gods' home and stole the moon.

Using all her might, Marowlyth flew the moon into the sky, so high that with every inch she flew upwards precious air was squeezed from her lungs and the heavens turned dark. In her last desperate gasps of life, Saint Marowlyth saw the moon firmly affixed in the sky, safe from the clutches of the gods. In the respite of the gentle light of the moon, the humans built Abbey Marowlyth in the fae's honor with a dedicated order of monks, the Order of Stargazers, to carry on Saint Marowlyth's story and her teachings of kindness. Over time, the Stargazers became progressively reclusive, developing their teachings and insight into self-care, meditation, numerology and astrology.

When the land was corrupted by the selfish actions of King Brennin, Abbey Marowlyth was one of the last areas to hold out against the blight sweeping the land. Whether it was because the abbey was such a blessed place, or that the Stargazers knew how to weave hope among the faithful, who can say. However, the monk's power was not enough and eventually the abbey fell to the same fate as the rest of the land.

Abbey Marowlyth is located in a vast graveyard some distance outside Yúla. The abbey is a behemoth structure of grey stones, chipped and worn with age, and dotted with multitudes of round windows. These once shone a beautiful blue light into the abbey, mapping constellations and celestial bodies. Behind the abbey itself are outcroppings of interconnected buildings, built in the shape of



### MOONLIT SEAL

Servants of the abbey often call upon the power of starlight and the moon for their magic. With every incantation, they are reminded of their beloved saint's sacrifice.

various constellations. At the center of these buildings is a large dome, the Lunar Temple, where the Stargazer monks would commune with the heavenly bodies. To get into the Lunar Temple, one must descend a twisting set of spiral stairs, traveling roughly 30 minutes downwards before reaching the large double doors of the temple itself.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

#### *The Shrine of Saint Marowlyth*

The Shrine of Saint Marowlyth is the focal point of the abbey. This is where every great prayer took place, where the Stargazer monks met with members of the community and where they planned their charitable works. The shrine is also the main entrance of the abbey.

Bordering the ceilings are paintings of Saint Marowlyth's great sacrifice depicting how humans suffered before the greedy gods, Marowlyth stealing the moon, and finally her placing it high in the sky. In times past, the monks were able to see straight into the heavens from the beautiful, clear glass, but now in the abbey's current state the glass is cracked and dirtied with the fumes of alchemical concoctions. In the center of the room there

were once rows upon rows of pews leading to a statue of Marowlyth. Now, the pews are nowhere to be seen, broken apart and used as kindling by the Luminous Circle.

Marowlyth's statue once depicted a woman with large moth wings and a dress made of moonlight and stars. Atop her head was a crown of pure gold dotted with hundreds of pearls which glowed a soft ivory in the moonlight. The statue now lies beheaded, her crown melted for potion ingredients and the pearls crushed underfoot. Standing next to the statue, those true of heart cannot help but feel a small spark of hope within themselves. While the stone of the statue may be cracked, its soul is very much intact, its arms are open and the saint's sacrifice is still very much real. No matter the chaos around her, the statue of the saint is a place of peace in the room.

### *The Infernal Laboratories*

Spread out across the abbey's grounds are numerous metal and glass vats and alchemical laboratories. The large metal vats are the beginning of the process by which the Stewards of the Luminous Circle break down a corpse's essence into raw materials to use in their foul magic. These vats have an unbelievably terrible smell, so rank it would make any normal person fall ill to the ground from taking one whiff of the contents inside. The Luminous Circle, on the other hand, find the smell intoxicatingly delicious. Every so often one will wander over to a vat, open one of the hatches, stick their head in and take a deep long breath in.

Steam clouds spew fumes of death and chemicals into the air from tables upon tables of alchemist's test tubes and beakers bubbling away under vicious green fires. Gigantic round metal containers bolted together attach to each other by spiraling cables stretching between buildings like sick vines hanging from every lamp, window, and wall.

The Stewards of the Luminous Circle have very little use for organization. So much so that they leave their bombs haphazardly piled inside the abbey's buildings. These messy storage methods do mean that often enough accidents happen. Many a steward has stumbled onto one of the bomb piles and immediately died as its flesh melted off while its coven-mates laughed without lifting a finger.

Once in a while a steward will bring back a live victim who was unfortunate enough to cross their path. When this happens they will put them into crude metal cages until the victims are used for the sorcerers to try their experimental potions on. Some manage to survive this process, but are forever changed by the toxins they inhale, becoming a ravenous, corrupted being, much like the Luminous Circle themselves.

## CHARACTERS OF ABBEY MAROWLYTH

### *Ceidwen*

In the aftermath of slaying her mother, and stealing the Capsa Signet from Cliodhna, Ceidwen traveled into the abbey of Saint Marowlyth in search of the Stargazers' help. The young woman knew her last chance to save Ember was to send the Capsa Signet between realms before it fell into her enemy's hands. The abbey was known to some as a place of instability in the fabric of reality, stemming from a dark time in the history of the Order of Stargazers. After she pleaded for their help, the monks revealed to Ceidwen some of their secrets and helped her cast the ring into the shadow place between life and death.

Piercing between the realms left Ceidwen weak, even with the guidance of the one who would become the last Stargazer. This weakened state caused her essence to be damaged further by her inner soulfire, and thus she began to transform into the Reaper of Ash. Shortly after this the abbey fell to the Summer King's madness, with all but one of the monks suffering horrible fates. The last Stargazer tried to coax Ceidwen back from the brink, but it was too late.

Ceidwen can be found wandering the buildings and the grounds of Abbey Marowlyth in search of the memories she lost so very long ago. Ceidwen's calling as both the fire maiden and a daughter of ash has her roaming all of Ember, but eventually she returns to the abbey to rest her weary soul. Some quality — a powerful echo of the past — of Abbey Marowlyth allowed Ceidwen some respite. But unfortunately, the serenity of the abbey has become corrupted by the arrival of the Luminous Circle.

### *Stargazer Telanuon*

Long ago, Stargazer Telanuon was one of many monks sworn to carry on the teachings of Saint Marowlyth by pledging their life to the moon and giving up any sense of personal identity. When the Cycle broke, the power of the saint waned. As the moon rises every night, so should the seasons change from winter to summer and back again. Without the power of the Cycle to sustain them, the venerable monks became frail. With what magic and prayers they could muster, they held back the summer curse sweeping across Ember, but this could only last so long. One by one the monks weakened and the magic sustaining their long lives faltered, until eventually only the last of the order remained, one who clung onto the last threads of Saint Marowlyth's power.

Stargazer Telanuon wishes to see the Cycle restored and balance to reign. The order was once a benign force of good in the world and Telanuon would like it to be again. They hide from the cultists who have invaded the abbey, and spends time both maintaining Abbey Marowlyth in what capacity they can, and researching in the order's archives, to find some knowledge that might help end the curse.



*Stargazer Telanuon*

During the day, Telanuon keeps a wary eye on Ceidwen who still wanders the halls of the abbey. They remember the woman they helped many years ago and wishes to help her again in whatever way the monk can. Often, the Stargazer will leave bowls of food and water in Ceidwen's way or steer her from the unfortunate souls she may try to reap.

During daylight, the Stargazer is languid and sluggish and uses Marowlyth's magic as little as possible. The power the monks once possessed tampered with the fabric of reality, and this was always risky at best. In the evening, the Stargazer is a sight to behold. Able to pull eldritch armaments and spells out of other realms through tears in reality, Telanuon can do anything from hurl shards of ice at someone to whipping them with a fiery lash. While the Stargazer prefers to avoid confrontations, they know that this may not always be an option in order to restore Abbey Marowlyth, the Order of the Stargazers and the Realm of Ember to what they once were.

### *Wayside Golem*

The Wayside Golem is an old being, long said to have wandered Ember's land looking for its maker. In its early days, the golem studied the long-lived fae and the mortal humans alike, in order to find some form of identity for itself, in order to know what it was, and what it was not. When it realized it could not live such as them, the Wayside Golem found solace as a caretaker for the dead of Ember in the graveyard of Abbey Marowlyth. Perhaps the golem had more in common with the dead than it did the living, and it had always felt separate from the other beings of Ember. The Order of Stargazers and the Wayside Golem formed a courteous relationship after they welcomed the golem into the abbey and allowed it to maintain the structures of the abbey themselves, the grounds and gardens, and the graveyard, enabling the Stargazers to focus on more cerebral pursuits.

Unlike many creatures in Ember, the Wayside Golem is an artificial creature, created by some being that once passed through the realm, and was therefore not affected by the disruption to the Cycle. This also means that it is in perfect control of its mind, and while it has limited forms of communication, it has had a great many years to ponder on the mysteries of the realm.



When the Stewards of the Luminous Circle moved into the abbey, they used their magic to corrupt the great creature's heart, turning it a sickly green. And while the Wayside Golem's mind was strong enough to resist their magic, its body remains under the control of the cultists.

The Wayside Golem has three different "eye" shards floating above its body, which grant it different abilities, each a result of becoming attuned to the environment of the abbey over so many years. The golem is never able to use each ability at the same time and must cycle through its eye shards as each charges up again after use. The first of the eyes allows the golem to wake the vines and grasses within the abbey's grounds to rise up and entangle a person. The second of the eyes allows the golem to warp the abbey's buildings or the headstones of the graveyard and sculpt the stonemass into forms it can use. The third eye enables the Wayside Golem to manipulate light sources around the abbey, conjuring new sources of light, expanding or diminishing other sources of light, or extinguishing them altogether.





### *The Stewards of the Luminous Circle*

The Luminous Circle started out as one of the many circle of magi to have the honor of being taught by the Queen of Winter herself. But a few particular personalities within, those who craved more power than what Maeve offered them, rose to dominate the rest of the Luminous Circle, and the stewards, having abandoned the queen, grew more into a cult following. The stewards had always been drawn to Abbey Marowlyth due to the instability in reality the Stargazer monks' magic had caused there. But the strength of the Order of Stargazers had always been too formidable for them and the cult's numbers too few. Then the Endless Summer began, and the Stargazers' strength dwindled, and so the cultists saw an opportunity. The cultists began to exploit the instability within the abbey to grow their power, while at the same time they raided the abbey's archives for more arcane knowledge, and also discovered the demon Kor within the Lunar Temple.

Already scavengers, once they had established themselves at Abbey Marowlyth, with no fertile land near the abbey, the sorcerers began to dig up bodies, feasting upon dead flesh for sustenance. The eating habits of the cultists corrupted them, turning them into monsters obsessed with death and they soon forgot about Kor and the archives. Instead, their new obsession became protecting their lands, consuming the dead, and tinkering with their strange alchemical contraptions.

These twisted sorcerers have found a way to use the dead to power large machines where they mix deadly toxins with magic to create the horrible bombs they have begun stockpiling for an attack against other parts of Ember. When the Luminous Circle first met the Wayside Golem and realized they could not eat it, they corrupted the golem instead, bringing the creature's vast physical power into their ranks. The Stewards of the Luminous Circle hate Stargazer, the last remnant of the abbey's monks they can't seem to get rid of. The problem is Stargazer seems near impossible to kill and when the sorcerers have the old monk close at hand, Stargazer manages to slip through some hidden passage they never knew existed and flees deep into the abbey. At present, Ceidwen is merely a ghost to the cultists, one who if they do not disturb, then she will not notice that they are there.

The Stewards of the Luminous Circle swarm their targets and use sheer numbers to overwhelm them. The sorcerers are able to cast basic magical spells from their staves, but their real power comes from the potent explosives they have at their disposal. The cultists are able to levitate the bombs into the air with their staves and fling them at their enemies. The Luminous Circle have been experimenting with the bombs, looking for any effects that would enable them a decisive victory against the rest of Ember. While they are always changing their formulae, some of their current explosive batches might include lime green bombs laying a thick cloud of toxic fog; mucus yellow bombs that cover a victim in a thick honey-like substance and which causes painful boils to grow on their skin; and murky black bottles that explode with mutated leeches, which bury underneath the skin and slowly suck a victim's internal fluids until a leech is strong enough to burst from the body.



### *Kor the Many Voiced*

As a young demon, Kor lived amongst his own kind at the center of the earth. There, he swam through rivers of magma and played in the hearts of primal volcanos. Kor was not one for his kind's strict rules and rituals that endowed their realm with great power. Railing against the authoritarian rules of his home, one day Kor stepped beyond the borders of his demonic realm. However, one of the eldest of his clutch discovered this and brought it to the attention of the Blazing Elders. Kor was cast out onto a tide of magma, sending the demon into the world, spewing him forth to a dry, scorched, cursed land. If that were not enough, Kor felt a sudden stabbing pain in his head and then a dark laughter. Turning to his left he saw that he had grown another head. Then another terrible stabbing pain. And another. Until the demon stood there with four heads, each more foul than the next and able to control his body.

The heads tormented Kor, and he realized his kind had laid one final punishment upon him—he had become Kor the Many Voiced.

Kor moved through the primal times of Ember, for the most part remaining hidden,

but not afraid to defend itself against those who thought themselves mighty enough to attempt to take one of Kor's heads as trophy. Mostly what Kor wished for was freedom, and to be left alone. In the disruption of the Endless Summer, Kor sensed the wellspring of energy within the Lunar Temple and burrowed his way within, and now feeds off Saint Marowlyth's lunar power.

Four heads make up Kor the Many Voiced. While each Kor has different wants and needs, all of them enjoy drinking power from the Lunar Temple and so this demonic being is content enough for now where it lies.

### **Kor the Rebel**

This head is the first and eldest, though it's difficult to tell that is the case. The Rebel has learned to control his entire body if he wishes, but generally works with the other heads for the sake of keeping the peace. This Kor is not one for rules, tending only to satisfy its urges and desires as they come. He is particularly mutinous against any who might attempt to tell him what to do or seek control over him.



### **Kor the Deceiver**

The Deceiver lives for lying and manipulating others, including the other voices of Kor. He will be the first to speak in place of all the others who mostly try to ignore his words.

### **Kor the Hungry**

The Hungry wishes to devour all that come before him – be it animal, vegetable or mineral. He is kept content by feeding upon the focused lunar power that the temple provides, but he could easily be tempted by unfamiliar and exotic new meals.

### **Kor the Proudful**

The Proudful is the youngest of all the heads, but the most vain by far. He is the only head unhappy with their new home at the Lunar Temple and believes they can do so much more. This Kor is particularly ambitious, and may work with the others to leave the temple and exert power over the world above.

Every once in a while Ceidwen will enter the Lunar Temple and sit with Kor for a time. Each head enjoys hearing the stories of the dead

spirits she carries with her and she makes the perfect companion to keep Kor the Proudful occupied as he regales her with tales of his brilliance.

Kor is a demonic hydra with four heads, and if any his heads are chopped off, two more will grow in its place, all the more terrible than the one they came from. Kor is immune to any type of fire and heat and is able to spew molten hot magma out of each of his heads. The only way to kill Kor is to strike true at the glowing red heart in his chest, but Kor always keeps this heart facing the ground so that he can protect himself.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### *Awaken the Scarlet Herald*

Ceidwen has been becoming the Reaper of Ash for longer periods, and she will eventually be lost and cast a very grim shadow over Ember. It is time for the Scarlet Herald to be reborn. Reconnecting Ceidwen through her past, or removing the corruption from the abbey, may allow her to be renewed.

### *Purify the Corruption*

The stewards have infested Abbey Marowlyth like vermin, and picking them off one by one will do very little to dissuade them. Clearing their stronghold from the Shrine of Saint

Marowlyth and removing their corrupted machines inside its halls will restore the light of Saint Marowlyth to the area. It is possible that one could find a way to turn Kor the Many Voiced or even the Wayside Golem against the Luminous Circle, any of which would surely undermine the foothold the cultists have on the abbey and grounds.



# LOCATIONS IN THE ABBEY MAROWLYTH

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## THE SOLEMN GRAVEYARD

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### HISTORY

There was once a tangible serenity cast over the immaculate grounds of the Solemn Graveyard, a result of the great responsibility the Wayside Golem took in its role as caretaker. The grasses were lush and trimmed and the vines splayed across every crypt, yet never overhanging. Most notable were the vibrant blooming flowers found in the intricate and precise gardens wherever space could be poached. Now patches of dried grass struggle to grow between the graveyard's densely packed graves and crypts.

