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THE BOOK OF PLEASURE

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A RESOURCE ON SLAANESH, THE DARK PRINCE OF CHAOS

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PRINCE OF PLEASURE

Slaanesh, called among other things the Prince of Chaos and the Dark Prince, is the youngest of the Ruinous Powers. His is the domain of decadence and excess, but only a fool believes that Slaanesh is concerned only with the idle pleasures of the flesh. Rather, Slaanesh is fuelled by extremes of sensation, experience, and emotion. The Dark Prince of Chaos grants the power to excel in all things, pushing those who serve him far beyond the normal limits of human passion, desire, and obsession. None have dreamed until they have dreamed of the power Slaanesh can grant, their horizons expanding infinitely in the very instant their soul is forfeited. While the Dark Prince is as yet the least of the Four Great Powers, his potential is limitless, for it is defined only by the evils men can dream of inflicting upon one another.

While none of them would openly acknowledge it, the other Chaos Powers secretly fear Slaanesh. While Khorne, Nurgle, and Tzeentch fuel wars, plagues, and machinations within the world of men, Slaanesh gains power by feeding humanity's darkest urges, stoking the fires of all that drives men forward. Ultimately, such power is self-sustaining, for heresy begets heresy. One day, Khorne will run out of foes, Nurgle's tally of plagues will be completed, and

Tzeentch's schemes shall reach their conclusion. None, however, can foresee a time when men shall set aside their darkest passions and selfish desires and forego that which they most crave.

THE DARK PRINCE OF CHAOS

Were a man of the Empire to travel northwards, passing out from the shadow of the deep forests, over the cold plains of Kislev and the blasted Troll Country, and into the northern wastes, he would eventually reach the borders of the Realm of Chaos. The poles of the world are realms of seething magic centred upon the remains of the polar gates, where reality and unreality merge, where the physical and the spiritual intermingle in ways not possible anywhere else in the mortal realm. Were the traveller to somehow survive the predations of the savage tribes and ravaging, twisted beasts that haunt the land, he would, perhaps without realising it, step across an invisible barrier and pass from the real world of stone, air, and flesh into a universe that does exist in any true sense. Rather, the domains into which he has passed are the king-



doms of gods and daemons, a land made from the stuff of souls and sustained by the dark will of its most powerful inhabitants – the dread Gods of Chaos.

Within this limitless, shifting Realm of Chaos, each of the Chaos Gods has his own territory, the unreal borders of which wax and wane as the power of each ebbs and flows. The territory of the Dark Prince of Chaos can be imagined as a peninsular of spirit-matter, a spit of land which, while nowhere near as expansive as that claimed by other gods, is supremely defensible, and utterly under the sway of Slaanesh.

Unlike the other Ruinous Powers, especially Khorne, Slaanesh does not maintain a fortress or stronghold as such. Instead, his court is found inside a vast, shimmering pavilion where the every excess contrived by humanity is practised to the utmost degree. It is said that this terrible place heaves with such extremes of emotion and experience that it radiates into the dreams and desires of mortals, stoking hidden flames and nurturing secret desires. It is even said that such extremes are practised in the form of contests, adjudicated by Slaanesh himself so that his champions can be chosen and sent into the world to spread their evils amongst men.

Such a place may appear vulnerable to attack by the cohorts of the Dark Prince's brother gods. With the hosts of Slaanesh disporting themselves in every manner possible beneath the eaves of his pavilion, surely his enemies could attack and destroy his domains once and for all. But Slaanesh's holdings are well protected indeed, for their defence is the weakness of the intruders themselves; any attacker must first pass through six circles of temptation before entering the Dark Prince's territory.

The outermost of the six rings is the Circle of Avidity, where the intruder is tempted with riches beyond measure, yet to accept them is to become immobilised in the form of a shimmering statue of the gold, the soul entrapped within for all time. The Circle of Gluttony offers any sensory excess imaginable, yet to partake of it is to engorge oneself until the body explodes under the strain. The third is the Circle of Carnality, a realm of fleshly pleasures where daemonettes masquerade in whatever bodily form the intruder most covets, only to tear him limb from limb before his desires can be assuaged. The Circle of Paramountcy offers power in its many forms, yet to linger in its halls is to succumb utterly to the doubt and paranoia that assail even the most outwardly powerful of men. In the Circle of Vainglory the intruder is seduced by visions of his own glory, yet his past victories will be mocked for eternity should he halt in the scented arbours of hubris. The last defence is the Circle of Indolency, through which one must pass before gaining egress to Slaanesh's Palace of Pleasure. It is the most deadly, for it seduces with the promise of eternal rest yet ultimately grants nothing more than oblivion.

In the guise of welcoming guests to his lands, Slaanesh entraps both friend and foe. Once enslaved to the Dark Prince's will, death is a merciful release of which the damned can only dream. Those few who somehow pass through the six circles of the Dark Prince's domains find themselves before Slaanesh himself. Mortals perceive Slaanesh as a litesome youth, clean of limb and of indeterminate gender, though most perceive him as more male than female. His features are beguiling and young, and to look upon them is to lose one's soul utterly. An eternity of damnation awaits the souls enslaved to the blasphemous desires of the Dark Prince of Chaos.

EXCESS, PERFECTION, AND OBSESSION

Slaanesh gains power and influence within the Realm of Chaos by fuelling and feeding upon extremes of emotion and experience unleashed within the mortal domains. While no mortal is immune to the temptations of the Dark Prince, some men are more likely to attract his attentions than others.

In particular, the nobility seem most attracted to the gifts of Slaanesh. Without the need to toil just to place food on the table, nobles are at leisure to pursue whatever pastimes they desire, and a life of indolence is strewn with entrapments to ensnare the unwary soul. Wealth and noble birth grant power, which is all too easily abused. Nobles have access to resources few others can imagine, including libraries of ancient texts and treasuries full of priceless artefacts. What forbidden knowledge and arcane relics lurk within such places, just waiting to entrap the soul of the dilettante? There are also stories of noble-owned hunting lodges deep in the Reikwald, where the sons and daughters of the Empire's highest-born lines retire to practise dalliances they could never risk pursuing in the cities. Some even claim that by night, they cavort about roaring fires with the beastmen of the forests, sealing some unholy pact in the name of the powers of Old Night.