The Solemn Graveyard contains nearly two thousand commoner graves, alongside dozens of noble-born family crypts. But even this space has never been quite enough for the dead of Castle Ember and the city of Yúla. Before the Endless Summer, the burial ground had been in use so long that many of the oldest graves were continually dug up to make room for the newly dead. The bones were frequently emptied from the coffins, and thrown amongst other discarded dead. The Wayside Golem took these discarded bones and ground them into dust, forming the bleached white pathways around the graveyard. The nobles valued the privacy of their dead and their great crypts were so well-protected that entering them was an art-form, a carefully timed dance of the digits turning tumblers, opening locks, and untangling chains.

The arrival of the Luminous Circle sent the perfection of the graveyard into disarray. They have dug up the dead to feed upon, or to use as fuel in their infernal machines. Their hulking vats and noxious laboratories blight the grounds and buildings of Abbey Marowlyth. As much as it tries to maintain the graveyard when it is left alone by the Luminous Circle, the Wayside Golem is prevented time and again from tending to the grounds it so dearly loves.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

#### *The Howling Tomb*

The Howling Tomb is a large grey stone built in the shape of a wolf's head mid-howl. On windy days, air blows through small vents in the wolf's ears and escapes from an opening in its mouth, emitting a low mournful howl. The tomb can be unlocked via a small keyhole carved into the wolf's neck, between hunks of carved stone fur. The bottom jaw will slowly lower via a chain system inside, and fully opened, the tomb entrance appears like a wolf snarling in anger. The structure below is the resting place of the great winter wolf Helyór, staunch companion to the Queen of Winter. The cavern below is frigid and icy and inhospitable to the unwary. Great stone-frosted pillars dot the cavern, as do grand monuments and statues made from ice itself, carved by the Winter Queen during times of solitude.

#### *Ceidwen's Perch*

With a good position close to the Shrine of Saint Marowlyth is one of the most extravagant crypts in the Solemn Graveyard, nearly two-stories high, and covered with all manner of leering gargoyles. Ceidwen has made a room of sorts here with various objects and trinkets she has absentmindedly collected over the years, sometimes pinched from the people whose soul she had just taken. When she is unable to rest, twigs, branches, and other types of kindling make a soft nest where Ceidwen can meditate and think, and try to reconnect to who she once was.

Particular types of objects she most consistently collects are various forms of instruments and music boxes, which Ceidwen plays for the souls still tied to her in order to comfort them. Through the clanging of the metal vats outside and the hissing of the stewards – or the screams of their victims – the soft plinking of a music box can just be heard.





## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *Helyór the Winter Wolf*

The Howling Tomb has always been the secret resting place of the winter wolf, as designed by the Queen of Winter. It was Helyór whom the earl visited many years ago to bewitch. When the winter wolf was forced to savage Ahnarad, Eurwyn and Grufeid, the beast was grievously injured, especially after one telling blow from Brennín's older brother. In great pain, the beast slowly limped his way back to the Howling Tomb to lick his wounds, to rest, and to recover, remaining in a torpor ever since.

The winter wolf is an old creature, and in his age, Helyór's eyes had previously clouded with cataracts. But in honor of his once bright blue eyes, Maeve replaced them with two brilliant sapphires, gifts to Maeve from Tylwyth. The beast is massively strong and unexpectedly agile for his bulk, and it also has the natural ability to alter the climate around it, bringing on a snap freeze that changes its surrounding terrain. Given time, the beast could summon a blizzard to blind and harry his enemies.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *The Loyal Companion*

Once the loyal companion of the Winter Queen, Helyór the winter wolf wishes to return to her side. If Helyór is awoken, he may still be weak from his injuries, but will still have some strength, enough to attempt to deal with intruders. Helyór will protect his territory, but is smart enough to know when he is outmatched. Above all, Helyór respects strength, and any who show such to the beast may win the winter wolf's favor. If this occurs, the wolf will speak to them and be happy to travel with any of noble heart who seeks out the Winter Queen.

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# THE LUNAR TEMPLE

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## HISTORY

The Lunar Temple was built so that the Stargazer monks could commune with the heavenly bodies. From the outside it is a large, ghostly dome, almost seamlessly smooth, but with occasional pockmarks, like craters. There is a small entry hall at one side of the temple, and within is a winding set of narrow stairs leading down under the abbey grounds and into a great observatory. The vertical tunnel is lined with stones and thousands of mirrors with attached levers. The Stargazer monks were able to use these mirrors to channel the moon's light into the observatory of the dome itself. An unknown property of this process has created some resonating frequency within the observatory, a vibration, a humming that the monks said was the music of the heavens singing to them.

The Stargazers trained for many years to recognize the patterns of the stars and other celestial bodies within the Lunar Temple. They believed the patterns showed fundamental truths of the order of reality, which could lead to predictions of the weather and the tides, of agriculture or disease, of even politics themselves within Ember. These predictions were not always accurate, however, and this only led the monks to focus further on their studies so that the future might be told with more certainty. The monks often interpreted these predictions into song, and it was their job to sing to anyone who asked, from kings and queens to nobles, merchants and commoners, or even those who might prey upon Ember – such as the Earl of Aderyn – all were welcomed at the Lunar Temple.

The temple is still very much intact today, protected by Kor the Many Voiced who dug his way into the observatory after the Endless Summer began. Kor lies in the middle of the vast room at the focal point of the mirrored moonlight. At night, the demon draws power from the light of the moon and speaks to itself animatedly, and during the day it slumbers, dreaming of the many dreams it has half-seen in the ethereal moonlight.

An extensive library covers most of the walls of the temple. In-between the bookshelves are statues of the Elder Stargazers, those who founded the order, and those who had reached the pinnacle of wisdom before the order was nearly destroyed.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Elder Stargazers*

These masked statues stand roughly 7 feet (2 meters) high and stare silently towards the pinprick stars of the roof of the observatory. The statues of the Elder Stargazers are slightly eerie in their similar appearance, except for minute variations in height and build. The habits of the Stargazers were meant to both protect a person's identity and destroy it at the same time, and by dedicating themselves to the monastery, the Stargazer gave their life up to the moon.

Each of the Elder Stargazers is ascribed with a short saying, spoken by the monk before they died. These insights are often coveted as sacred knowledge passed down, as from a person on the brink of entering a new realm.

### *The Archive*

The Lunar Temple's library is filled with tomes upon tomes of stories, and the ramblings of the Stargazer monks' introspections. The tales within the library are not tales of distant lands or things that have never happened, they are tales of this land and things the monks believed would come to pass. Some of these were false foretellings, ones that did not come true, and some may speak of such possibilities as the Endless Summer or the Eternal Winter, and how such things may be ended.

### *The Burrows*

In one of the furthest recesses of the Lunar Temple, the stone has begun to sag, and there lies a considerably-sized tunnel entrance. It was through here that Kor the Many Voiced dug up from below. From the tunnel emits a gentle heat, bringing warmth to the vast stone observatory, but this heat ebbs and flows as if the breath of some fiery beast akin to the Demon Kor.

For those bold enough to explore the tunnels, precious metal and crystal veins can be found deep within, and one must be careful of the demonic vermin and parasites that have traveled up with Kor from his infernal home at the center of the earth.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *Kor the Many Voiced*

Kor the Rebel is the voice who most does not wish to leave the Lunar Temple; he has his freedom, and shelter, and he has a font of power to feed him. But some of the heads of the Many Voiced have other ideas and could be persuaded into other causes. If Kor is attacked in the Lunar Temple, he will fight viciously and dirty to save his hide. If it looks like he is going to be overcome, Kor will stop to bargain with his opponents, and if pressed, he may move on beyond the temple, seeking out other sources of power to consume, but this would of course mean coming into contact with the other residents of Ember.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Dreams of What Could Be*

The tomes of the Stargazers record a handful of instances where some of the monks, long into their studies and at the point of collapse, had fallen asleep in the Lunar Temple under beams of moonlight. These monks spoke of a form of lucid dreaming they experienced, a kind of spiritual epiphany to the Stargazers. They recorded dreams of long ago, of what might be, and of stepping into the dreams of others within Ember.

### *Deep Secrets*

Stargazer Telanuon is the only one remaining who knows the esoteric cataloguing system of the monkish order. With Stargazer's help, it's possible to spend time researching in the archives, and while there is a lot of the mundane scribings of the monks, there is also ancient knowledge deep within the tomes, from before Ember was founded and from other dark corners of history. There is knowledge of the Deep Ones in the Forlorn Cove, said to have arrived from the abyssal darkness before time; there is knowledge of Faerie, as a separate and far off place, long before a series of archaic bargains and contracts brought it bodily into Ember; and in the ravings of the Empyrean One, a heretical Stargazer, whose existence has not completely been concealed, lies hints of the nature of the fabric of the Cycle and how one might access it.





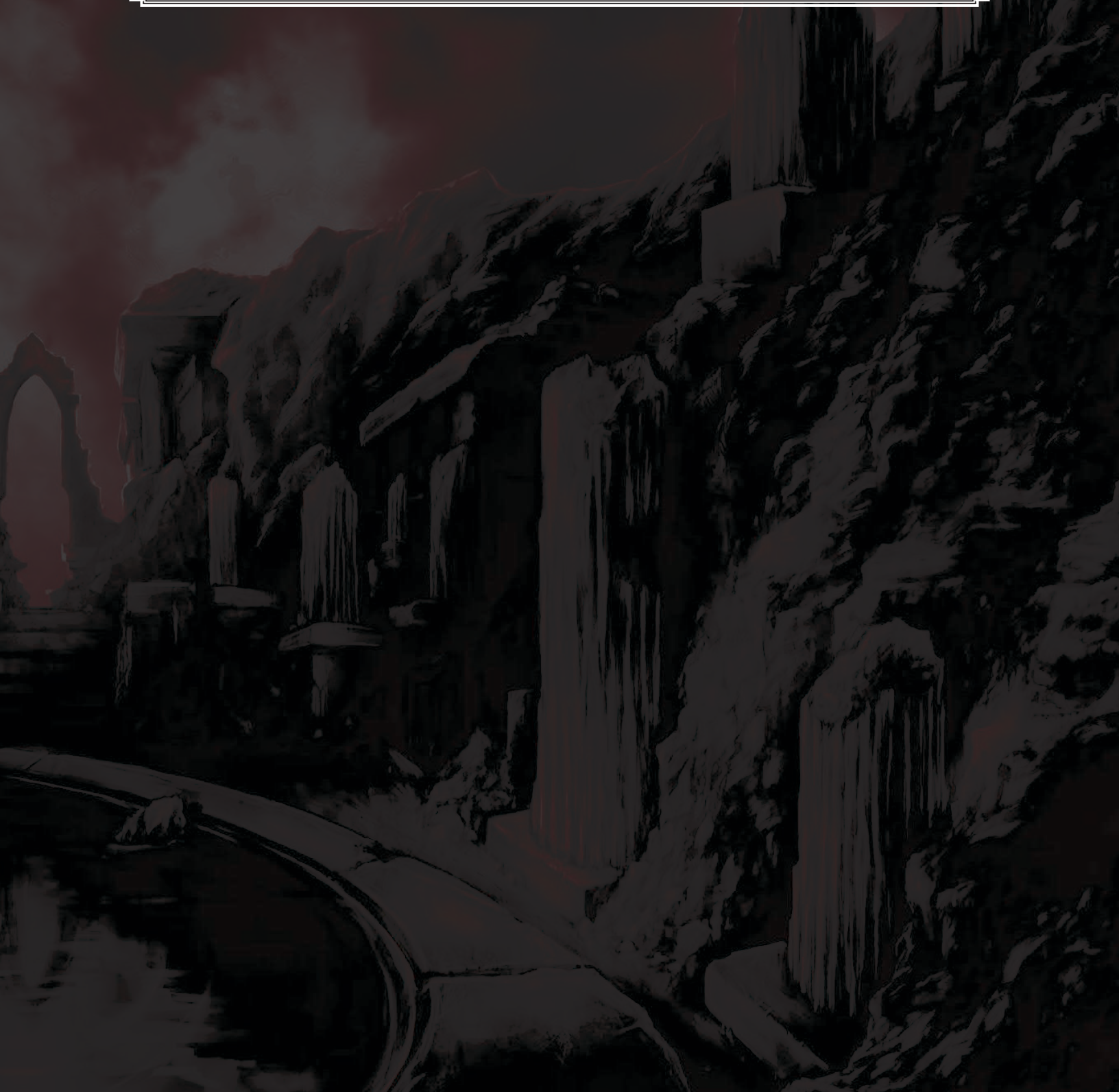
# THE ROYAL MAUSOLEUM



## CARETAKERS' WRAPS

The nuns who were charged to care for the remains of the royal line – sealed away from the outside world – wore white wraps to ensure their sanctity. Their isolation may have shielded them from graverobbers, but not the Endless Summer's curse.

*A low wail echoes from the dark halls of the Royal Mausoleum. Two large steel gates, curved into the symbols of winter and summer, stand ajar. The faint scent of dried flesh and death wafts through their bars, and inside, among the empty halls of forgotten princes and princesses, something yet lives, lurks, scratches and moans.*





## HISTORY OF THE ROYAL MAUSOLEUM

In years past, the Royal Mausoleum was surrounded by acres of beautiful golden orchards cared for by a benevolent order of nuns, a stark contrast to how it appears today. There is little left of the glorious orchard, now years long decayed. It is scorched with blackened trees, bogs, and sinkholes. On the eastern side of the orchard is the now Sunken Cloister of the Sisters of the King, and at the very heart of the desolate orchard is a single grand building of crumbling stones and two giant rusted metal gates. Entering the Royal Mausoleum is easy – escaping it is another matter.

Over the eons, as more of the family of the Liyume King and Erya Queen died, the mausoleum grew. Every year, new crypts were added, with great halls, tombs, sepulchres and shrines – ever burrowing outwards – until one day the mausoleum looked more like a labyrinth, its secret ways known only by the sisters who cared for it. When the great cycle stopped, the labyrinth took on a life of its own; it mutated, and changed into the beast it is today. Now the Royal Mausoleum is a labyrinth like no other, near inescapable as it grows each day, almost a living thing, trapping the poor souls who have wandered into it.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *Insurgent's Camp*

Before Caddell fell into his fugue, he had begun to gather about him a band of mercenaries and loyal followers to help against the Earl of Aderyn, and King Brennin, who were believed responsible for the Endless Summer. But before Caddell's rebellion could grow, he and the mercenaries were drawn deep into the Royal Mausoleum by the Lost Children. There, some lost their sense of identity to the children, some became victims of the Chainman, and the rest became foodstuffs for the Death Agari. Caddell's camp lies abandoned, tents and lean-tos up against one side of the mausoleum and their resources and makeshift bedding remain untouched within one of the grand entrance halls.

## CHARACTERS OF THE ROYAL MAUSOLEUM

### *Caddell*

Caddell drifts through the endless halls of the mausoleum, looking for something he cannot remember. He was one of the earliest victims of the vampiric Lost Children, who stole his memories, and his purpose. Without knowing why he had entered the mausoleum, he continued to wander, slipping deeper into his fugue. While hunting Caddell was at first a game to the spectral children, some part of them recognized the prince as being of their blood. Now, Caddell's presence is important to the children, the emotionless man who stays with them despite their torment of him; to them, he has become a surrogate father, a brother, a friend.

### *Death Agari*

When the realm was young the Death Agari were fae carrion serpents, feeding on the flesh of all things dead and decomposing. Many years ago the Agari were members of the Faerie Queen's court, but after a grievous insult to the queen, they were sent scurrying underground, unable to show their faces amongst the fae. Worse yet, the then queen decreed unto them a new purpose – to feed on death so that life could thrive.

The Death Agari spent many years in their far-reaching underground realm. They were separated from their kind, but they adapted. As the power of mortals grew, a great mausoleum was built atop their home, yet the Death Agari adapted. When they were hunted, because the kings and queens wanted their families preserved, the Death Agari adapted once again. Now these long, grey beasts are perfectly suited for life in the dank labyrinth of the mausoleum. With the Cycle broken, these creatures have nearly used up their foodstocks – the dead of the mausoleum.