But it is not only members of the nobility that seek the extremes of experience. While many think of Khorne, the God of Blood and Murder, as the patron of warriors, many such men beseech the favour of Slaanesh as well. While Khorne revels in the simple, uncomplicated act of killing, however it is achieved, Slaanesh seeks the perfection of the killing blow itself and the experience of killing and dying. Warriors that look to the Dark Prince do so to perfect their skill at arms into an artful performance, one in which each

stroke of the blade is as delicate as a lover's caress and equally as exquisite for slayer and victim. Such men drive themselves towards ever-greater extremes, yearning to master the act of killing in every one of its permutations. As much as some warriors seek to perfect their own skills, some come to revel in the cruelty of their arts, becoming masters of pain and torture in all their forms.

Men in search of knowledge are also susceptible to the temptations of the Prince of Chaos. One might expect that most men would turn to Tzeentch for the revelations they seek, but this is not always the case. Scholars who become obsessed with the details of obscure wisdom are driven to ever more extreme acts when granted the dark blessings of Slaanesh. There is no knowledge too terrible for them to bear, or so they believe, and they will make any sacrifice in the ceaseless pursuit of the teachings they crave. Such dark scholars inevitably stretch the limits of the knowledge a human mind can contain, especially where it pertains to the secret histories of the world and its creation, and of the forces that underpin reality. The sanatoriums are said to be full of fallen scholars who gibber and rant of nameless deities and impossible places, their souls and minds blasted by the knowledge revealed to them by their dark patron.

Those who serve the various creeds and cults of the Empire and beyond are especially valuable to Slaanesh, for blasphemy is one of the numerous permutations of his realm. The Dark Prince revels in pushing any and every boundary and expects his servants to do likewise. Nothing is more pleasing to Slaanesh than an outwardly pure individual, especially an officer of a creed, revelling in the very acts he condemns. Thus, the Witch Hunters must regularly search their own ranks, and those of the Cult of Sigmar, for hidden servants of the Dark Prince. Countless outwardly holy leaders have been charged with heretical crimes and put to death after the Mark of Slaanesh is discovered upon their bodies.

There are many more examples of individuals driven to excess by the dark gifts of Slaanesh. The practitioners of magic must be ever vigilant for the siren song of forbidden knowledge and power, and regular contact with the raw energies of Chaos makes them supremely susceptible to the Dark Prince's influence. Counsellors and administrators too are often tempted by the power they wield, and those denied the full extent of their capabilities by a common birth are all the more likely to sell their souls for access to the status the nobles so jealously guard. There are lovers who love as no mortal ever could, and artists driven to create such wonders as to make on-lookers pluck out their eyes so they may never be sullied by a lesser sight. Hunters seek the ability to stalk the wilds undetected and long for preternatural aim – invariably, they are driven to hunt not beasts, but men, and some feel compelled to test their skills against wood elves and the like, usually with results fatal to the hunter.

Invariably, those who partake of even the smallest portion of the blessing of Slaanesh are driven so far along the road to excess that their damnation is inevitable. The cruel reality of Chaos is that it will ultimately destroy all but the very strongest of those who attempt to wield it. Perhaps above all other Chaos Gods, Slaanesh revels in this process, glorying in the downfall of even the mightiest champion. In truth, a being as powerful as Slaanesh perceives even the mightiest of mortal champions as nothing more than a brief spark against a conflagration, if he perceives them at all. Though he does not know it, the servant's excesses do nothing more than fuel the fires of his own eternal damnation.

CHAOS CULTS OF SLAANESH

Those who venerate the Dark Prince of Chaos are wont to form secret coteries, cults, and confraternities, for, perhaps more than for servants of the other Chaos Gods, their deeds must remain hidden in order to perpetuate. Slaanesh's followers are gregarious by nature, and their rituals require both victims and an audience, though often these are one and the same. No act, no matter how extreme or blasphemous, holds much meaning unless it is witnessed, whether by others who also venerate Slaanesh or by unwilling victims moments before they meet their end.

The followers of the Great Powers organise themselves into cults – secret societies of like-minded worshippers who gather in hidden places to practice their vile creed. Commonly, cultists are highly placed members of their communities – the alderman, the magistrate, the lord, or the trader. Each cult is different, but most feature a highly compartmentalised, pyramid-shaped power structure, with each level ignorant of most of what goes on in the level above. Members hide their true identities from the bulk of the cult, though it can be guaranteed that someone will know their name and thereby hold power over them. Many cults are sprawling networks that employ their own staffs and agents, own properties, and conduct themselves more like a business or criminal enterprise than a body of worshippers. Yet, whatever form the cult takes and whatever masks it wears to disguise its true face, it is above all else a sect of men and women dedicated to the worship of a forbidden god.



Many cults have existed for decades, centuries, or, occasionally, millennia. Over generations they have spread their influence far and wide, working towards some end only the most senior of masters is aware of. It is likely that the lowest ranked cultists, whatever they do by day, are mere foot soldiers in the cult's great undertaking and they are only allowed to glimpse a small portion of the greater plan. The exact nature of this grand undertaking varies enormously, though most have several points in common; it invariably promises a time when the cult will be able to throw off its disguise and rise up against its oppressors, tearing down or taking control of the prevailing social order. The Chaos Gods tend to approach their goal in different ways. Khorne would see the entire world shattered and the building blocks of civilisation ground to dust beneath his cloven feet. Nurgle would see it transformed in a vision of eternal festering decay and rampant re-growth. Tzeentch wills it that time never ends, one layer of reality peeling back to reveal yet another, still more complex web of fate. Slaanesh however, seeks to impose his darkest dreams upon the world, to remake it in a vision of eternal submission and domination.

Even if its lower ranked members believe otherwise, no cult is completely isolated. As they grow in power and status, new cults come into contact with older, established cults. Some worship the same Chaos God, others his brothers, and so war or alliance may follow. Some cults seek out others, especially those only recently incorporated, that they may be dominated and subsumed. The oldest and most powerful organisations have existed in one form or another since the earliest days of the Empire; their influence stretches across the world and into the highest of courts. Others seek to utterly wipe out all other cults they encounter, whether those of the same god or his rivals, dispatching sinister agents as effective as any Witch Hunter to track down their foes and destroy their works. At several points in history, the bitterest of wars have been fought on the streets of the Empire's cities, across the rooftops and along

the secret corridors of sprawling castles. Foes determined to not only ruin one another's works, but to offer one another's souls to their patron gods, grapple for power while men sleep fitfully scant yards away. Anyone captured alive in these conflicts is often sacrificed in appallingly creative acts of blasphemy before hooded congregations of cultists. Often, the only sign that any such war is raging is the sudden disappearance of key members of the community, those who were highly ranked in the cult's power structure. At the same time, the low ranked foot soldiers die by the dozen, but they are rarely missed.