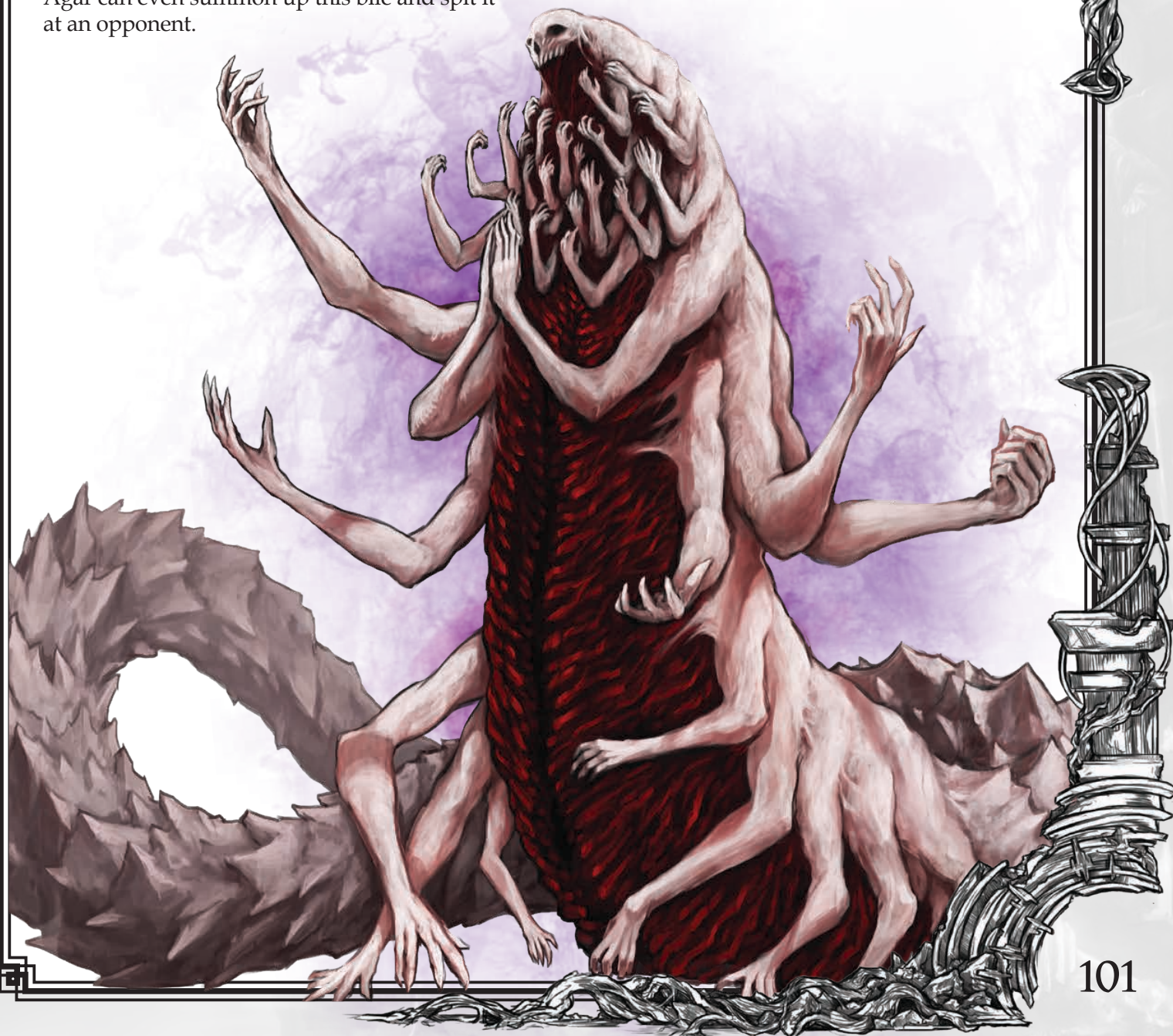
Just as the Endless Summer began, Fatesealer Rhonwen visited the Royal Mausoleum and spoke to Ghost Mother and her brood. Ghost Mother attacked the Fatesealer, and as the witch barely escaped with her life, she cursed Ghost Mother with an everlasting memory. The years would drag on and Ghost Mother would see her brood's brilliance dim and fade – only she would remember what they once were.

So far she has restrained the rest of the Agari from giving in to their hunger and moving beyond their home in search of food. With the threat of degenerating further, the Winter Queen is now the only one who can restore the Death Agari to what they once were.

Death Agari are giant, fae serpentine creatures who possess very little in terms of guile or deception. However, one natural ability they have is camouflage, changing their skin to appear like any natural scenery. When a Death Agar has a victim right where it wants them, it will try to swallow the poor unfortunate whole. Within the Death Agar, the stomach acid is strong enough to melt flesh and eat away metal, once a way for the creature to soften dead flesh before it was consumed. In combat, a Death Agar can even summon up this bile and spit it at an opponent.

### *Chainman*

When the Earl of Aderyn decided to steal the Capsa Signet for herself, Sir Evard, a knight of Brennin's court, was wise to her schemes. Under guise of night, Sir Evard snuck into Cliodhna's chambers and found a missive she wrote, naming her rightful ruler of the Realm of Ember and master of the Capsa Signet. Astonished by the proof of the earl's treachery, Sir Evard made off to tell the king of Cliodhna's schemes, but sadly the knight was caught by the earl's agents. As punishment, Cliodhna cut out Sir Evard's tongue and nailed the missive to his chest, so he would be forever burdened by the proof he found. Finally, she bound him in chains and dragged him to the darkest corner of the mausoleum to rot.



Even now that he is dead, the Chainman is still a knight at heart. This harrowed creature is unable to die until he delivers the note nailed on his chest to Brenninn. Each time the Chainman suffers defeat, another chain is added to his body, a sign of the growing burden he carries. The Chainman's dismal loneliness manifests inadvertently in ghoststeel chains binding others to him, tangling and dragging them behind, furthering his torment.

The Chainman is able to wield his chains like weapons, sending them flying through the air to wrap around a target. Once the target is entangled, the Chainman will drag them behind, battering the unlucky person into submission. At the end of each of the chains is a jagged hook. As well as using these for brutal effect in combat, the Chainman can gouge them into stonework to climb the walls and roofs of the decrepit mausoleum like some kind of diabolical spider.

### *Lost Children*

The Liyume King and Erya Queen lived in a continuous cycle of death and rebirth, but it was not so for their children, and some died tragically young. Disease, famine, assassination, or accident—no matter the case, they were all entombed in the Royal Mausoleum. Those children who lived good, happy lives rested within the mausoleum's walls, but when the Cycle halted, the children who were taken too soon from the world grew unsettled and awoke with a strange hunger, the need to feast on

### BRENNIN THE SUMMER KING

This aspect of Brenninn is more noble and dutiful than any other soul-fragment. He has fully embraced his role as ruler of Ember. It is this Brenninn who will rule with compassion and insight, but first he must learn how. This Brenninn can be found searching the Royal Mausoleum for the knowledge of his ancestors, or communing with them, in order that he may learn the wisdom of the past and use it to build Ember's future. This soul-fragment of Brenninn can be resolved either through realizing that he has made positive, meaningful impact on Ember and its people (*joyfulness*) or that his choices have destroyed the realm and the Cycle, and that there is no going back to the way things were (*misery*).

memory and identity, to awaken themselves to who they once were.

The true hunger that drives each child is the need to find the love they lost and the only way for them to remember is through taking the essence of others. After a child feeds, a soft wailing echoes through the labyrinth, a child mournfully calling for the parents they've lost.

When the Lost Children are not hunting in packs within the mausoleum halls, each makes its home in the tomb of their parents or siblings, curled up next to their shrouded corpses. They are trapped by this family bond, and if every body of a Lost Child's immediate family is destroyed by flames, so too is the Lost Child.

Lost Children can appear alive for brief moments in time. They use this ability to lure unsuspecting people into the labyrinth and trap them there. Their soft, hissing voices spew terrible dark nothings into the victim's ears, causing the person to become distracted, dismayed, eventually losing their way. Once a person is trapped in the mausoleum, the Lost Children descend like a wolf pack, each desperately trying to feed.

### OPPORTUNITIES

#### *Sir Evard's Revenge*

Those who encounter the Chainman will see the proof of the Earl of Aderyn's treachery nailed to his chest, but only if they get close enough. Underneath his pain and torment, this once loyal knight still desires to reveal the earl for what she truly is. If someone were to take the proof of the earl's duplicity to Brenninn, even if he does not care or believe it, it will allow the Chainman to finally die.

#### *Her Serpentine Eminence*

The Death Agari's leader, Ghost Mother, cousin to the Queen of Winter, can be reasoned with, and alliances with her can be made. She has several bones to pick with the surface-dwellers, particularly with Maeve and Rhonwen, and also wishes to return to the surface of Ember and take her rightful place amongst the fae. Ghost Mother struggles to manage her brood's self-control, and dignity. She seeks restoration for her brood, and their sanity. If any could provide either that, or reprisal against Maeve or Rhonwen, she would be grateful and the services of the Death Agari might be directed to other parts of Ember.

# LOCATIONS IN THE ROYAL MAUSOLEUM

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## THE SUNKEN CLOISTER

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### HISTORY

The Sunken Cloister was once known as the Cloister of the Sisters of the King. It housed the nuns dedicated to serving the king of Ember, and the royal family, and their dead. The sisters tended to the large orchard surrounding the Royal Mausoleum, brewed cider from the apples that fell there, and kept the mausoleum a warm and inviting place for royalty to visit their beloved dead.

New halls, tombs, and crypts were slowly added underneath the mausoleum over the centuries, spreading underground and destabilizing the land above. Eventually these tunnels reached the cloister and it began to sink, slowly at first, but then one day in a sudden tragedy it was swallowed whole. Villagers worked for days trying to dig the nuns out, but with every shovel of dirt they removed, the building sunk faster, until the muffled screams coming from the Sunken Cloister ceased – all the nuns were dead.

Despite their grim ending, unexpectedly, the ghostly figures of nuns began haunting the orchard and the ruins of the cloister. Each nun had lived a life dedicated to serving the dead royalty; they had lived good, kind, and selfless lives, so why should they rise again – why should they be so angry? The orchard became overgrown at first, but then the Endless Summer fell across Ember, and the orchard became withered, blackened, blighted.

In life, the nuns' main task was to upkeep the Tomb of Would Be Kings, but also to care for the bodies of other family members entombed in the mausoleum. Caring for the Would Be Kings was a task that gave the nuns great purpose and was considered an esteemed position. Thus, prestigious families would often



offer their youngest daughters to serve for a time at the cloister to improve their position at court. Despite the honor laid upon those who served at the cloister, many women did not truly wish to become nuns. They had their own aspirations and dreams, but frequently, they were never given the choice to refuse this *duty* to the king and royal family. Now the spirits of the nuns wander the orchard grounds, urgently trying to get someone, anyone, to listen to their stories.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

#### *The Blighted Orchard*

All around the mausoleum cloister are kilometers of burnt, blackened trees and rotting fruit. The uneven, rocky terrain is difficult to walk, undulating up and down, dotted with sinkholes and treacherous bogs. Each tree shows a history of sudden overgrowth and then blight, now a dried up husk of a moment of glory. Apple trees are bent and gnarled, pear trees withered skeletons, and cherry trees blackened from the sun's relentless rays.

Only one tree remains full and in bloom. A perfect apple tree, blossoming and bearing the



sweetest fruit all at the same time. Next to the apple tree, the day's heat does not feel so harsh and the night is not so bitter. Any person who plucks a fruit from this tree will taste the most delicious fruit, and see a bright red flesh inside, right before being sucked down into the Ghost Heart in the depths of the Royal Mausoleum. If one were observant, it might be possible to hear a distant heartbeat coming from the roots of the apple tree.

### *Shrine to Saint Ebberynn*

One of the accessible areas of the cloister is the Shrine to Saint Ebberynn. Within lies rotten wooden pews across one wall, half-submerged in dried mud. At the northern end of the shrine is the statue of the Sun Saint, and while somehow unblemished by the rot affecting the rest of the cloister, the statue has only just recently begun to subside into the muck. In one hand the saint holds a sickle, and in the other, a handful of grain. Ebberynn is the saint of loyalty, selflessness, and bounty.

The story of Saint Ebberynn goes that when Saint Marowlyth gave the moon to humanity, there was a period of decadence. Each night, when the moon rose high in the sky, people would drink and make merry, basking in the respite it brought them. The people's minds turned to dance, art and love – they no longer wished to till the fields and toil away for endless hours a day. Soon, cities went without food, merchants had nothing to sell, and even the royalty felt the bite of hunger. Ebberynn saw the folly in this, and so while everyone else enjoyed the nights, he continued to work. Harvest time came, and rather than taking for himself, he shared his bounty with his village. A few days later Ebberynn was found dead in his field, overworked and underfed, having given his last breath so that others could eat.

### *Ebberynn's Tears*

There is another accessible room of the cloister, just to the east of the Shrine to Saint Ebberynn. At the northern wall there are two large drains that pour water into a large pool at the center of the room. The crystal clear water falling from the drains is known as Ebberynn's Tears, said to be drawn from what was rumored to be the saint's tomb many years ago before it was lost into the earth, even before the cloister itself sunk below. The

nuns had previously used this area as a bathing chamber – each morning, the nuns would wake and bathe themselves in Ebberynn's Tears to purify themselves before the day's labors.

Despite the cloister sinking, the pool of Ebberynn's Tears remains intact. The water is blue and tepid to the touch, and both the room and water warm as anyone enters, the perfect temperature for a swim. Since the cloister sunk, however, those who have partaken in a swim still remain in the pool, their perfectly intact bodies sunk to the bottom of the saintly tears.

### *Cider Hall*

One area of the cloister still remains above ground: the cider storage hall. Located a short distance from the rest of the ruins, half of this wooden building has fallen into the ground and it stinks of the sweet smell of rotten cider. Flies buzz around the hall looking for any morsel of sweet liquid they can find. At the rear of the hall, the mass of insects swarm over a cask of cider so large it must have once covered an entire wall.

Any movement in the room causes the flies to stir and reveal they were also resting upon the half-buried body of a woman, still perfectly intact, but covered in rags, hair matted in dirt. Despite her outward appearances, Sister Lenil is still very much awake and not a ghost like the other nuns. It was her job to maintain the cider hall, and dole out the brew to visitors, and she did that to her very last breath. She will insist to anyone who enters the hall to sit down with a mug of cider, and another, which she dispenses from the large cask just behind her.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *Sister Lenil*

Sister Lenil sees it as her duty to remain awake – and "alive" – until she has given out every last bit of her cider. She is generally a happy-go-lucky woman, despite technically being dead. Unlike many of the other sisters who tragically died when the cloister sunk, Lenil always wanted to be a nun, and if her unfinished business was concluded, she could easily take her final rest. Her offer to any visitor entering the hall of a good mug of cider is genuine and will help her towards her final goal of passing into the next life. As her guests drink of the cloister's cider, Sister Lenil is happy

to converse, and she knows a great many things about the Royal Mausoleum and its surrounds, if one can stand her ragged, rasping voice.

### *Sunken Sisters*

There are multitudes of ghostly nuns wandering the orchard, looking to make someone listen to their story. While the nuns have no intention to harm a would-be listener, they are many and might inadvertently mob around a living being, fighting and clawing with the other nuns in order to have their story heard first. One would need to be wary of being caught up in a brawl between the ghosts, growing more insistent and desperate as time goes by. If a nun can get through to someone, she will tell them her stories, those dreams she had before she was forced into service in the cloister, and then she will pass on to whatever life awaits her. A few of the nuns have stories of how they carried bastard children and were hidden away in the cloister before shame could fall on the noble families of Ember.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *A Treacherous Landscape*

Any who enter the grounds of the mausoleum and the Sunken Cloister have to deal with the hostile nature of the terrain. The labyrinth below has warped the earth profoundly, and there are many concealed dangers if one is not vigilant. The blighted trees have long, twisting roots that will trip the unwary. The sinkholes are nearly impossible to escape once they are stepped into, with the earth sucking the poor unfortunate downward. Someone caught by the sinkhole is drawn down and dropped into a random part of the labyrinth. The bogs within the orchard are difficult to traverse, unless a person jumps from tree to tree, avoiding touching the ground altogether. Anything dropped into or placed on the bog will be sucked into the hungry mud, becoming impossible to find. To top it all off, sometimes a ghastly fog emerges deep from within the mausoleum, making it even more treacherous to navigate the terrain. The fog's vaporous tendrils seem to be exploring and probing the land in search of something.

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## THE TOMB OF WOULD BE KINGS

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### HISTORY

The Tomb of Would Be Kings was built near the Royal Mausoleum long before it turned into the sprawling labyrinth it has now become. Long ago this tomb housed all the second brothers who never became the Liyume King. It was a grand golden hall with a domed roof emblazoned with a giant sun decorated in thousands of yellow glass crystals. When the ring of oil lining the walls was lit, it set off the glass crystals, reflecting across every wall with a bright heavenly light. The glory of the Liyume Kings of Summer shone down upon their honored brothers.

At the center of the tomb, under the apex of the dome, is a gold throne and upon the throne is the corpse of the most recent royal brother who did not become the Liyume King. When a new body was brought to the tomb, it was given a ceremonial crown, marking that while the dead prince was worthy of the title, his service was unneeded and the previous brother's body was removed and placed in an alcove to rest with the other Would Be Kings. This was the throne meant for Brennin, had Grufeid not been found unworthy by the Hearth's Flame.

Now this tomb lies in disrepair – crystals are shattered on the floor, princes have been pulled from their tombs, and the Lost Children play hopscotch on the ancient runes carved into the floor. The corpse in the center of the room is a charred skeleton. A melted gold halo encircles its skull, the crown fused to his head, and the rubies drip over his cheekbones.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

#### *The Chanting Scions*

A ring of oil encircles the top ceiling of the tomb and can be lit via two small canals at either side of the tomb's entrance. When the oil is lit, anyone within the tomb beholds the full glory of its domed ceiling.





Bathed in the light of the ceiling, each Would Be King chants the following, and then falls silent:

*Come now brother and sit with me,  
How many years have gone?  
Within your light I rest with thee,  
My face turned towards the dawn.  
From death to life and life to death,  
By your side I have served.  
I was with you till my last breath,  
My rest is well deserved.*

The final couplet is only said by the charred corpse sitting upon the throne at the center of the room:

*Oh my king what have you wrought?  
No winter will I see.  
A land of fire your greed hath brought,  
Is there no end to thee?*

### ***The Last Would Be King***

Eurwyn the Wise is the last Would Be King to be entombed here. He was known as a kind, gentle man who loved the people of Ember deeply. When his brother Ahnarad became king, Eurwyn dedicated himself to education, opening schools all around the realm so that each and every person in Ember had the opportunity to study, should they wish it.

When Brenninn lost Brigid, he entered the Tomb of Would Be Kings in a fit of rage. He saw the corpse of Eurwyn crowned in all his glory and realized that this wise king among men was something he could never be. Everything Eurwyn had, Brenninn would not – the simple life, the crown, the family. Brenninn took a torch from the wall and set Eurwyn's corpse alight, staring madly as the Wise Would Be King was engulfed in flames.

### ***The Maiden's Hand Door***

At the back of the tomb is a simple black stone door with ten holes dotted in the shape of a constellation known as the Maiden's Hand. When a Would Be King's spouse would die, they would not be buried with the Would Be King. While records show this was for ceremonial reasons, the practical reason was that the tomb simply wasn't big enough. When the spouses died, their hearts were removed, brought to the Tomb of Would Be Kings and placed behind the Maiden's Hand Door so that part of them would always be with their love.

The Maiden's Hand Door is also a play on words, since to open the door, all the sisters had to do was place their fingers in the slots of the constellations and press the appropriate switches within. Pressing the correct switches would cause the door to slide open, giving the sisters access to the chamber beyond. Pressing the incorrect switches would cause any potential grave robber's digits to be severed.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *Thadeaus*

While the other children come and go, one Lost Child makes his home in the Tomb of Would Be Kings. Thadeaus was a young boy adopted by a Would Be King from centuries ago, after being orphaned in a long forgotten war. Sadly, soon after Thadeaus died of a lingering disease he was entombed as a real, very much missed, part of their family. When the Lost Children first awoke, Thadeaus found a way back to the man who saved him so many years ago and has stayed with his corpse ever since. While within the tomb, Thadeaus is able to keep ahold of his identity and manage his thirst for the memories of others. But in his loneliness, he is desperate for attention, and while he would be wary to any intruders into the tomb, he would most likely be helpful to anyone who treated the tomb with respect.

### *Eurwyn the Wise*

Eurwyn the Wise is not a truly sentient creature, but some aspect of the mausoleum allows memories to cling to his charred corpse. If he is addressed correctly and with due respect, he will answer three questions. Eurwyn is only able to respond with what he would have known during his life, attesting to things, such as Brennin's true personality, his family's lineage, and any lore relating to the Summer King. If Eurwyn is asked what he wants, he will request to be entombed with the other Would Be Kings – since no-one should rule for as long as he amongst the dead.

It's possible to take Eurwyn off his throne and place him to rest within the walls with the other Would Be Kings. A wall space has already been prepared for him with a gift from his brother, a handsome diamond encrusted scepter. When Eurwyn is placed in his final resting place, he sighs with relief and utters his final words:

*Years came and years passed,  
Everlasting was my reign.  
Now I see my end at last,  
I'm thankful that you came.*

Those who have helped Eurwyn find his resting place will be able to take his scepter as a gift without being cursed.



### CREST OF THE PROTECTOR

Fine warriors who protected the Tomb of Would Be Kings bore shields of the Silver Bastion, who was a legendary knight in the days of old, and once royal protector to Maeve herself.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Treasures of Kings*

When each Would Be King was entombed, he was gifted great treasures by the Liyume Summer Kings. This often took the form of golden goblets overflowing with gems, necklaces bearing their house sigils, or great golden robes woven in the finest silk. To this day only three treasures are missing from the Tomb of Would Be Kings. Each of the treasures is perfectly pristine, without a fleck of dirt or speck of dust on them, but each of these items carries a great curse with them if they are taken from the tomb. The curse is proportionally terrible to how badly a person wants the item – the more they want it, the worse the curse is. In theory, someone who truly doesn't want an item at all could walk out of the tomb with a treasure and without a curse, but this has never happened. The only thing that will stop the curse from progressing further as time goes on is returning the item back to where it was stolen from.

If someone decides to steal from the Tomb of Would Be Kings and they have sufficiently scared Thadeaus into hiding, not only will they have to deal with the curse, but they will find the Lost Children prepared to take revenge on the thief, by luring them further into the labyrinthine crypt.



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# GHOST HEART

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## HISTORY

As more children of the Summer King and the Winter Queen died over the centuries, the Royal Mausoleum grew to accommodate their bodies. Queens commissioned large wings dedicated to the children they outlived, kings requested great halls be built in honor of their sons and daughters dying valiantly in battle, and slowly the mausoleum took on a life of its own. So much so that somewhere, somehow, the gargantuan labyrinth now has a heart.

The ghostly heart keeps the walls from collapsing in on themselves, and with each beat of its hollow ventricles a new winding pathway is forged into the darkness. Without the heart, the labyrinth would decay, falling into disrepair, and eventually becoming nothing more than rubble.

The Ghost Heart is a sight to behold. It is 33 feet (10 meters) tall and roughly as wide, and appears as a human heart would, but wreathed in a ghostly halo. Wispy, veiny mist, smoke and aether extend from the organ and into the walls of the labyrinth around it.

There are few who have seen the Ghost Heart and escaped to tell of it. It is said that within the aura of the Ghost Heart one can hear the stories of all the royalty of every cycle reaching back to the start of time. Others say that the veins of the heart stretch increasingly into the outside world, and with growing hunger.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Hungry Mists*

The misty tendrils spiraling out of the Ghost Heart reach into every corridor and tomb of the Royal Mausoleum. Unlike the heart, the veins do not seem to have a distinct shape nor density. They appear as smoky wisps of nothing, something one could easily walk through. That is, until the mist thickens unexpectedly and one finds themselves trapped like an insect in amber. The mist *studies* those it has captured, as it prepares to feed on what it hungers for: *stories*.

Stories of lives well-lived, stories of great deeds, stories of near places and far places, and the stories of others from whom it may yet feed upon. If there was one thing the Royal Mausoleum always had in abundance it was stories of the royal bloodline, and thus the story of Ember; the Ghost Heart has craved such things since it first found the taste.

The spectral veins also allow for quick travel to other parts of the labyrinth. By grabbing onto one of the larger veins, a person can be transported from one room to another and then back to the Ghost Heart. The only downside is with no way to tell what vein leads to where, traveling through them is like taking a stab in the dark.

### *The Ghostly Aura*

The chamber that the Ghost Heart is found within is awash in a spectral radiance — its aura. And this aura has strange properties. Those who would step within the chamber are hypnotized by the rhythms of the heart and time seems to take on an otherworldly property. Within the aura, people hear what they truly desire and they are told it is okay. The heart speaks to them in a loving manner. People can spend hours listening to it, letting the feeling of acceptance and love wash over them. Those with an honorable soul, after hearing their desires put so plainly, may then be gifted with the wisdom of that which they fear most. The heart will warn the honorable soul to steel themselves for what is to come, to grow strong in their desires, and to face their fears. Those with a dishonorable soul will get no such wisdom from the heart. Instead, they sit slack-jawed for hours, days, years, until their body and mind waste away and they eventually die.

### *Grandfather's Beard*

A giant tree stands next to the entrance of the Royal Mausoleum and its roots have made their way down to the Ghost Heart where they protrude from the wall like the whiskers of an old man. Weaving in and out of these roots are skulls from the crypt, dragged down into the Ghost Heart's chambers through years of erosion and plant growth. Some essence from the heart has seeped into the roots of Grandfather's Beard over the years and though the tree has not gained full sentience, it is awake and it craves whatever form of life the Ghost Heart has. Every month, the roots of



Grandfather's Beard inch closer to the Ghost Heart, and every month the heart scrapes away more dirt and stone, attempting to burrow and flee its impending doom. If the roots were ever able to catch up with the heart, they would devour it, and Grandfather would awaken, and the mausoleum would collapse.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *Chainman*

One creature who has entered the Ghost Heart's aura and left is the Chainman and the bodies of the restless dead he drags behind him. In Chainman's wandering of the Royal Mausoleum, he stumbled into the heart's chamber. He held each of his skeletal captives in the heart's aura and allowed them the time they needed to hear the acceptance the heart offered. Finally, Chainman himself stepped into the heart's aura to hear its words. The creature sat there for years, so long that the Lost Children suspected they'd never again have to run from the slow clinking sound that once followed them down the hallways. Yet, somehow, the Chainman broke free and emerged from the Ghost Heart's chambers.

Whether the Chainman gained any wisdom from the heart is unknown, but he came away from the experience unwaveringly loyal to the Ghost Heart. Every so often the Chainman will make his way back down to the heart, traveling within the spectral veins easily. There, he communes with the heart, in its aura, though sometimes he attempts to prune back the roots and skulls of Grandfather's Beard, but no matter how much is hacked away, the tree ever seems to inch forward, closer to the heart.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *The True Self*

When characters enter the chamber of the Ghost Heart they will be pulled into its aura. This feeling starts as temptation, but eventually becomes an irresistible pull. Within the aura, they will hear their utmost desires manifest and feel the heart accept who and what they are, flaws and all. The heart is otherworldly and impossible to understand by any human terms. Thus, its wants are also impossible to understand and it's hardly possible to negotiate with it.

If the heart deems the person in its aura worthy, it will show them their greatest fear, and confront them with it so they come out of the experience stronger. This may come in the form of a dream sequence or a very tangible figure standing in front of the person speaking to them. If the heart deems the person unworthy, they will remain in its aura forever or until they are dragged out by some other force.

### *Restoring a Broken Soul*

Taking Caddell to the Ghost Heart would do much to heal his broken soul. Having him face his innermost fears will awaken his heroic side and bring hope to this very lost prince. Despite the grim things he has done as a mercenary in far off lands, he is a noble person deep down and will come away from the experience more well-adjusted. Anyone watching Caddell receive his "wisdom" from the heart will see him exiting the fire as the new King of Summer, the spitting image of his father before he turned mad.



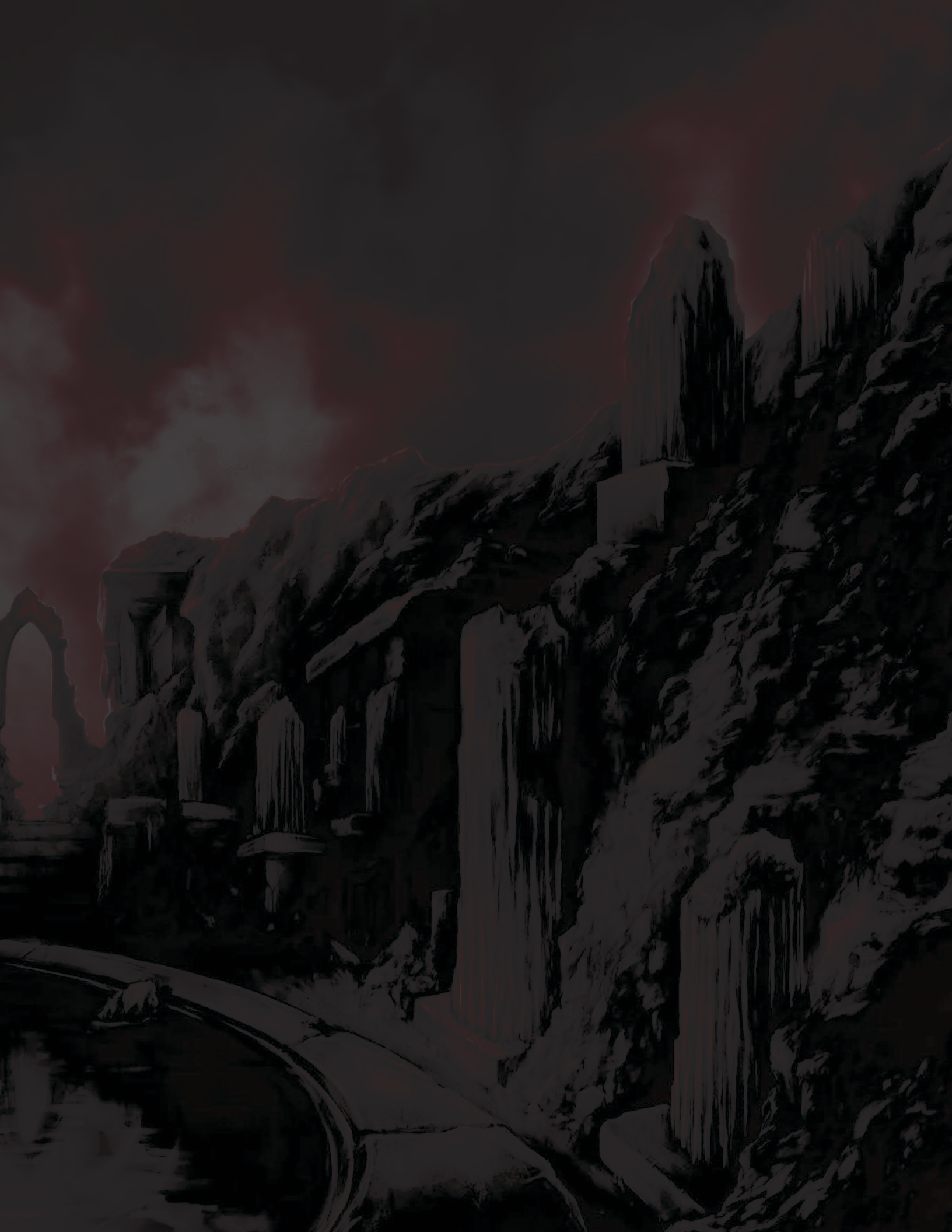


# THE FORLORN COVE



## DEEP PITCH FERN

Some plants more readily absorb the dark power of the Deep Ones. The ferns can be turned into a paste, which when applied to a weapon has fast-acting necrotic and corruptive properties.



## HISTORY OF THE FORLORN COVE

The Forlorn Cove begins where the land meets the sea, yet there are no sandy beaches here. The cold sea and bitter wind have cut into the brittle limestone over the ages, carving sharp-edged tunnels and jagged caverns into the rock itself. These caverns and tunnels reach far inland, even under some cities. In some distant reaches, tiny organisms are the only thing to bring light to the cold darkness here, and that illumination only occurs when they're disturbed. Wandering near the shore can be treacherous, as the undercut ledges crumble away easily, dropping the unwary into freezing darkness.

Legends hold that the underwater dwellers who first inhabited this place were jealous of their dry cousins, and they funneled this envy to power their magics. They conjured an Old One that ate away at the land itself, gorging itself as it tunneled towards the core of the land. The dwellers' plans went awry, however, when the Old One had filled its belly and fallen asleep, slowly digesting the land it had eaten. Now the dwellers wait and pray for it to wake one day and start its feast anew. They call it the Great Beast Who Slumbers, and they have long forgotten its origins.

Razor-sharp rocks line the submerged tunnels that pass air pockets to the rare dry cave, from broken lava tubes to cenotes that bring light into the depths. Some of these pits contain ruins of people far older than the merfolk that dwell there now, along with evidence of dark rituals performed by those without lungs or legs, those who had never seen the light of the sun.