There are numerous cults active in the Reikland today and those dedicated to Slaanesh are particularly virile and dynamic. In Frederheim, for example, the so-called Crimson Eye has existed for nigh on seven decades, its influence spreading insidiously downstream along the River Teufel like spilled blood and infecting the minor nobility almost as far as the Court of Grünburg. The Cult of the Exquisite Cadaver has only recently appeared in Altdorf but is thought to have its roots in dispossessed nobility out of Bögenhafen. The Brotherhood of the Perfect Deliverance is thought to be an offshoot of a far older cult that is well established in Averland and Wissenland, but so far it has been unsuccessful in subverting the established cults of the southern Reikland. The Cult of the Purple Moon recently won a long war against a number of lesser bodies in and around Eilhart and looks ready to exploit its gains and attack others based in Helmgart, Ubersreik, and Auerswald. Perhaps the newest cult in Reikland is the so-called Angels of Griesenwald, a body that, for some as yet unknown reason, other cults in the region abhor and fear in equal measure, their blasphemies too dire even for the servants of the Dark Prince to stomach.

Nobles are especially prone to be seduced into the service of Slaanesh via a life of unfettered indolence. It is said that many of the Chaos worshipping cults that exist across the Empire have sprung up amongst coteries of idle nobles, individuals whose decadence has transmuted from selfish dalliance to something far darker and ultimately destructive. In such groups, the frisson of trifling indecency all too easily turns to overt and deliberate blasphemy and iconoclasm. Equally, bored yet inquisitive minds are easily turned from the exotic to the esoteric; from there it is but a short, damning journey to the pursuit of forbidden knowledge. Those who plot and scheme against rivals or more favoured kin are led astray by the promise of undreamed power, while those afflicted with some weakness, whether real or imagined, might find a means to overcome it, if only they will pay the price.

When the dalliances of the idle nobility turn into the active pursuit of power, the agents of the Ruinous Powers are ready to offer counsel and lead the damned even further astray. Hooded strangers appear in the small hours and tell the glazed-eyed nobles of power and experience even they have never imagined. Missives are written and rituals conducted. Blood is spilled and pacts are sealed. Souls are bartered and unspeakable deeds performed. All too soon, the group of nobles seeking distraction from the petty concerns of everyday life have become a cult, its members fearful of discovery by the Sigmarrite Witch Hunters who have suddenly appeared in town. Before they realize it, the nobles are devotees of the Ruinous Powers, already numbered among the uncounted ranks of the lost and the damned.



GIFTS OF SLAANESH

Those who seek the blessings of any of the four Great Powers know that each gift they receive might be their last, for all too often a man is transformed into a slaving mindless spawn by the sheer potency of his patron god's power. Mortals are fragile things to the Ruinous Powers; just as a man may not be able to pick up a fly without crushing it between his fingers, so the Chaos Gods are likely to destroy a mortal body and soul by the gifting of even the most inconsequential blessing. Of course, Slaanesh being the most capricious and wantonly cruel of the Ruinous Powers, he takes great delight in such happy accidents and cares not whether his servants welcome the gifts he bestows.

MORTALS AND SLAANESH

Despite the Dark Prince's ability to warp and corrupt the flesh of those dedicated to his worship, it is in the mind and the soul that the greatest changes are wrought. Physical mutation is almost an inevitable side effect of any contact with the power of Chaos but those who seek Slaanesh's gifts desire something far more potent and useful. They lust not only for perfection in all they pursue, but also to exceed perfection and experience every possible aspect of a given pursuit until it is mastered utterly.

THE PROMISE OF PERFECTION

The perfection Slaanesh's followers seek is anathema to the world of mortals, so that to normal men they appear to be engaged upon some hideous mockery of mortal pursuits. There is a vast gulf between what the follower sees and experiences and what the onlooker perceives, unless perhaps the witness is also blessed by the Dark Prince's gifts. For example, a musician might draw upon the blessings of Slaanesh to produce exquisite cadences and tones that no mortal has ever heard, and he experiences such heights of delirious joy in producing them that he feels at one with his fell patron. A mere mortal forced to witness the performance might be driven utterly insane, his mind unable to process the cacophony he is hearing, his ears bleeding from the unnatural sounds they are forced to absorb. An artist might draw upon his patron's gifts to communicate such visual splendour as no mortal eyes have ever witnessed, portraying wonders of composition and balance, concept and perspective, power and wit. A mortal forced to look upon the piece might find his eyes bleeding from the sheer atrocity exhibited, his sanity blasted for all time. A warrior blessed by the Dark Prince's gifts moves so fast that he appears as a blur, every artful stroke of his blade parting flesh and spilling blood in patterns that delight and inspire the servants of Slaanesh. The hedonist seeks new and novel flavours and scents, passing far beyond what decent folk consider edible and inducing witnesses to gag in disgust while he sups upon the foulest of feasts, his face a mask of delight. These and countless more pursuits are subject to the dominion of the Dark Prince and no experience is beyond his followers.

THE PRICE OF EXCESS

Despite the impossible heights to which Slaanesh's servants soar, all but the smallest fraction inevitably come plummeting back down to earth to be dashed against the jagged rocks of their own sins. The power of Chaos is the most seductive, powerful, and addictive drug ever imbibed by mortal souls and, like all drugs, the addicted are doomed as soon as the first taste passes their lips. Those who dedicate their souls to Slaanesh seek to draw power

from their pact, power to drive them to extremes they would never otherwise experience, but the price is terrible indeed. Ultimately, the adherents experience all there is to experience, break every taboo, exceed every mortal limitation, and impose every form of suffering the mortal mind and body can endure; all that remains is a soulless husk driven by the hollow desires of one who has seen all and knows there is nothing left to see. For a time, the universe, indeed the multiverse, was a realm of limitless splendour and variation, but now it is a pale, faded, ragged remnant sucked dry and spent of all joy. To one dedicated to Slaanesh, such a fate is terrible indeed and one that all but those who achieve apotheosis and are granted daemonhood are doomed to meet.