There are no maps of the cove, and no help from the stars, and the only sounds are those of the wet slap of water on stone. Light barely pierces the murky waters, swirling in endless spirals when saltwater meets fresh. The water here smells and tastes mineral, with an unpleasantly fishy aftertaste.

The low creatures that scuttle into darkness at a stranger's approach are mindless things, their chattering noises seeming to mimic speech. Their flesh is often the only thing for explorers to eat, as many of the plants that grow in these dark waters protect themselves from harvest through a weak poison or a faint electric current that runs through their leaves and stalks.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Ebbing Temple*

In a lost cenote far in the reaches of the Forlorn Cove stands a temple to dark gods whose names even the Deep Ones fear to speak. The walls of the temple are scrawled with a jagged runic text, the remnants of the history of the Deep Ones and how they arrived on this plane. Inside this temple is an altar made of flowing bile that never stills nor runs dry. And on this altar is an amulet that crackles with eldritch energy. Its wearer can command Deep Ones and their minions for a short amount of time, but at the cost of their own humanity. Each order given picks away at their appearance, and their soul, and no-one can don the amulet more than once, less they become fused with the soul of a long-dead Deep One, whispering of ways to awaken the Great Beast Who Slumbers.

### *The Murky Grotto*

Clíodhna has a hidden lair in the Forlorn Cove, a large cave smoothed and dried by the earl's magic, with fresh air filtering in from an artificial cenote. Within the cave is a deep pool, filled with several mermaids and mermen, all captives of the earl. The Earl of Aderyn has been testing various spells on them to investigate how her magics interact

with aquatic creatures. It hasn't been pleasant for the twisted creatures, many of whom can no longer breathe water or swim. Crystalline bones litter the bottom of the cenote from those experiments that weren't as successful.

### *Sailor's Folly*

Thousands of stories are told of Sailor's Folly, just beyond the Forlorn Cove proper. These stories are passed from one sailor to the next, rumors, fears, warnings. Never go to Sailor's Folly, they say, for there you shall die. Sailor's Folly is a veritable graveyard of ships, both still drifting on the surface of the sea, and long sunk beneath it. A haunting dirge welcomes visitors to the Folly, calling them deeper into the dark waters. Once a boat or ship enters the water, one of the merfolk climbs on board. She welcomes the sailors into the water with soft songs and a hungry gaze. She begs the sailors to tell her of the lands of dirt, to instruct her in the ways of land and flesh. Then, when she tires of the sailor's pitiful attempts at conversation, she consumes them – swallowing them whole.

## CHARACTERS OF THE FORLORN COVE

### *The Earl of Adeyrn*

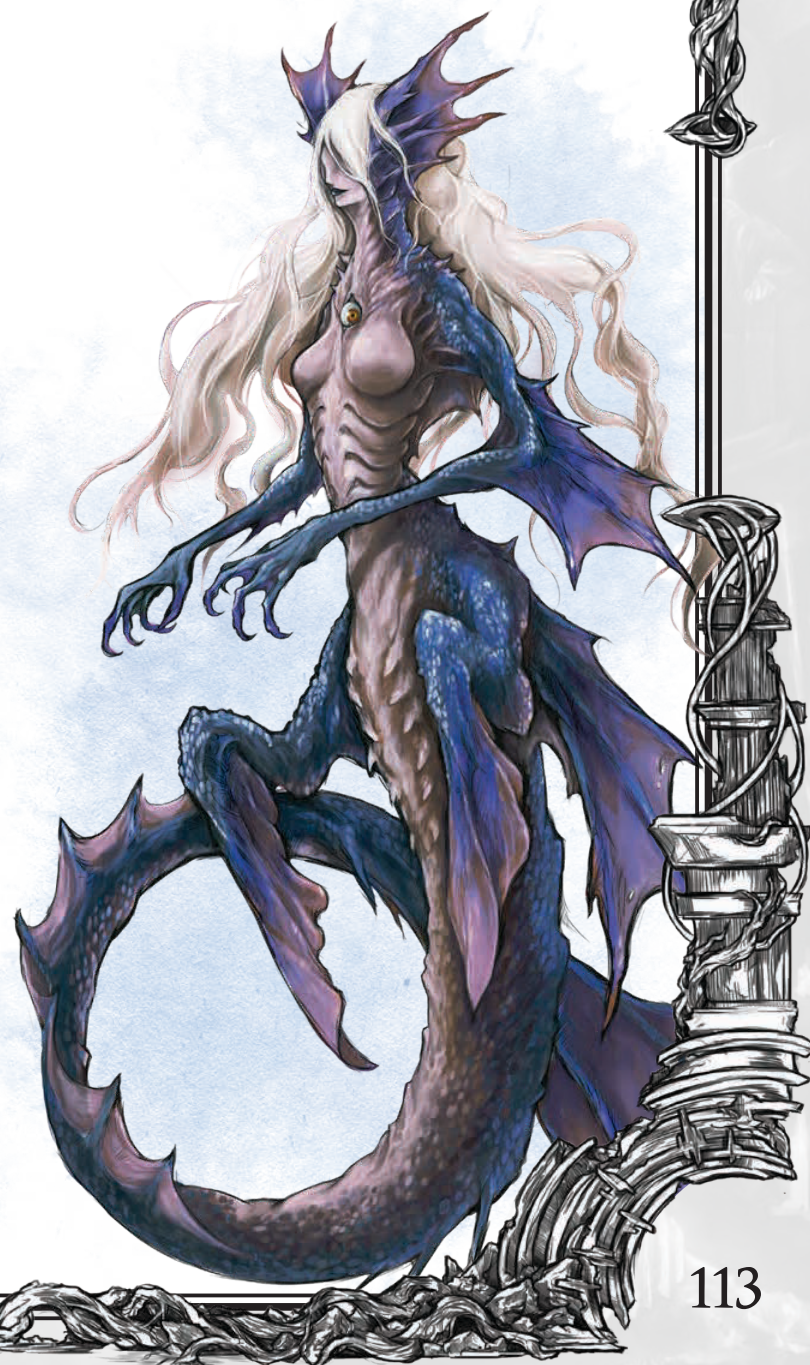
Before her "official" arrival in Yúla, Cliodhna spent significant time in the Forlorn Cove, both improving her magic and looking for new sources of arcane power she knew to be there. She had dealings with the Deep Ones, their thralls and the merfolk while she spent time here. One particular type of magic she has recently begun experimenting with is that which she can use to open portals. Once she's successful in the use of this magic, she intends to open a gateway back to Adeyrn, in order to take revenge on her homeland. At present, however, the portals she has established are imperfect and temporary, like jagged stains on the fabric of reality, more than anything useful.

Unbeknownst to the earl, she has begun to disturb the Great Beast Who Slumbers, the Old One who ate into the core of the world. This Great Beast will be less than pleased to see how the earl has treated the descendants of those who summoned it, whom it considers distant cousins. The Great Beast Who Slumbers will be further displeased when it realizes that the earl has been unwittingly tapping into its eldritch nature in order to fuel her experiments.

The earl knows only that she feels more powerful and capable when in residence in the Forlorn Cove. She believes it to be due to being away from the court and the machinations there and her ability to focus purely on research.

### *Merfolk*

These creatures were once part of a grand civilization beneath the waves of the seas that was swallowed by a submarine earthquake. The remnants fled to the Forlorn Cove, and infighting amongst their own kind destroyed any attempts to re-establish their former greatness. Now, only a handful of immortal, solitary merfolk remain, plotting against each other and indulging in their taste for the flesh of the surface dwellers to while away the time.



Many years after the decline of their civilization, mermaids and mermen are now solitary by nature. The few who remain have their established feeding grounds, and defend them viciously. Occasionally, some feel the urge to find a mate, but their bickering and pettiness means they are often unable to successfully court one of the opposite sex.

Theirs is a long, tedious existence, broken only by occasional bouts of violence and feeding. Deep down, there are still remnants of their long lost culture. They love poetry and song, puzzles and stories. They have been known to spare their prey in exchange for riddles, ballads and legends of old.

Merfolk possess alluring voices, especially when they sing, and will first try to charm any they encounter into spending time with them. When hungry or threatened, merfolk will unhinge their jaw in order to bite with serrated rows of teeth, as well as fan out their razor-edged fins and flare their sharp claws. If mated, a pair of merfolk will work together against enemies, although they will frequently argue over who eats first.

### *The Brachyura*

They have always lived here, where the earth meets water. Over the years their bodies have mutated back and forth, resulting in a myriad of loosely-related creatures now scattered around the Forlorn Cove. The low ones, who lack language and are little better than animals, avoid their bigger brethren, who wouldn't hesitate to make them a snack. The larger, more humanoid crabs, those who click and sign their own language, spare no thought for the smaller ones while moving slowly about their business, lost in thought. Their discourse revolves around black magic and the nature of the universe, and they dislike having their train of thought interrupted.

The small crabs worry only for their basic needs, and murmur to each other of the best places to find small fish, the coolest currents of water, or the richest mud for spawning. The larger crabs spend their time in contemplation of esoteric theory. They incise their work into their shells, and will sometimes form circles in order to read each other or to transcribe new rituals onto hard-to-reach areas. They do not



*The Brachyura*

believe that any save the Deep Ones can add to their knowledge, and trade food and tools with them in return for blasphemous morsels of knowledge.

If provoked, smaller crabs will summon others of their kind with an inaudible whistle. As a horde, the smaller crabs can strip a full grown man down to a clean skeleton in mere minutes. The larger crabs turn first to their magic, employing the most depraved spells with cold precision and deadly logic. If pressed, they will use weapons and even their claws, but this is a last resort.

### *The Deep Ones*

The Deep Ones claim to have come from the void, the blackness before the stars. They say the darkness in the Forlorn Cove is comforting, and reminds them of their origins. Their bodies have adapted to the water easily, and they swim in the black depths as if born to it. Although Deep Ones have both nostrils and gills, internal examination reveals no lungs nor any other known method of respiration. It is also unclear what they eat, although underneath their facial tentacles their sharp teeth suggest that it is a meat-based diet.

Their motivations are strange, but most react strongly at the offer of occult knowledge or previously unearthed secrets, especially those of a personal nature. They disdain performing most day-to-day activities for themselves, and rely on their thralls to bathe, dress, and groom them, as well as clean their quarters and decorate their common areas. Many Deep Ones perform some sort of craft, such as stone-carving or designing elaborate ritual costumes, and they pride themselves on these crafts, bickering over who is the best at each activity.

The Deep Ones are very practical in terms of relationships, seeming to cast off those they perceive as weak, and cosy up to the strongest. They cull their young, leaving only the most potent, and raise the rest as a communal activity. Deep Ones shun others that hold unpopular opinions, exhibit a lack of control, or otherwise present themselves as socially vulnerable.

They consider most enemies beneath their magic, and at first wield weapons and armor that seem to coalesce from the shadowy water around them. If truly threatened, they will attack with dark magics aimed to the most



vulnerable of those around them. If made to flee, Deep Ones will often hobble one of their own to increase their chances of getting away.

### *Thralls of the Deep Ones*

They believe the Deep Ones brought them to the earth from the stars, but the thralls' short-term memories are poor, based mainly on stories repeated in tandem as they go about their daily tasks. The thralls look upon the Deep Ones as a mixture of volatile gods and delicate fools. Thralls consider themselves the truly pragmatic bedrock of Deep One culture, but lack the long-term calculation to leverage this in their favor. They are rarely used for complicated tasks, as thralls will frequently forget part of all of the instructions if said errand takes too long.

Thralls seem to feel their mission is to care for Deep Ones, mainly as the thralls are better at it. They take a great deal of pride in their work, and are not subtle in their belief





## OPPORTUNITIES

### *The Order of the Jade Eye*

Once the Forlorn Cove was home to an order of sea-goddess worshipping priests who hunted the Brachyura for sustenance and sacrifice.

Now their descendants continue what few of their traditions remain, and sometimes their scavenged exoskeletal armor and claw-tipped spears make it difficult to separate hunter from prey. They do not know the value of the gold-plated liturgical objects they decorate their homes with, but they will defend them viciously.

### *The Kind One*

The Great Beast Who Slumbers has attendants, even as it sleeps. While most of these servants are thralls, the Deep One in charge is called the Kind One.

This creature is a sort of entrepreneur amongst its kind and for a hefty sacrifice, the Kind One will allow others access to a portion of the Great Beast Who Slumbers. The slime of the slumbering beast it exudes and shed scales fetch high prices in certain covert markets in Ember, and even amongst the Deep Ones themselves. Collecting these components does risk rousing the beast, however, and only the sacrifice of one pure of heart can lull the beast back to sleep before it will try to burrow its way to the surface to continue its feast of the land.

### *Dawn of the Summer King*

Long before Brennin was born, one of his ancestors captained a great ship known as *Dawn of the Summer King*. The ship was the star of Ember's fleet, a giant golden glory for all to behold. Now, *Dawn of the Summer King* lays at the heart of Sailor's Folly, covered in an inky black algae. Untold riches rest in the hull of this ship, but they are troublesome and potentially deadly to get to—even by the merfolk who often make a dangerous game of trying to enter the ship. A giant two-headed shark slumbers within the bowels of the ship. The creature has grown so large it barely fits in the hull and spends most of its time sleeping, guarding its treasure, and waiting for its next meal to swim inside the ship.

that the Deep Ones would starve if left to their own devices. They do not voice this to the Deep Ones, but merely mutter it beneath their breath. They will bully and shove a Deep One into accepting their ministrations when necessary. Thralls ignore the feuds that populate the Deep Ones' days, but mourn deeply if one is killed before finding another Deep One to care for.

They form family groups around the Deep One they assign themselves to, splintering and reforming groups as needed to even out the work and accommodate the preference of the thralls involved. They appear to love games deeply, and can display a keen wit when strategizing, only to lapse back into cheerful vapidness a moment later. While they are fairly obedient, thralls will refuse to kill their own or Deep Ones, and will work in concert without visible or audible signals against an enemy.

# LOCATIONS IN THE FORLORN COVE

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## TEMPLE OF THE OLD ONES

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### HISTORY

Long before the cycle of summer and winter began there were ancient, timeless creatures who existed in the space between worlds. These creatures were neither good nor bad, they simply hungered. Having fed for aeons in their original birthplace, eventually their food sources dried up, and so they began to consume one another. But during this time one of the smallest and most feeble had a moment of clarity amongst its ravaging hunger and created a race of creatures in its own likeness, to serve as fodder for the appetites of the other Old Ones. Eventually, some of these Deep Ones escaped the endless feeding cycle, slipping through the dark spaces of the universe and made their way to the lands of Ember.

In those initial days arriving on a new world, they constructed a massive temple, rising from the waters, dedicated to their godly creator. In time, their culture grew and flourished, and in their eldritch rituals and great envy of the land-dwellers, they summoned an Old One to feed on them.

With the Cycle halted, many Deep Ones believe the time of the Old Ones has returned. It's only a matter of time before the Great Beast rises from its resting place and consumes the fat of the land. And so they worship in the far reaches of the Forlorn Cove at the Temple of the Old Ones. Some of the Deep Ones have even begun to consider that if they cannot wake the Great Beast Who Slumbers, then perhaps they should repeat their ancient rituals and summon other Old Ones against those who live on dry-land.

Built into a massive sea stack, hundreds of the obsidian stone spires of the temple jut towards an ever dark cloudy sky above. Stone tentacles weave and interlock with one another, forming



the face of the temple, pillars, doorways, halls, and more. Water from above falls over the dark stone carvings, giving them an ethereal un-life as if each glistening appendage could come alive at any moment. There are no windows set into this foreboding temple, only thousands of runic inscriptions carved into its face.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

#### *The Great Hall*

The Great Hall is located at the very back of the temple, where its winding hallways plunge downwards and converge at one central point. The Great Hall was once where untold dark services were conducted in the name of the Old Ones and now it lays in wait for their return. While the thralls of the Deep Ones care for most of the rooms in this temple, the Great Hall is guarded over by an ancient Deep One, the Gray Guardian, who claims to know all the stories of the Old Ones stretching back into infinity. His purple eyes are clouded with age, his gait halted, his voice hoarse, but make no mistake the Gray Guardian's magical abilities are as sharp as ever. Upon the central altar within the hall is an effigy of an Old One, created through scavenged bones and shells, stuck together with secretions from the Deep Ones and some of their dry-land victims.