One might wonder exactly what the Dark Prince gains by exacting such a price from his willing servants. When the mortal mind experiences extremes of emotion, Slaanesh's power within the ever-shifting Realm of Chaos grows at the expense of one or all of his kin. As his power waxes, so too do his territories, which encroach upon the lands of the other Chaos Gods. This process manifests in infinite forms, not least of which is the spectacle of a billion daemones capering through the territories of the Dark Prince's foes, slaying rival servants with graceful flicks of their razor sharp claws as they sing the praises of their master. When his power waxes so strongly that it can no longer be contained within the Realm of Chaos, the Winds of Magic turn to storms that howl outwards from the polar gates to saturate the lands of men with the fell power of the Dark Prince, driving his servants onwards and causing them to commit countless unspeakable acts in his name. One day, the storm will be unstoppable and never abate, and all the lands shall be submerged beneath a writhing, twitching blanket of sin.



MINIONS OF THE DARK PRINCE

What manner of mortal heeds the siren song of the Dark Prince and pledges their souls to Slaanesh? Certainly, those born of noble blood are easy meat for the Great Corruptor, but so too are many others, from artists and musicians to politicians and warriors. When the Winds of Magic gather strength and the hordes of Slaanesh muster, two types of warrior can be found in the ranks of his mortal hosts—those born in the lands of men and those born into the service of Slaanesh.

Those who hear the call of Slaanesh and make their way north to join his magnificent hordes are fortunate indeed to even begin their journey, for the Templars of Sigmar are ever watchful for those bearing the mark of the Dark Prince. It is fair to say that most men of the Old World who hear Slaanesh's call fall long before they can answer it. Some are consumed by their passions, drinking too deeply of the wine of obsession so that their sins are clear to all around them. Others find themselves gifted with such marks of their patron that they must flee to the woods before their true nature is revealed, but most of them fall easy prey to the beastmen and other fell denizens of the forests and never realise the visions that haunt their fevered dreams. Unless their dark passions are husbanded by an established cult, such tragic figures invariably signal their pact with the Dark Prince for all to see, the evidence of their sins impossible to ignore.

A very few, however, manage to contain the excesses of their dark desires in such a way as not to attract unwanted attention and work their way northwards to join the hordes of Chaos. The journey is a mighty feat in itself and is sure to stand the champion in good stead when he encounters the denizens of the Chaos Wastes, who will challenge him the instant he passes into their lands. Such men must fight duel after duel against savage barbarians and towering warriors of Chaos, proving themselves ever more worthy to tread the northern lands with every head they take. The few who reach the lands of a tribe dedicated to Slaanesh have proven themselves worthy of not just joining those tribes, but of leading them into battle, though more duels await them should they decide to take control of an army of their own. Having made it so far, some mortals simply keep going, passing out of the knowledge of the tribes and into the far north, where the lands writhe and the skies boil under the baleful influence of raw Chaos. Whether they enter the Realm of Chaos itself or pass into some other unfathomable reality, none can say, though certainly they do so in the name of the Dark Prince of Chaos.

THE HORDES OF SLAANESH

As with each of the Chaos Gods, there are entire tribes dedicated to the Dark Prince in the far north. These peoples exist in a harsh land of constant war, where men must be strong and guileful to survive, and as such one might imagine that the hedonism often associated with Slaanesh would be out of place. What soft pleasures might be found amidst a land of howling gales and hard ground? In truth, the pleasures sought and found by those who serve the Dark Prince are those of war, in all its forms. In a land where no law applies other than the will of the strong, the servants of Slaanesh openly venerate their fell god, practising every extreme of emotion and experience possible. If there are no laws, there are no crimes, and the power of Slaanesh waxes ever stronger.

THE MARK OF SLAANESH

Those who attract the dark benedictions of Slaanesh may be blessed with his rune upon their flesh. The Mark of Slaanesh resembles an astrological gender symbol, and as such depicts the aspect of the Dark Prince that is genderless, male, female, both and neither. In short, Slaanesh's venerated transcend this most mundane yet fundamental barrier in their quest to fulfil the pursuit of obsession.

Many abilities and qualities are associated with the Mark of Slaanesh, but the greatest and most terrible must surely be the ability to corrupt and seduce the most loyal and pure. Those marked by Slaanesh are said to be able to gaze directly into the most hidden depths of a mortal's soul and rip out his most secret desires and fears. Such knowledge is truly the most powerful weapon in the world, for Slaanesh's servants use it to turn even the most bitter of enemies into the most adoring of slaves.

When borne by a hidden cultist, the Mark of Slaanesh is most often manifested somewhere easily hidden from casual searches. Often, it appears on the left breast. This is significant to the servants of Slaanesh, as it alludes to the genderless qualities of their patron and the fact that many of his daemonic attendants have one breast. The mark might be hidden elsewhere, sometimes in locations only the most dedicated of Witch Hunters or the most intimate of lovers would find it.

More information on the Mark of Slaanesh and its rules in play can be found on page 15.



Slaanesh is worshipped throughout the north and the Chaos Wastes in all manner of aspects and known by a staggering range of names. The Tribe of the Serpent, for example, calls him Loeth, and holds that he lives in the seas about Norsca. Hundreds of tribes revel in every extreme of war and death, arts that they practice daily in wars against one another and the nations of the south. The tribes dedicated to Slaanesh are among the cruellest mortals of the wastes for they seek not simply to slay their foes, but to inflict symphonies of misery upon them. They prefer to debilitate and capture rather than slay, so that they might bind the defeated and haul them back to their settlements. They are masters of torture, which they regard as the ultimate worship of their fell lord. Before each battle, the marauders of Slaanesh imbibe all manner of narcotic substances, often of magical aspect, and under their heady influence make war as the supreme celebration of the Dark Prince's blessing.

MARAUDERS OF SLAANESH

Marauders of Slaanesh are vain creatures that take as much pride in their physical appearance as in their abilities. Those who choose war as their obsession endeavour to exceed perfection by honing their bodies until they are as deadly as any blade. Some are mountains of rippling muscle, while others are creatures of whipcord sinew. As many are hulking brutes as are lithe and agile sylphs, yet their standards of outward perfection are entirely at odds with those of the people of the south. To mortal eyes, marauders of Slaanesh are disturbingly alluring, bearing proudly the symbols of their blasphemy. Swirling tattoos trace the contours of flesh, while the runes of the Dark Prince are brazenly born on armour and shield. Perhaps worst of all are the scented oils many apply to their skin before battle, cloying musk that dulls the senses of the marauders' opponents, making it all the more joyous to cut them down.