### *Shrine of the Smallest One*

This shrine is located in a far eastern wing of the temple. When entering the cuboid room, it's impossible to escape the giant opal eye set into the rear wall. Wreathed in candles, held up by serpentine sconces, with offerings laid beneath its bottom lid, the eye takes up nearly the entire wall and peers unblinkingly into the room. Any who look directly into the eye feel a withering sense of dread in the pit of their stomach as their blood runs cold and fear pricks goosebumps onto their skin. Staring too long into the eye places a deep hunger within a person. This starts with an insatiable need to drink, then consume vegetable matter and cooked meats, then raw flesh. The hunger is nigh impossible to stave off and the only creature known to be able to cure it is the Gray Guardian and he never does so without a price.

### *The Underquarters*

The thralls of the Deep Ones who live in the hallways of the temple have an easy life; they keep the halls tidy and drive off anyone who wishes to do the temple, or their masters, harm. The thralls are never allowed to leave the halls and whoever is born within the temple dies there as well. It is a boring life and boredom breeds cruelty. Within their quarters, thralls take part in dark rituals and scarification to keep their minds active, actions they hide from their masters. When they leave their quarters, when all their monotony is unburdened, the thralls are able to conduct themselves in a normal manner and care for the temple.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *The Gray Guardian*

The Gray Guardian is frequently found within the Great Hall he is meant to guard, but leaves from time to time to keep the thralls under control. He has the temperament of a wizened elder, but his eyes spark with malevolence when he speaks of magic. Under the guise of forgetfulness and long-winding stories about forgotten gods, he schemes to awaken the Old Ones, to call them forth from their dark resting place and offer up the world of landwalkers as sacrifice.

### *The Unforgotten*

There is a thrall who has been cast out by its own kind; it speaks of things no thrall should know; it remembers things no thrall should remember. Some aberration of its birth has given this thrall a greater memory than the rest of its brethren. The Unforgotten knows the hidden corners and passages of the Temple of the Old Ones and is able to live entirely without serving its masters, should it wish. There are no others in the temple quite like the Unforgotten, and so this being lives in loneliness, and with a hatred, at the subjugation of its brethren, and the lazy Deep One masters.

### *The Earl of Aderyn*

The Earl of Aderyn visited the Temple of the Old Ones once or twice many years ago. She visited each shrine dedicated to a long forgotten god, trying to glean any magical knowledge she could from them. When the earl returned to dry-land she was never the same. Only the Gray Guardian knows what happened to her so many years ago and at present he refuses to speak of it, saying only, "What is spoken between a person and the depths of darkness is sacred. It is for no others to hear."

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *The Maddening Spiral*

Visiting the Temple of the Old Ones is dangerous and by even spending a short time within its halls people are in danger of coming too close to the psyche of an Old One. If a person is extremely strong-willed, they suffer from nightmares days after visiting the temple. They dream of a mind they are unable to truly comprehend, so alien that it defies this plane, of any plane, or any place. The only thing to stop these dreams is distance from the temple, and time.

### *Revolt*

The loyalty of the thralls is not unwavering; merely, they have never been presented with any viable alternatives to serving their dark masters. In the back of their alien minds they despise the Deep Ones, and all it might take for them to consider alternatives to their existence is one spark of freedom. If the concept of a revolt is given over to the Unforgotten, it would quickly latch onto the idea, and attempt to spread it to any of the thralls who might listen.

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# THE BLACK LAGOON

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## HISTORY

Off the southern edge of the Forlorn Cove is the Black Lagoon, separated by a lengthy reef of twisted, jagged rocks and coral. The waters of the lagoon are never clear, nor do they ever reflect the blue skies above. Instead, perhaps some property of the murky sands underneath gives it the characteristic black waters.

It is in and around these waters that the traditional breeding grounds of the Brachyura can be found. Travelers here should watch their step on the lagoon's surrounding stony sands, for they may never know when they are about to step onto one of the crab folk, or their eggs. Debris and even lost cargo from broken ships often washes ashore here, some from the shipwrecks of Sailor's Folly, some from the great seas and from far off lands.

When the Earl of Aderyn came to the Forlorn Cove, she explored the halls of the Temple of the Old Ones and exited a changed woman. Something inside her had become unlocked, but she experienced continued nightmares that she was not able to make sense of, or understand. While she found her powers had grown, she was smart enough to know that if she ever returned to the temple it would surely consume her, and instead she found the Black Lagoon. Standing next to its dark waters she was able to taste the fevered dreams she experienced so many years ago. Whatever is beneath the surface of its black waters comforts the earl and allows her to focus.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *Ancient Scratchings*

Under a giant mangrove tree is a ring of boulders largely forgotten by the creatures of Ember. Written upon the boulders are the stories of the Brachyura from before the Cycle halted and darkness crept into the lagoon. There are many stories carved into the boulders, but only one of which is most important: the Brachyura were once a great and noble race. Charged with keeping magic alive through

the ages, each new crab was born into the Cycle with a magical spell carved into its shell. It was each creature's duty to protect their spell, to keep it safe and make sure it passed successfully into the next age. When the Cycle halted, the crab folk forgot their sacred duty and the majesty that once graced their beautiful shells started to fade. They discarded their soft shells for more durable ones or allowed barnacles to grow over the magical words inscribed upon them.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *Llinos*

Llinos is a Deep One who lives on the shore of the Black Lagoon. The earl "adopted" him many years ago when on a whim she wanted to see if she could turn a Deep One away from his own people and make it devoted to her. It took time, but the earl was able to bend him to her will. Now, she uses Llinos as a spy, to tell her the comings and goings of the Deep Ones and to keep her lagoon free from anyone who dare disturb its dark peacefulness. Llinos appears much like any Deep One, except he wears a crab shell on his back, a gift from the Brachyura who allow Llinos to pass amongst them.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Gaze into the Abyss*

The lagoon's waters are cold, placid, and as dark as the night sky. No matter what time of day it is or the weather, they reflect perfect dark images of their surroundings. Strangely, the reflections of any living creature in the lagoon refuse to mimic a person's actions at all, but instead they act of their own accord. If next to the reflection of another being, both will fight within the waters until only one remains. And if any blood hits the water, the lagoon unlocks the mirror realm the reflection is trapped in and the reflection steps into the real world where it will do anything to take the place of the "real" copy of itself.





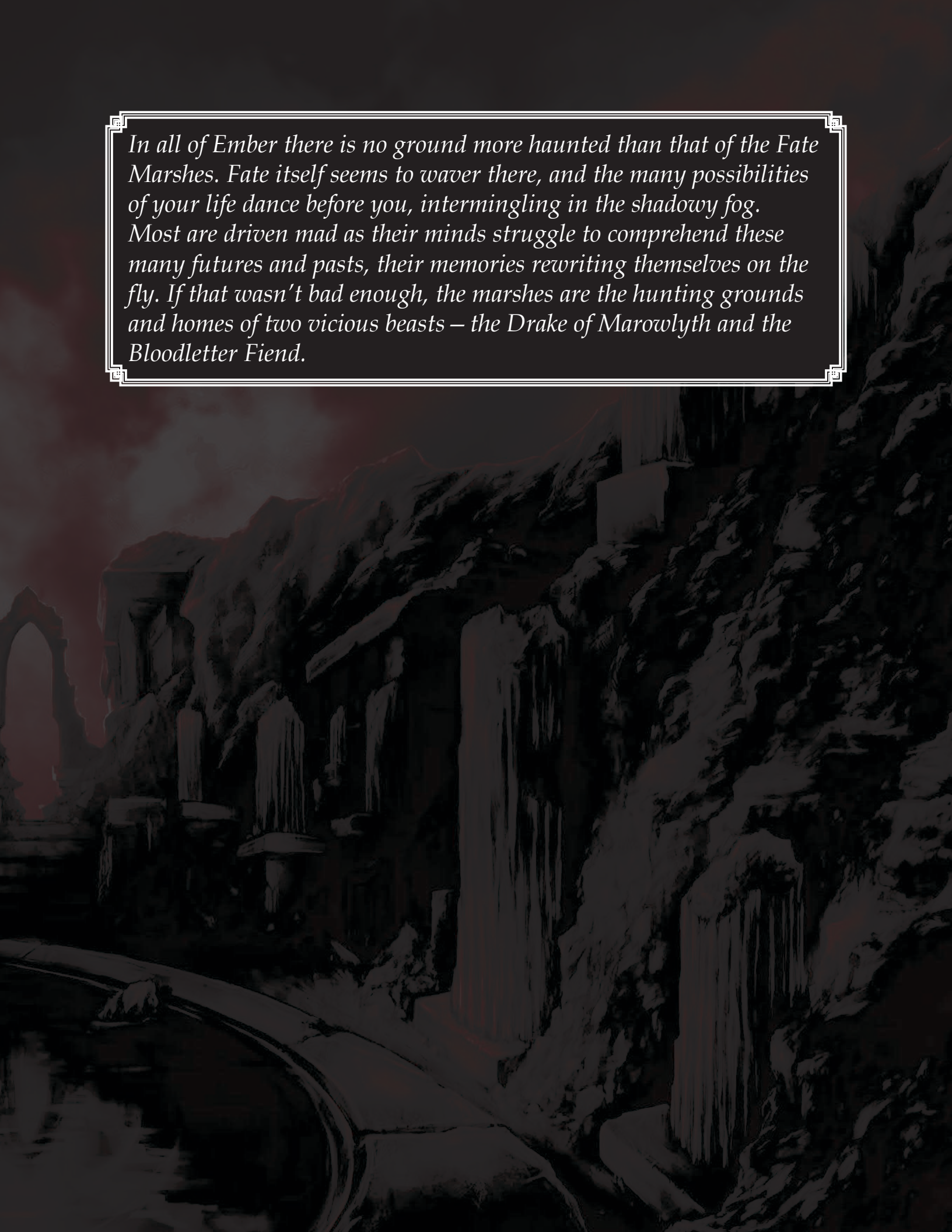
# THE FATE MARSHES



## **BLOODFEH SPORE**

Native to the Fate Marshes, this fungus can grow to the size of a large watermelon. When disturbed, the spores violently explode, and use the poor unfortunate as food for future growth.

*In all of Ember there is no ground more haunted than that of the Fate Marshes. Fate itself seems to waver there, and the many possibilities of your life dance before you, intermingling in the shadowy fog. Most are driven mad as their minds struggle to comprehend these many futures and pasts, their memories rewriting themselves on the fly. If that wasn't bad enough, the marshes are the hunting grounds and homes of two vicious beasts – the Drake of Marowlyth and the Bloodletter Fiend.*





## HISTORY OF THE FATE MARSHES

In the early history of Ember, there stood a great kingdom where the Fate Marshes now lie. It was one of the last to bend the knee to the then King of Ember, and its stalwart castles, protected by a weave of rivers that criss-crossed through the region, were difficult to siege. Their resistance angered the king, and so he gathered up his greatest witches and tasked them with destroying this upstart kingdom, which they did by overflowing the kingdom's rivers and causing a great flood. Tens of thousands died in their homes and behind castle walls as the waters rose. The kingdom's leaders pleaded with the Liyume King to stop, and then for assistance with the damage done to their homes. But the king made them pay for their arrogance.

Most of the area is still under water, and the land has become a swampy marsh. Remnants of the old civilization can be found reaching out from the muddy depths: the top of a bell tower or the steeple of a fallen church—many secrets lie hidden beneath the mud. The instability of the region regularly unearths new artifacts while making it difficult to explore and build anew.

Specters of the future and the past haunt the Fate Marshes. Possibilities that could have been, and those that could still be. Within the misty marsh air, these ghostly figures can be glimpsed albeit briefly, and the viewer may have difficulty working out what portents, or never-been histories they have seen. The fate witches who inhabit the marshes have some skill deciphering these visions, if one can find them.

There is but one established settlement that exists in the Fate Marshes: a village called Ark, founded by a few refugees attempting to flee the Endless Summer's curse. They built makeshift cabins where they could on what little dry, stable land remained in the middle of the marsh. Over time, the village was forced to expand and large wooden platforms were built atop the muddy ground, with poles buried deep beneath the surface for added stability.

As safe as these platforms may seem, they still collapse often, as the ground shifts and muddy currents displace the anchors. Living in the marsh is



not easy, but the villagers prefer the swamp to living in the kingdom proper, where the curse has its strongest foothold.

Beyond Ark lies the Sunken Castle, once the center of the buried kingdom. Little remains of the castle that hasn't been engulfed by the mud, but intrepid explorers have found a way into the castle through some of its exposed towers. The Drake of Marowlyth is said to live in an extensive cave system below the marshes, a honeycomb of caverns and sunken buildings that houses many relics of the old kingdom. The drake isn't the only threat that exists in these caverns, as the Bloodletter Fiend has been spotted near the entrances to the caves below, and occasionally a poor blood-drained soul has been dragged up from the marsh, thought to be a victim of the fiend.

After creating the king's phylactery and inadvertently causing the Endless Summer, Fatesealer Witch Rhonwen fled to the Fate Marshes to find a way to undo the damage to Ember. Rhonwen worked with Satyr Mwars, another witch, whose powers might have worked in concert with her own and Rhonwen hoped that their close proximity to each other would stabilize fate, but the future is as erratic as ever. Their alliance was short-lived and broke down as their paranoia towards one another grew and the two of them descended into a sour feud.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *Camp Yarwood*

There is an old, haggard hunter with a burning hatred of the Drake of Marowlyth and who searches the Fate Marshes for evidence the beast has returned after years absent. Ren Yarwood was one of the first hunters appointed by King Brennin to bring the beast down, and even as others on this hunt were killed, or left once the Endless Summer came, Ren would not abandon his prey. Even as the drake vanished into the caverns under the Fate Marshes, Ren knew the beast would emerge again and take up its own hunt. Ren has gathered about him a motley assortment of mortals and fae – whom he has been imparting his skills in hunting and gathering – and with them, he intends to find the beast that cost him two brothers and a sister. His camp is years established now, and has grown as others have joined his cause, or sought solace from the horrors lurking in other parts of Ember. Day-to-day, the hunters track wildlife in the marshes and trade their meat and fur to nearby camps and to the village of Ark.

## CHARACTERS OF THE FATE MARSHES

### *Rhonwen*

Rhonwen presently lives a nomadic lifestyle within the Fate Marshes, peddling her witchcraft to those who can provide for her the necessities of life – such as food, firewood, or cloth to repair her clothes or bags. While her travels rarely bring her in contact with the village of Ark, there are other, small settlements and camps throughout the marshes, and the denizens of these speak of Rhonwen in hushed whispers, a ghost story used to frighten children.

There are some who have begun to prey upon Rhonwen as she roams the swamps, getting the Fate-sealer to use her magic to give them boons they selfishly use to help themselves, or to sell at a tidy profit; but she soon forgets she has done these favors and so they make their requests to her once again. If she were to be made to realize this, she would be grateful.



### *Fate Witch Satyr Mwars*

The witches of Ember were once a loose association of practitioners who reached the zenith of their power and renown in the days before the kingdom that opposed the Summer King was sunk below the marsh. Their decline began sometime after those events, and who can say exactly why this came about – perhaps it was some revenge enacted by the survivors of that kingdom, or perhaps it was the guilt such devastation had wrought that diminished the witches. There are few witches remaining in Ember now and they are often solitary beings, and something about the Fate Marshes frequently draws them there than any other location within Ember.

The Fate Witch Satyr Mwars is one of the only other witches in Ember who has been able to match Rhonwen in her ability to manipulate the fates of others. Over the years, Rhonwen and Mwars shared several masters and mistresses in learning their trade, and their relationship was always finicky and somewhat competitive during those times. While Rhonwen surrounded herself with people and adoration, Mwars lived

## *The Drake of Marowlyth*



deep in the Fate Marshes, intent on developing her power and living her life without the interruption of others. In particular, she spent years uncovering the remnants of other witches who disappeared from public notoriety and into the Fate Marshes for reasons she has yet to determine.

After the Endless Summer fell on the land, Satyr Mwaris reluctantly worked with Rhonwen to fix the fabric of the Realm of Ember, but their shared history got the better of them and the two fell out. With Rhonwen now a specter of her former self, Mwaris feels a weight of responsibility upon her shoulders, that perhaps she might still have the power to help Ember. To this effect, she has begun to contact others within the Fate Marshes, and emerge from her hermit isolation. Mwaris makes no secret of her whereabouts, and openly trades and visits with the people of Ark. Many of the villagers have started to grow cold and suspicious of outsiders, so her dealings with those few who do need her witchcraft are kept surreptitious. She is welcoming to guests, though her hovel is small

and in constant danger of sinking into the mud. Sometimes she spends her nights searching for Rhonwen, hoping to bring her old compatriot back into the fold, but always returns to her hovel by morning.