SPECIAL MARAUDER OF SLAANESH RULES

To represent a marauder of Slaanesh, use the characteristics for a marauder found in The Bestiary chapter of the Core Product. However, a marauder of Slaanesh also has the Mark of Slaanesh (see page 15) and at least one mutation.

CHAOS WARRIORS OF SLAANESH

Chaos warriors dedicated to the Dark Prince of Chaos are regarded by the people of the north as walking avatars of their god. Their bodies are clad in Chaos armour gifted to them by their fell patron and fused to their flesh in a hideous, symbiotic union. Many leave portions of pale flesh bare, as if to titillate their opponents with the illusion of weakness, inviting him to attempt to strike at that imagined weak spot. Chaos warriors of Slaanesh truly walk the path of damnation and excess and the strongest are fated to become mighty champions. Consumed by their own dark passions, they appear distant and something other than human. Their followers bathe in this otherworldly glory, driven by the need for the master's approval to commit still further atrocity. Enemies are frequently struck dumb by the sight of Slaanesh's champions, unable to raise a shield to ward the blow that brings their own doom.

SPECIAL CHAOS WARRIORS OF SLAANESH RULES

To represent a chaos warrior of Slaanesh, use the characteristics for a chaos warrior found in The Bestiary chapter of the Core Product. The chaos warrior has the Mark of Slaanesh (see page 15) and at least one mutation.

CHAOS SORCERERS OF SLAANESH

Sorcerers of Slaanesh are masters of the most dire and secret arts. Their magic focuses on the scrying of hidden truths, blasphemy and coercion, and domination and submission. With a softly whispered incantation, a sorcerer of Slaanesh can make a man believe that the twisted abomination before him is the most pure and beautiful of maidens. With a sly cantrip, he can turn brother upon brother. With a subtle invocation he can tempt the strongest soul with the promise of its most cherished desires. Chaos sorcerers of Slaanesh are described in more detail on page 16.

BEASTMEN AND SLAANESH

Beastmen perceive the world in a manner wholly at odds with the way mankind sees it, but who is to say their vision is not the true face of reality? Unlike humanity, beastmen do not sell their souls in return for power, nor do they undertake pacts or bargains with the Ruinous Powers. Beastmen are children of Chaos and they are born into its service. Their world is a one of power and war, where the raw stuff of Chaos runs through all things. To the beastmen, the being men call Slaanesh is the power that grants them the virility that swells the dark forests with their kind. He seeds the hatred of man within the children of Chaos, a hatred they have nurtured for uncounted generations and expressed in their befouling of man's most cherished symbols of faith.

Those beastmen especially bestowed with the qualities of Slaanesh are sometimes called by heretics slaangor. To the beastmen war-herds, slaangor are worshipped exemplars of potency and power.

SPECIAL SLAANGOR RULES

You can represent a slaangor simply by giving a beastman the Mark of Slaanesh, as described on page 15.





CHAPTER TWO

SLAVES OF EXCESS

Of the many servants of the Ruinous Powers in the Old World, the human followers of Slaanesh are perhaps the most numerous, and with good reason. Slaanesh is a great tempter of men, seizing upon every moral weakness and offering a life of pleasure and excess. Cults of Slaanesh are prevalent among the richer elements of Imperial society, where bored nobles go to great lengths to sate their desires. Followers of Slaanesh succumb to their darkest needs, leading lives of extreme pleasure and pain while enticing others to join their cause.

Although the daemonic personalities of Slaanesh are foul, depraved creatures, they are at once terrifying and beautiful, entrancing those who stare at them. Entire regiments have been known to lay down their weapons and stand enthralled as they are mercilessly slain. Voices whisper from these horrific forces, corrupting all those in their path and turning the minds of even the purest priests of Sigmar. These demons delight in toying with their prey, seducing and then dismembering those that come near with savage, yet subtle strikes, honed to perfection over millennia.



The priests of Sigmar preach that the True Gods play on the base emotions of men, but it is Sigmar who rules through Fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of the different, but even worse: fear of ourselves, fear of our own power. I throw off those shackles of fear; I live a life fuller and richer than any of the Sigmar-fearing sheep. I dare to be great, I dare to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous. I strive for perfection. If that is heresy, so be it. I may die, but at least I have lived.

*- last words of Bertholdt Freude,
executed for heresy*



ANATOMY OF A CREATURE CARD

Creature cards put all the information a GM needs to manage creatures during an encounter right at his fingertips. The important statistics and game information are organised on one side, with art the GM can show the players on the other side.

In addition to the convenience of managing creatures during a session, the card format makes it easier for GMs to prepare between sessions. The creature cards can be combined with action cards to create a limitless variety of encounters to challenge the players.

Some creatures have icons appearing on the side of their card indicating a number of action cards, by type, that the GM can select to help customise the creature, making these opponents more diverse and challenging.

The GM can select any action cards of the appropriate type for which the creature meets the requirements listed on the card. This is in addition to the basic actions to which all NPCs and creatures have access, so long as they meet the card's specific requirements.



Melee



Spell



Ranged



Blessing



Support

1 Threat Rating. The creature's threat rating.

2 Creature Name. Name of the creature shown on the card

3 Category. The NPC/Adversary group it belongs to.

4 Wound Threshold. The creature's wound threshold. Once it has suffered more wounds than its threshold, the creature is defeated.

5 Characteristics. The creature's six characteristics, including any fortune dice associated with its characteristics.

6 Stance. The creature's default stance, which the GM can adjust, if desired, by spending dice from the creature's Cunning budget.

7 A/C/E Budget. The Aggression, Cunning, and Expertise dice budget for the creature.

8 Damage Rating. The damage of the creature's attacks, reflecting its innate or default capacity for carnage. This value may be swapped with a different rating if the creature is equipped with specific weapons or effects.



9 Soak Value. The Soak Value of the creature, reflecting its innate or default resistance to damage. This value may be swapped with a different rating if the creature is equipped with specific armour or effects.