Satyr sees herself as she once looked, and refuses to acknowledge the effect that the curse has had on her. The Endless Summer has changed Satyr, as it has all of Ember. With every death she experiences in the marshes, and there have been many, she comes back changed and mutated by the summer curse.

### *The Drake of Marowlyth*

The Drake of Marowlyth is neither dragon nor lizard, but an amalgamation of the two, created by a wizard who desired to create what she believed to be the perfect creature, and one she could control utterly. The drake was the last of many attempts to create this being – the wizard could not have predicted how powerful her creation would be, and the Drake of Marowlyth killed its creator shortly upon creation. After this, the drake lived up to the original intention of its creation; it had become the perfect

predator, and so began hunting any living creature it could find in Ember, soon finding a particular appetite for humans.

King Brennin was not keen to the idea of this monster running freely through his kingdom. If the monster couldn't be killed, then he decided it would be trapped instead. The king hired the greatest hunters across the lands, each a legend in their own right, to bring down the beast. For years this team hunted the drake, and they lost many men and women in pursuit of the beast.

Finally, the hunters cornered the beast in the forests of the Fate Marsh. The beast had nowhere to go, and the muddy ground hindered the drake's movements. This appeared to be the moment of capture, and the hunters were certain the beast was theirs. Then, suddenly, the Drake of Marowlyth vanished. The beast escaped through a small chasm in the ground, fleeing to the labyrinthine cavern system that existed beneath the surface. The hunters tried to pursue the drake, but there was no hope in navigating the endless maze.

Eventually, the hunters abandoned their quest, and left the drake alone to form a new nest in the caverns. Shortly after, the Endless Summer set in, and the drake was all but forgotten as new issues in Ember had to be dealt with. The drake initially nursed injuries the hunters had caused but then it returned to the surface, first in small forays and then in longer hunts. At this point in time, it has become more selective in its prey; for now, it feeds upon livestock and other animals in the marsh, but soon, it may return to its favored prey.

The drake has claimed the caverns beneath the Fate Marshes as its home, and will defend them aggressively. Occasionally, the beast finds itself beset by the undead that share its caverns, but the drake finds them to be of little threat. Unfortunately, the drake cannot feed on these decaying bones, and so it hunts the marsh and surrounding forests in search of larger game. Even with some of their livestock having mysteriously vanished in the night, the people of Ark are yet to realize the beast has returned to Ember.

## *The Bloodletter Fiend*

The first of his kind, and now the last, the Bloodletter Fiend is an ancient, murderous beast that drains its victims of blood. The fiend's history goes beyond the beginnings of Ember, all the way to the founding of the Order of Stargazers.

In the early days of the Stargazers, there were three elders, those who had founded the order and brought others into the fold to pass on the teachings of Saint Marowlyth. The First Elder aspired to construct Abbey Marowlyth and the Lunar Temple, both of which are said to be the first structures built on the land that would one day become Ember. The Second Elder searched far and wide across the land to rally and inspire new followers, bringing them back to the newly constructed abbey. The Third Elder was responsible for recording the knowledge and doctrine of the Stargazers. But this elder took sole responsibility in this role, and did not trust anyone else to do the good work. This elder was left for far too long with the scrolls, books and inscriptions, and in exploring these works, the Third Elder grew in hunger for even more knowledge. And so, the elder explored new avenues of research, and ritual, pushing the boundaries of numerology and astrology into new obscene areas.

The first two elders were too busy with other aspects of the Order of the Stargazers to at first notice their brethren's obsessions. But when the Third Elder drew others into the works, and the first rituals were successful, they could not help but notice the damage caused to the fabric of reality within the abbey grounds. They cornered their corrupted brethren and demanded the Third Elder stop at once. But from the great laughter the Third Elder gave in response, they knew the elder was lost to them.

Since they knew only kindness, the First and Second Elder could neither harm nor kill their brethren, only cast out the Third Elder from the order. They gave the elder supplies for a month, and forced them from the abbey. In defiance of the other brethren, the Third Elder attempted use their fledgling power to strike the other elders down, but the First and Second Elders called upon Marowlyth to reflect the magic back upon its caster. And thus, the Third Elder suffered under a curse brought upon by their own magic.



As he drifted across the land, his skin became taut and leathery. His hunger grew, not this time for knowledge, but for blood. In time, the Third Elder's body succumbed to the curse completely and he became the Bloodletter Fiend. In this form, the beast roamed from settlement to settlement, preying on any who should cross paths, and leaving before he was found. In rare moments, the elder would find lucidity again, trapped in the body of a beast, and despaired over what he had become, but these moments were far and few between.

The Bloodletter Fiend eventually found that he could pass on his curse to others, and that soon a whole race of blood-hungry fiends emerged. Just as the fiends began to spread like a plague, reaching every corner of the land, the Stargazer elders woke up to the horror they had caused. They knew they had been responsible

for the creation of the beasts inadvertently in their kindness. The Stargazers set up an order of hunters to slay the fiends. And while no Stargazer themselves would raise a weapon against the beasts, they could certainly use their predictive powers to track and corner the creatures. And so this bloody war was waged for nearly two decades, as the fiends were hunted, as they spread their curse even further, but eventually the numbers of the fiends diminished. Doggedly determined, the monster hunters tracked down every last beast, but one. The first of his kind, and the last, had created a lair under the earth, a sanctuary for itself. As the rest of his kind were slain, he retrieved their bodies, one by one and brought them to his underground lair. There, he entombed them, hoping to one day to find a way to restore them.

To prevent the last hunters from finding

*The Bloodletter Fiend*





him, the Bloodletter Fiend entered a great sleep that even the flooding of the Fate Marshes did not wake him from. Many centuries later, perhaps it was the fall of the Stargazer order as a result of the Endless Summer that brought him out of his sleep, more hungry than ever before.

The Bloodletter Fiend is both physically strong and incredibly agile and its paws are adorned with sharp claws that can cut through steel. It has enhanced senses, which include a form of echolocation, much like a bat. The beast can pass on its curse, if at the point of death, those mortally injured by the beast inadvertently come into contact with the fiend's blood. The fiend only hunts at night, which suggests a weakness to sunlight, and with the knowledge of the monster hunters long lost, this could be the secret to defeating the creature.

Upon having awoken, the Bloodletter Fiend has found the village of Ark to be its largest and closest source of food. But it must step carefully in its thirst, lest it make itself too obvious a target once more.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *Restoring Fate*

As the Endless Summer drives Fate-sealer Witch Rhonwen further into madness, the very bedrock of fate and the fabric of Ember continues to be shaken. Soon, the mad visions that affect those who enter the marshes will spread across all of Ember, unless the Endless

Summer can be ended. It's possible that Rhonwen knows how to destroy the phylactery that houses King Brennín's soul and reverse the Endless Summer but, if she does know, she hasn't tried to end it herself. Locating the witch in the Fate Marshes is the first task, and perhaps the most difficult, as she moves around erratically and reveals her location to no-one.

### *The Lost Sword of Aerilon*

Legends tell of the knight Aerilon who once lived in one of the cities that now lie buried by the marshes. Presumably, Aerilon was killed by the flood, and her body lies somewhere in the cavernous network beneath the land. If the legend can be believed, her sword, which was blessed by the gods and enchanted to kill undead in a single blow, remains at her side, waiting to be discovered.

### *The Machinations of Faeries*

The faeries of Ember have always populated its many woods, particularly the Kingswood and the Vitreous Wood, though for some reason, they have always been hesitant to reside in any of the small clustered woods of the Fate Marshes. Escaping from other parts of Ember, handfuls of fae have started to make their homes in the marshes. But they have grown restless with their new surroundings, and have begun manipulating the affairs of mortals, simply because they are bored. Any capable adventurers who enter the marsh might make fine pawns for faery schemes.



# LOCATIONS IN THE FATE MARSHES

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## THE VILLAGE OF ARK

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### HISTORY

Pagran Brune was the first to conceive the plan to escape into the Fate Marshes. He believed the distance from the heart of the realm might lessen the curse plaguing it. He was right, at least initially. Pagran and his followers carved out a piece of land for Ark, clearing stable ground where the wooden, hatch-roofed buildings wouldn't sink into the mud. Originally, the village of Ark had only a few homes, a cookfire, a storehouse, and no name. But word of Ark spread, a place to escape the corruption of the Endless Summer, and eventually Ark began to grow. Wooden platforms were built atop the mud as further buildings were added: a tavern, a blacksmith, a smokehouse, whatever was needed to keep a small village operational. Most of the buildings remained standing, and only a few had to be rebuilt as the platforms sunk into the muddy currents.

In the end, Ark was not free from the Endless Summer: nowhere in Ember was. It only took longer for the corruption to sink in. Ark currently functions under the leadership of Pagran Brune, who counsels the villagers that all is still well, despite the strange specters in the marsh mists and the beasts that have begun preying on Ark and its surrounds. They listen obediently and blindly, certain that all will be made right, if only they continue to have faith in Pagran.

Pagran has more recently started turning opinion against strangers to the village. Those who live in Ark must keep Ark safe, and foreigners only pose a danger to their way of life, bringing the Endless Summer

with them. Not all the villagers have gone along with his belief, but these are far and few between, and the most outspoken quickly change their mind or are found to have "left" Ark for other pastures.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

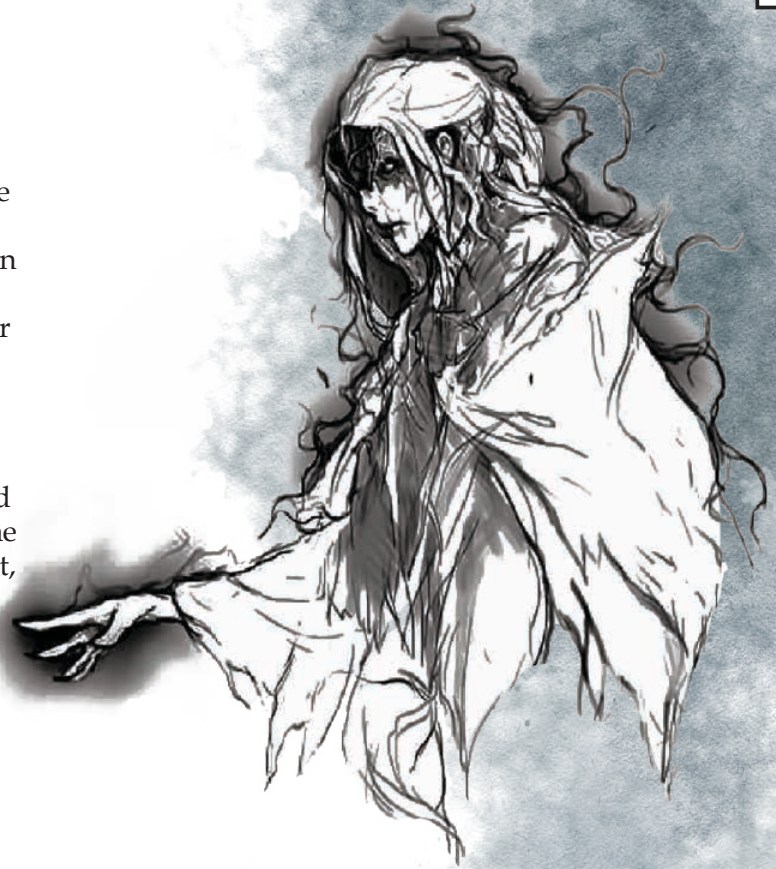
#### *The Altar of Brune*

Those who believe Brune to be their true guide have erected an altar in the center of Ark, a place where they can join together in community and make small sacrifices to help keep the ravages of summer away from their village. Eosaeus, proclaimed High Priest and close friend to Brune, leads ceremonies every night, in which prayers are made, many of which are becoming more directed to Brune himself. On certain occasions, Brune will attend these ceremonies in what are considered the most hallowed of nights. While Pagran Brune never officially declared himself a "deity" during the founding of Ark, he certainly hasn't dissuaded his followers and, with the onset of the madness creeping through the village, he is growing into the role.



## *The Sawmill*

Originally, the sawmill was built to help improve the structures of Ark. A gifted engineer from one of the logging villages of Ember had big plans for Ark and believed the bountiful trees of the Fate Marshes could be harvested and turned into sturdy construction materials. The construction of the mill was abandoned part-way through, as the engineer went mad and stalked and killed many of his fellow villagers before he was cornered by Brune and Eosaeus, and hung from the scaffolding of the mill. During the day, the saws of the mill are still operational, and used for their original purpose to help Ark keep the marsh at bay. Villagers avoid the mill at night, casting uneasy glances in its direction, and sometimes they think they hear the saws running, and a familiar, echoing maniacal laughter.



## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *Pagran Brune*

Pagran Brune is founder of Ark, who was born on the streets of Yúla, cast out of several churches in his attempts to become a priest, and after much hardship in the grimy corners of the city, eventually found work as a town crier, becoming a much-loved persona in Yúla. And when the Endless Summer came, Pagran had a vision to help people, and the renown he possessed allowed him to bring others to him quickly. Pagran Brune's natural willpower and charm has allowed him to guide survivors and refugees from the rest of Ember. But Pagran's popularity and importance within Ark has now gotten to him, and he is being consumed by his own self-importance, and the need to keep his "flock" safe.

### *Baldith the Weather Witch*

The Witches of Fate aren't the only witches living in the Fate Marshes. Baldith, a witch who has the ability to control weather, has made her home in Ark. Unlike the more well-known witches of Ember, Baldith's abilities were always determined to be lacking. Still, Pagran saw a great potential in her, and brought Baldith under his wing, and in fact, she is possibly one of the reasons Ark is still standing. She has used her weather-manipulating abilities to keep the worst of the rain away from Ark, protecting it from dangerous mudslides and

from sinking into the marsh. Baldith is not blind to Pagran's strange turn as leader in Ark, but she is uncertain how to act against him, especially when she's never felt more a part of a community in her life as she does now.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### *The Brethren of Brune*

"The Brethren," as they call themselves, are the chosen acolytes of Pagran Brune and live in secret amongst the rest of the villagers of Ark. The times they have been seen on the muddy roads of Ark, they wore plain, drab robes and polished, smooth wooden masks to hide their identities. Pagran has denounced some of their more extreme actions, such as assaulting those who speak out against Brune, and the sacrifice of livestock in their worship of Pagran as a god, but secretly, he protects them. When travelers arrive at Ark, it's the Brethren who will be keeping a close eye on them, and reporting back to Pagran Brune.



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# MAROWLYTH LAIR

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## HISTORY

The Ebon Castle was once the holdfast of the great king who held the lands that would one day become the Fate Marshes. When the old kingdom fell, the king and his knights were lodged in the castle, seeking shelter behind the tall walls. Unfortunately, the walls weren't enough to keep the flood waters at bay – only tall enough to keep the king and his men trapped inside. There they drowned, along with all of the king's family and the nobles of his court, thus ending the war with the land swiftly being claimed by the Realm of Ember. As the waters receded, the foundation of the castle crumbled and sunk into the mud. Over time, the castle was consumed entirely, and only the tops of the tallest towers remained above ground, looking to the world like stone huts sinking into the mud.

The windows of these ancient spires open up to the long twisting staircases that lead to the bulk of the castle. The mud and earth have flooded most of the castle, collapsing rooms and passages, sometimes forming others where there were none. The Realm of Ember never launched an official expedition into the castle, but many private ventures were funded before the fall, leaving tunnels and caverns hollowed out within. Those who explored the castle spoke of undead monsters that guarded the treasures there.

When the kingdom fell, it wasn't just the castle and the king's armies that were targeted. Many peaceful civilian settlements were drowned as well. One such place was Marowlyth, the large and prosperous city surrounding the Ebon Castle and whose denizens did not deserve the fate their king had delivered to them. When the flood first came, the people ran into the deep catacombs, hoping to block the entrances to stop the water from entering. Some were successful, but they eventually died of starvation or even drowned when their barricades finally buckled and broke.

The floods brought terrible mudslides and shifting rock, and the city sunk under the world.