10 Defence Value. The Defence Value of the creature, reflecting its innate or default ability to avoid or deflect attacks. This value may be swapped with a different rating if the creature is equipped with specific armour or effects.

11 Action Card Options. The number and type of actions the creature may be supplemented with by the GM in addition to their standard abilities.

12 Special Rule Summary. A brief list of the creature's special abilities or rules. Refer to the specific creature entry for full details.

13 Set Icon. Each card is marked with a set icon to quickly identify which product the card is from.

LESSER SERVANTS

Even the lesser servants of Slaanesh exude a hideous beauty. While their bodies, viewed in isolation, are hideous, perverse things that should make a man retch, their exotic movements and sensual words can overpower the resolve of even the strongest men. These sadistic creatures often appear weak and vulnerable in comparison with the other daemonic hosts, but they can be just as vicious on the battlefield as any follower of Khorne and as hardy as any worshipper of Nurgle. They strive to perfect the art of battle, wasting no energy with each graceful strike. Foolish is the general that chooses to underestimate Slaanesh, as his creatures are just as potent at warping the mind and soul as they are at causing bloody havoc in battle.

Frightening: All lesser servants of Slaanesh cause Fear 2 when first encountered.

DAEMONETTES ☠☠☠☠

Daemonettes are the most numerous of Slaanesh's daemons, and they attend to his every need and whim. He keeps a vast harem for his own unholy pleasures and these courtesans and handmaidens also act as his personal guard. When in the mortal realm, daemonettes carry messages to cults and lead rituals to glorify their blasphemous master. Daemonettes are great temptresses and those who cannot see through their alluring mask will be eternally damned, their souls despoiled, used, and deposited at the feet of a new, vile master. These potent seductresses are all but irresistible; even the strong of mind, those who can see the foul beast beneath the exterior mask, have been known to enter the fatal embrace of a daemonette.

The bewitching, opal eyes of these creatures and their alluring, carnal features are always considered the height of beauty by the beholder. Like many of Slaanesh's daemons, however, to give in to this sensory overload is to risk destruction, for the slender arms of a daemonette end with chitinous claws filled with razor sharp barbs and edges that are capable of severing limbs, ripping through armour, and tearing flesh from bone. Legions of these creatures are a sight to behold; historical texts tell of hundreds of daemonettes dancing and singing in perfect unison like a choreographed killing machine.

Aesthetic Beauty: The magnificent aura of a daemonette is hard to behold. The distraction adds ■ to all actions targeting the daemonette.

Suggested Action: Swift Severity

STEEDS OF SLAANESH ☠☠☠

Steads of Slaanesh are bipedal chargers; delicate and bird-like in nature with manes silkier than the finest sable. Their sticky tongues taste everything around them, enabling them to sense the terrain and move with alarming speed. The Liber Malefic tells fanciful tales of steeds even being able to dance in and out of the ether, as if they have control over time itself; few have ever lived to tell the tale, such is the awesome speed of these beasts.

Steads can also taste the very souls of those that they face; once the sensation has been sucked deep within them, it becomes like a unique flavour that cannot be forgotten. This allows them to track their prey over vast distances, pursuing them relentlessly and with-

out fatigue until the target inevitably succumbs. The beasts take delight in toying with their prey, pushing it to the absolute edge of their sanity before closing in for the kill.

Aesthetic Beauty: The magnificent aura of a steed is hard to behold. The distraction adds ■ to all actions targeting the steed.

Swift: A steed may perform 1 movement manoeuvre for free on each of its turns.

Suggested Action: Narcotic Caress

SEEKERS ☠☠☠☠

Daemonettes are beings to be feared, but when mounted upon the formidable steeds of Slaanesh, they become fast moving instruments of terror. Once mounted, the bond between the two daemons cannot be broken; a daemonette always rides the same steed and takes great pleasure in customising and decorating its mount. Together, the eternally linked creatures become seekers of Slaanesh. The daemonettes spend countless hours painstakingly applying lurid dyes, tattoos, and sigils to the steed's skin in reverence to their dark master. Each seeker is unique, and a line of these deadly troops riding into battle will contain a gaudy variety of daubed daemons. An adventurer that comes into contact with a seeker had best hope he can defeat his opponent; if not, he will face a breathless hunt that can continue for months or even years, bringing him to the very edge of stamina and sanity. Very often, a seeker's quarry will collapse and willingly surrender his soul to the Prince of Chaos damning himself to an eternity of exquisite torment.

Aesthetic Beauty: The magnificent aura of a seeker is hard to behold. The distraction adds ■ to all actions targeting the seeker.



Swift: A seeker may perform 1 movement manoeuvre for free on each of its turns.

Mounted: Seekers are mounted on deadly steeds. Anything that would cause their steed to lose wind instead inflicts 1 wound on the seeker. While mounted, the seeker gains □ to Melee Attacks and opponents add ■ to Melee Attacks unless armed with a spear, lance, or similar weapon. They are also **Swift** while mounted, and may perform 1 movement manoeuvre per turn for free.

Suggested Action: Tenacious Hunt

FIENDS ☠☠☠☠☠

The fiends of Slaanesh are one of the most bizarre of the Ruinous Power's creations. Almost indescribable, they seem part lizard, part arthropod, part equine and part insectoid. Long tongues flicker from the tapered, antlered heads of the beasts, sensing for prey, and despite the reptilian legs, fiends have cloven hooves. Their skin, while often white, can be any multitude of colours, and their arms end in oversized claws, similar to those of a crustacean.

It is an unusual creation, especially for aesthetic Slaanesh, for it lacks any form of humanoid intelligence and seems barely capable of even propelling itself forwards with any form of skill at times. However, the gangly appendages do not stop fiends from being incredibly fleet of foot. Half-staggering, half dancing, the creatures scuttle across the battlefield at an amazing pace. Although frail, fiends are quite dangerous in combat, attacking with flailing claws and venomous stingers while emitting a thick musk. The poison from their sting can put even an ogre or troll to sleep and the pervasive stench numbs the senses, lulling victims into the death's sweet embrace.

Swift: A fiend may perform 1 movement manoeuvre for free on each of its turns.

Poison: When a fiend inflicts a critical wound, the target suffers fatigue equal to the severity of the critical wound.

Suggested Action: Soporific Strike

MASQUE OF SLAANESH ☠☠☠☠☠

The Masque was once a daemonette, perhaps even the most favoured of them all. Her sensuous movements enraptured her audience, captivating them beyond distraction. Kings and emperors long past were said to be willing to give away their lands in exchange for a single dance, and even the Chaos Gods were struck by her prowess. There was good reason for this; her dancing and beauty were unrivalled, even amongst the followers of Slaanesh.

The Masque once danced for her lord Slaanesh, thinking to ease his mood, but this so displeased him that he cursed the Masque for eternity, forbidding her to ever again know rest. Movement wracks her limbs at all times but she can never stop her dance. Driven insane by the perpetual music that plays within her mind, and her mind alone, she dances, cackling, throughout the Realm of Chaos. When it pleases Slaanesh to unleash his pet, her captivating steps carry her into mortal lands.

The Masque is drawn to excess and often appears at banquets, theatres, or operas, dancing for the attendees. All observers are immediately drawn into the pantomime, dancing in time with the Masque until their bones break, limbs and muscle rip, and their

brains rupture under the strain. The Masque then dances ever onwards, leaving behind the wrecked minds and corpses of her victims, still twitching to her silent tune long after their hearts have stopped beating. To fight the Masque is to face a creature of intense seduction; any adventurer, male or female, will likely be drawn to the endless dance, unwilling to fight the creature.

Grotesque Majesty: As a result of her distracting presence, add ■■ to the dice pool of all actions targeting the Masque.

Eternal Dance: Each character within close range of the Masque suffers 1 fatigue at the beginning of his turn.

Unnatural Reflexes: The Masque of Slaanesh is a dancer of unequalled skill. She has three ranks of training in Coordination. She is also **Swift**, and may perform 1 movement manoeuvre per turn for free.

Suggested Action: Dance of Dreaming/Chanson of Caging

GREATER SERVANTS

The supreme servants of Slaanesh are his greater daemons. Whether they have served their master for aeons, or have been newly summoned from the Realm of Chaos, such beasts are both hideous and beautiful to behold, such is the depth of their depravity, but also the intensity of their gifts.

For Slaanesh, war is yet another sensation, one that can be accentuated through victory and the causing of agony. The greater daemons of Slaanesh are designed to find the ultimate gratification in the art of killing. Moving gracefully across the battlefield, these creatures scream, moan, and writhe in ecstasy as the thrill of battle rakes through their veins. The conduct of these daemons on the battlefield is horrific to witness, often consuming raw flesh, inflict-



ing pain upon themselves to induce a frenzy, addicted to the sensation of destruction. Causing pain has become a basic need for these daemons and they will do anything to intensify the ecstasy of violence, but no amount of slaughter can slake their lust. Once the last cruelty has been committed, these foul servants of Slaanesh immediately yearn for their next fix, which can only be found by wreaking still greater devastation. Commanding utter devotion, these creatures lead great hosts to war, salivating at the untold pleasures to come.

Unfathomable Power: All actions and skill checks targeting a greater servant of Slaanesh gain ♦.

Terrifying to Behold: All greater servants of Slaanesh cause Terror 3.

KEEPER OF SECRETS ☠☠☠☠☠☠☠☠

The Keeper of Secrets is the most beguiling of all of Slaanesh's creations. It is a creature that has no conventional beauty. It is androgynous, many limbed, and yet measured, sensuous, ethereal, and titillating to any that set eyes upon it.

The Liber Malefic tells of a great army that fell to its knees at the very sight of a Keeper of Secrets. To look within the piercing black eyes is to know the endless love of Slaanesh. But jealousy broke out amongst the troops because each man believed that he had the favour of this magnificent being. Angered by this, the army tore itself to pieces limb by limb, until none remained. The daemon merely watched, licking its lascivious lips at the sight of such blissful violence.

Adorned with claws, tentacles, and intricate weapons capable of causing insufferable misery, such a creature would always be a danger. However, Keepers of Secrets are also masters of sorcery, and their mouths constantly work to expel their beguiling words and thoughts into the atmosphere, weaving a magical aura over the battlefield. A Keeper of Secrets is capable of turning man against man, brother against brother, clouding or wracking minds with agonising pain or pleasure, and withering men's bodies until they are no longer capable of fighting. A Keeper of Secrets also feeds upon the very souls of those they brush aside and so facing one is doubly dangerous; many defeated have awoken to find themselves in the Realm of Chaos, damned forever to be tormented for pleasure by the followers of Slaanesh.

Only the incorruptible should attempt to face such a mighty daemon, and even then, the pure of heart have often fallen prey to either the subtle manipulations of a Keeper of Secrets or to its overwhelming martial and magical skill.

Lure of Perfection: Characters within medium range of a Keeper of Secrets lose the free manoeuvre on their turn.

Secrets of Battle: A Keeper of Secrets has three ranks of training in Charm, Guile, Leadership, Spellcraft, and Weapon Skill. It favours spells with the *Slaanesh* or *Chaos* traits and does not need to channel or spend power to fuel its spells.

Reach: A Keeper of Secrets may use *Melee Attack* actions against targets it is not engaged with at close range.

Suggested Action: Final Caress

DAEMON PRINCE OF SLAANESH ☠☠☠☠☠☠

Tales from the Liber Malefic tell how once-great warriors, consumed by their desires and temptations, have literally transformed in front of others. At the moment of final, amazing alteration, skin falls from muscle, bone reshapes, wings and horns sprout, and all manner of foul appendages surface, basking in the glory of their fell master. Often three times or greater in size than their former stature, these creatures rightly inspire thoughts of absolute terror.

Once in such a state, these favoured champions also shrug off their mortality, destined to serve their god for eternity. They gain an intense thirst for souls and rampage through the mortal and daemonic realms, hunting their master's enemies. As perverse as any other follower of Slaanesh, these daemon princes are twisted into a form more pleasing to their master. While sharing common traits such as wings, a powerful tail, and razor sharp talons, Slaanesh's daemon princes are lither and far more graceful in their actions than daemon princes that serve the other Ruinous Powers. They may even wear fine robes or armour in a vile mockery of their original form. Their armour is often imbued with disgusting runes, and their potent weaponry is ancient and magical in nature, able to carve through flesh with the greatest ease. Even more so than such creatures of the other Ruinous Powers, a Slaaneshi daemon prince will be at the forefront of its army, whipping the troops into the lust of battle, caressing their senses with its words, and tearing through flesh with masterful strikes.