New layers of mud and rock began to form over the castle and the city, and the marshes continued to grow atop these foundations. The fallen city formed an uneven, unnatural cave system and the ruins of Marowlyth can still be accessed from the surface, through a series of awkwardly-shaped tunnels that lead topside. This cold, dark cavern system attracted the unholy drake, who decided to nest in the ruins. Eventually, this drake became synonymous with the city where it rested: the Drake of Marowlyth.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

### *The Ebon Throne*

The king died upon his throne, surrounded by his most loyal knights, goblets still in their hands. These men had died a quick death, feasting as the water rushed into the room and drowned them all. The waters in the throne room have receded, leaving the room musty and dank, the perfect breeding ground for the lichen that cling to the walls, having claimed the throne room as their own. The Buried King remained dead and forgotten under the world for a long, long time, but inevitably returned in a state of unlife as the summer curse seeped into the Fate Marshes.



### *The Dragon Dens*

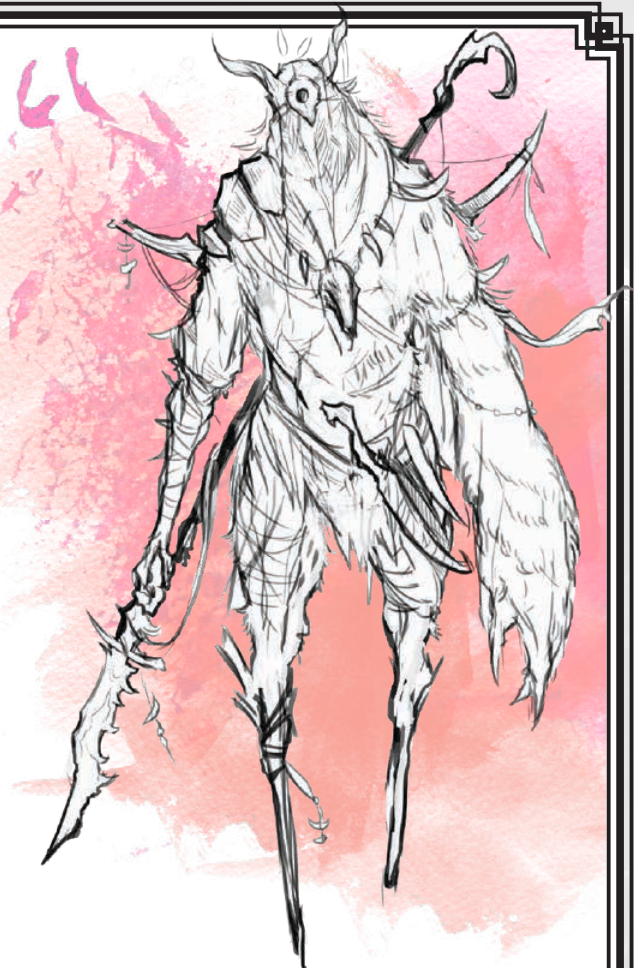
The sunken kingdom was once famous for the dragons they held in captivity. These amazing beasts were used to conquer the land, and were shown off to the towns and villages of the kingdom during celebrations. Unfortunately, these dragons were still in their pens when the waters hit, and most were unable to escape. Those that did fled to the far corners of the kingdom where they would eventually suffer under the Endless Summer. Those who died in the castle now live on as cursed beings, forced back to the life as mutated versions of their former selves.

### *The Scorching Catacombs*

The labyrinthine caverns lead into the catacombs, where the residents of Marowlyth once housed their dead. These twisting pathways were dug below the city, extending far down into the earth. When the ground around the city cracked and sank, the catacombs sank as well, deeper into the earth's core. Deep enough that a chasm opened, pouring magma into the lowest levels of the catacombs, filling the entire system with oppressive heat and humidity. It is dangerous to dig and explore in the Scorching Catacombs, as one wrong strike might be enough to open another vent for heated gas or magma to escape.

### *Crosstap Square*

Crosstap Square was the bustling arts and mercantile district of Marowlyth, set in a once beautiful open-air square detailed with engraved marble columns and beautiful fountains. A few of the tall buildings around it collapsed, creating a dome that has kept Crosstap Square mostly unharmed from the weight of mud above. The remnants of beauty can still be seen beneath the grime, dust, and mud that has been caked onto everything. The grand and awe-inspiring statues of Crosstap Square have remained intact despite the years, and the city collapsing under the earth. They depict a mix of the sunken kingdom's notable historic personalities from all manner of nobility and peasantry.



## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

### *The Buried King*

The ages trapped beneath the Fate Marshes have not been good for the Buried King, and his need for vengeance still burns within him, greater than ever. Once resurrected by the Endless Summer, the king began to muster the undead around him, reuniting with those who were most loyal to him, waiting for the day he can emerge from the castle and take back his kingdom. His once substantial armies are scattered in the Marowlyth caverns and trapped still in the mud across all of the Fate Marshes, but if he could gather them, there is a very good chance they would march upon Ember.

### *Eanswyth, Grim Sage of Fire*

Eanswyth was the advisor to the Buried King, a sage of a long-dead religion who could call upon both mundane and otherworldly fires, powers she used vehemently to protect her kingdom. But she was also secretly the king's bastard, and the royal heir, after all the king's other children had passed years before due to family-inherited illnesses. Her powers



were said to have originated from deals with infernal creatures deep within the earth, and there was a price they demanded—a tithe of the people of her kingdom—and Eanswyth would not give them their due. As the Buried King resisted Ember’s advances, Eanswyth was nowhere to be seen. The king believed Eanswyth had abandoned her duty, but in her heart she was still loyal, and fought a battle on another front, forcing fiendish enemies back to where they came from, deep into the earth. Now in her unlife, Eanswyth feels she must find forgiveness from her king, if only she was sure their underground kingdom was safe from enemies.

### *Aelwin Marowlyth*

Aelwin is the last descendant of the Marowlyth family, whose ancestors first founded Marowlyth and continued to govern it until it fell. Utterly loyal to their king, most of the Marowlyth family were killed in the early skirmishes between the sunken kingdom and Ember. Aelwin inherited the mantle of mayor from her mother who perished weeks before the fateful day the waters rose... Having been roused from death by the breaking of the Cycle, Aelwin is instilled with a sense of duty to govern Marowlyth, even though there is little of the city to govern.

## OPPORTUNITIES

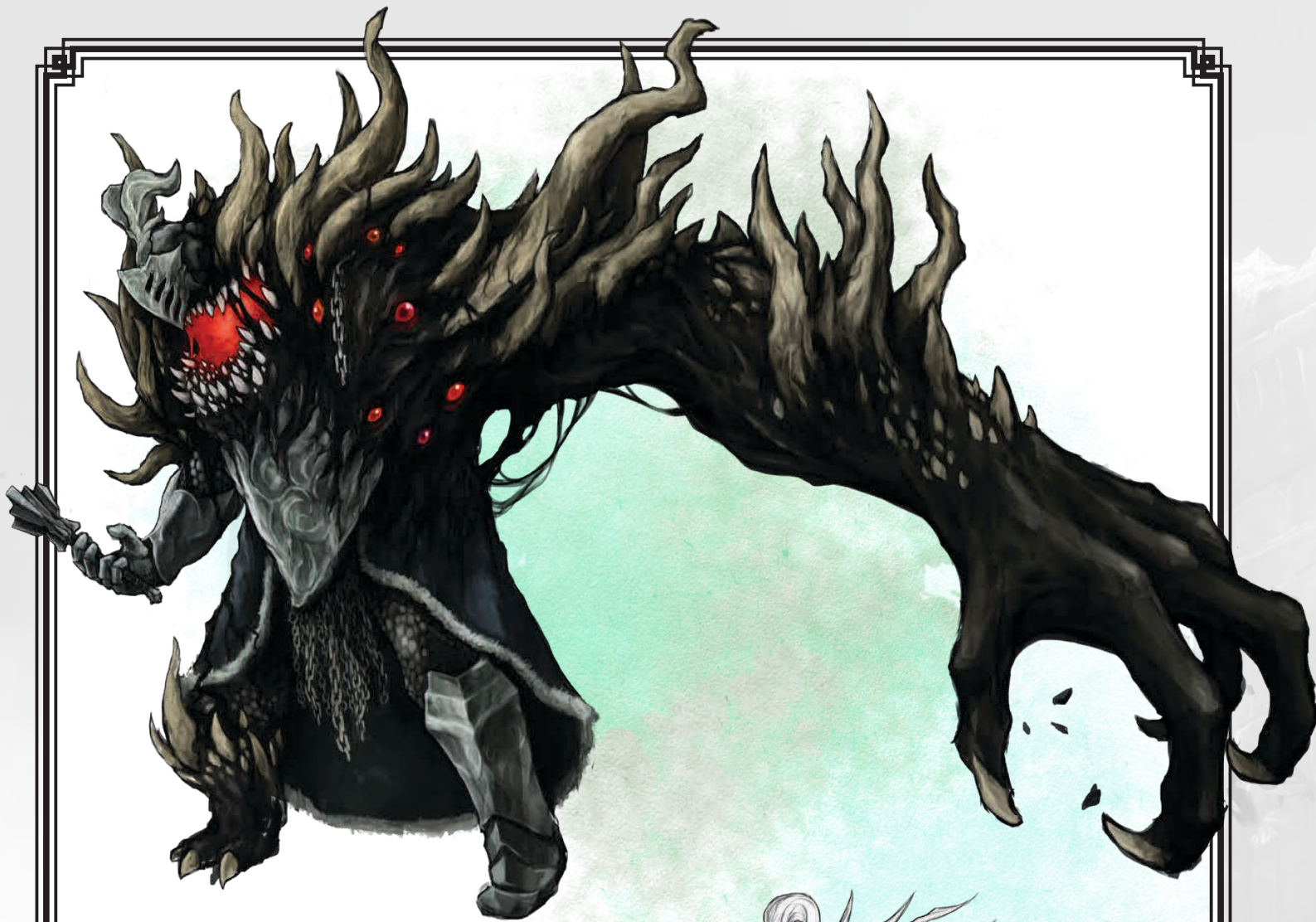
### *The Drake of Marowlyth*

The Drake of Marowlyth, a horrifying beastly aberration, has made a nest for itself somewhere in the twisting caverns of Marowlyth, turning the fallen city into its lair. The drake hunts what it can in the caves, but the undead are of little sustenance to the giant beast, forcing it to leave the den at night in search of prey in the nearby forests of the marshes. If an adventurer was to brave Marowlyth in search of treasure, it’s best to do so when the drake is out hunting the night.

### *The Army of the Dead*

Thanks to the Endless Summer, nothing can stay dead anymore. This includes the king’s army, which long guarded the Ebon Castle against invaders, and continues to do so after death. Most of the undead aren’t in fighting shape, as many have been crushed or maimed during the collapse of the castle and the ensuing mudslides. Those who retained their body parts can barely swing their swords. Each individual soldier is far from dangerous, but the army has vast numbers, and it is difficult to staunch the flow of undead.





### *Byrnhorn, Overlord of Steel*

The Buried King's chief knight and armorer, Byrnhorn, was known as an expert warrior skilled in every weapon and form of combat. Byrnhorn was tasked by the king to supply his armies with advanced weaponry in order to fight back Ember's forces, should they invade. And he succeeded in gathering the best smiths of the kingdom together, and creating such an armory, but too late as the Ebon Castle was flooded. Byrnhorn now guards the entrance to the royal armory, where the finest of the kingdom's weapons were stored, enough to equip a sizeable army. If the Overlord of Steel can be beaten, or in some other way surpassed, access to those weapons and armor may prove useful in some way to restore Ember, or even overthrow it.



# APPENDIX

## NPC MOTIVATIONS

### CORE CHARACTERS

Brennin (pg 25)

**Brennin the Husk (pg 61)** Protect the realm from threats

**Brennin the Builder (pg 71)** To be the perfect architect

**Brennin the Husband (pg 77)** To be the perfect husband

**Brennin the Father (pg 85)** To be the perfect father

**Brennin the Summer King (pg 102)** To be the perfect ruler

**Ceidwen, Reaper of Ash (pg 31, 89)** Moving on souls/stop Clíodhna/reunite with brother

**Clíodhna, The Earl of Aderyn (pg 37, 113, 118)** Power/revenge

**Maeve, Queen of Winter (pg 41, 77)** Restoration of Ember

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Caddell, Last Prince of Summer (pg 47, 100)** Regain sense of self/revenge against Brennin/Earl

**Rhonwen, The Fatesealer Witch (pg 51, 123)** Regain sense of self/restoration of Ember

**Atkond the Sundered Duke (pg 55, 78)** Protecting the fae realm from threats

**Tylwyth the Crystal Sage (pg 57, 78)** Escape from Ember

### CHARACTERS/CREATURES BY LOCATION

#### Castle Ember

**Bartun the Bold (pg 61)** Revenge against the Crown

**Carl Hemings, The Dockmaster (pg 70)** Revenge against the people of Yúla

**Edric (pg 64)** To serve the Five Knights as squire

**Gethwine (pg 64)** To stock supplies for Castle Ember

**Gorwedd the Guardian (pg 62)** Protect the phylactery/protect Castle Ember

**Herald Harwin (pg 64)** To continue running Castle Ember

**Huntmaster Roland (pg 67)** To protect the Barren Kingswood/to continue the hunt

**Mad Clayden (pg 71)** Preying upon ships/pirating plunder

**Matriarch of the Departed (pg 72)** Power/influence

**Saw Yer the Hound (pg 67)** To serve his master

**The Blind Beggar (pg 69)** To act as a guide

**The Pontifex (pg 68)** To feed on flesh

**The Tirithal Knights (pg 64)** Protect Castle Ember

**Watcher Wulfrum (pg 73)** Restoration of the Garrison of the Dead

### *The Vitreous Wood*

- Champion of the Royal Grove (pg 82)** To protect the Royal Grove
- Euroclydon the Mist Dragon (pg 80)** Protect her lair/to gain information about the land
- Keeper of Cups (pg 82)** To continue running the Unending Feast
- Lord of Ravens and Thieves (pg 80)** To thief/to protect his realm and peoples
- Terrac the Dream Vendor (pg 84)** To profit/to peddle his goods
- The Goblin Knight (pg 84)** To run the Goblin Market/to get filthy rich

### *Abbey Marowlyth*

- Helyór the Winter Wolf (pg 96)** To heal/to reunite with Queen Maeve
- Kor the Many Voiced (pg 93, 97)** To feed (from sources of power)/other motivations per head
- Stargazer Telanoun (pg 90)** Restoration of Ember/restoration of the Stargazers
- The Stewards of the Luminous Circle (pg 92)** Power/corruption/feeding (dead flesh)
- Wayside Golem (pg 91)** To attain freedom from the Luminous Circle/maintain the graveyard

### *The Royal Mausoleum*

- Chainman (pg 101, 109)** Revenge against the Earl of Aderyn
- Death Agari (pg 100)** To feed (dead things)/revenge against Queen Maeve/restoration to the fae court
- Eurwyn the Wise (pg 107)** To achieve final rest
- Lost Children (pg 102)** To feed (memory)
- Sister Lenil (pg 104)** To finish her charge (giving out cider)
- Sunken Sisters (pg 105)** To have others hear their stories
- Thadeaus (pg 107)** To protect Caddell/to protect the tomb/final rest

### *The Forlorn Cove*

- Llinos (pg 119)** To serve the Earl of Aderyn
- Merfolk (pg 113)** To breed/to restore their fallen empire/to feed (flesh)
- The Brachyura (pg 114)** Survival/remember their sacred duty
- The Deep Ones (pg 115)** To destroy the land-dwellers
- The Gray Guardian (pg 118)** To lead the Deep Ones
- The Unforgotten (pg 118)** Revolt against the Deep Ones
- Thralls of the Deep Ones (pg 115)** To serve their masters

### *The Fate Marshes*

- Aelwin Marowlyth (pg 132)** To govern what's left of Marowlyth and eventual restoration of it
- Baldith the Weather Witch (pg 129)** To protect the people of Ark
- Byrnhorn, Overlord of Steel (pg 133)** To guard the sunken kingdom's royal armory
- Eanswyth, Grim Sage of Fire (pg 131)** Find forgiveness from her king
- Fate Witch Satyr Mwars (pg 123)** Restoration of Ember
- Pagran Brune (pg 129)** To lead his flock/to cast out heretics and unbelievers
- The Bloodletter Fiend (pg 125)** To feed (blood)/to restore its kind
- The Buried King (pg 131)** Revenge against Ember
- The Drake of Marowlyth (pg 124)** To feed (flesh)





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THE ONE WHO FAILED AND BROKE THE LAND,  
AND CAST IT INTO CHAOS.

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SEEK AN END TO THE CURSE?  
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