Lure of Perfection: Characters within medium range of a Daemon Prince of Slaanesh lose the free manoeuvre on their turn.

Potent Foe: A Daemon Prince of Slaanesh has two ranks of training in Charm, Guile, Leadership and Weapon Skill.

Suggested Action: Torment



MORTAL SERVANTS OF SLAANESH

To those who see Slaanesh only as the god of pleasure, it may seem odd that he is so venerated by the proud warriors of the north. Legions of Norse marauders and Kurgan are devotees of Slaanesh for the many boons that he can offer. The most prestigious of these warriors are attractive, charismatic leaders that inspire great devotion in their followers. They command legions willing to fight and die for them and maintain a host of the most beautiful and adoring womenfolk to continue their line.

Champions of Slaanesh are great warriors, trained to strike with the utmost precision in order to inflict wounds that cause the greatest amount of pain possible, as opposed to the pure rage and aggression of a Khornate champion. These warriors strive for perfection in their combat skills, shunning the simple rage and fury of Khorne's followers and instead focusing on becoming efficient killing machines. In combat, they are majestic to watch, their beautifully crafted strikes inflicting mortal wounds time after time.

Slaaneshi armies often march into battle wearing ornate armour or even brightly dyed leathers replete with frivolous and excessive patterns sewn into the hides, giving the impression of a finely dressed circus marching to war.

Mark of Slaanesh: All mortal servants of Slaanesh are blessed with a Mark of Slaanesh.

EXALTED CHAMPION OF SLAANESH ☠☠☠☠☠

In the harsh, Norse lands near the Chaos Wastes, there is no guarantee of survival even for the hardy. Warriors considered mighty among normal men are cast by the wayside, naught but pawns in a great game. For a Chaos Warrior to rise above his peers and become an Exalted Champion is an achievement that brings him infamy and a fearsome reputation. These warriors have proved themselves not only in combat, but also in their devotion to the Ruinous Powers. Exalted Champions bear the scars, and the rewards, of a thousand battles and are often blessed with mutations, marks, and other foul gifts.

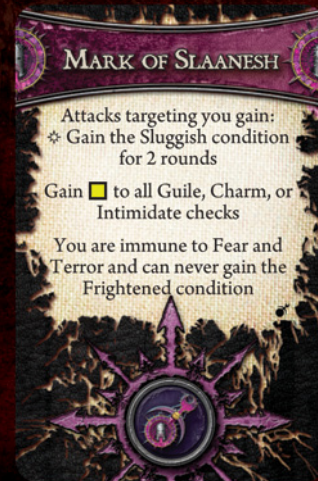
Exalted Champions of Slaanesh are great and striking leaders. They command mighty forces with a few charismatic words, spurring them on to achieve great victories in the name of Slaanesh. The perfection of their strikes, each one a killing blow, draws followers to them who wish to learn from their impeccable skill. The history of the deeds of Slaanesh's champions makes for grim reading: entire towns and cities slaughtered to the man and massive armies slain, each corpse's face contorted in perfect agony at its final moment of suffering. These fell achievements are spread out over the course of decades, or even centuries. Exalted Champions of Slaanesh are dangerous and wily opponents indeed.

Feared Foe: An Exalted Champion of Slaanesh causes Fear 2 when first encountered.

Paragon of Warfare: An Exalted Champion of Slaanesh has 1 rank trained in Discipline, Leadership, and Resilience, and 2 ranks trained in Weapon Skill.

Suggested Action: The Perfect Stroke

MARK OF SLAANESH



The Mark of Slaanesh is a mark upon the body of a servant of that Dark God which signifies his allegiance and bestows upon him special powers.

The first effect is that any time someone engaged with a marked servant attacks him and rolls a Chaos Star ✧ he gains the Sluggish condition for 2 rounds. This is in addition to any other effect that the Chaos Star ✧ may incur.

The second effect of the Mark of Slaanesh is that it confers 1 die to all Guile, Charm, or Intimidate checks made by the bearer of the Mark.

The final effect of the Mark of Slaanesh is that the bearer is immune to Fear and Terror and can never gain the Frightened condition.

The Mark may also cause difficulties for the servant of Slaanesh. Such a Mark may be difficult to hide, and, as such, anyone that recognises the Mark is likely to report the bearer to the Witch Hunters or local watch.

CHAOS SORCERER OF SLAANESH ☠☠☠☠

Chaos Sorcerers are powerful and dangerous foes, using more of the Winds of Magic than their counterparts at the Colleges of Magic despite the risk of mutation, corruption, or even worse fates. Sorcerers of Slaanesh are powerful spellcasters capable of distorting and distracting the mind to cause seizures, frenzies, and delusions.

Some sorcerers of Slaanesh are former students and acolytes of the Imperial colleges who have fallen and turned to Chaos. There are many reasons why a man may sell his soul to the daemonic power of Slaanesh. Perhaps the wizard felt impotent in comparison to his peers or simply desired even greater power. Others, delighting in their creations and cantrips, have fallen into a pattern of excess, devolving over time into a devotee of Slaanesh until their greed transforms them into a mere puppet, a tool of the Ruinous Powers. These depraved sorcerers take great joy in using their powers for destruction or pleasure, weaving through the Winds of Magic with their minds and basking in pure Chaos energies.

Others still are men from the harsh north that have been raised to Chaos. Either through prayer, mutation, or sheer luck, these sorcerers have become attuned to the Winds of Magic and are bestowed with the same great powers as their fallen brethren.

Magical Aptitude: A Chaos Sorcerer of Slaanesh has Channelling, Education, Magical Sight and Spellcraft trained. He does not need to channel or use power in order to cast spells.

Suggested Action: Velvet Parlance

PRINCE SIGVALD ☠☠☠☠☠☠☠☠

Prince Sigvald appears to be a male warrior in the height of his prime, but he is several hundred years old. Born the eldest son of a powerful and already depraved Norse warlord, Sigvald took after his father, and went farther still. The excesses of the chief's progeny disgusted all within the tribe, as Sigvald partook in all kinds of unnatural pleasures and even had a fondness for human flesh. Despite the handsome boy's skill with the blade and the distinctive aura around him, he was cast out into the snowy wilderness. Sigvald took his revenge, slaying his father remorselessly and wallowing in the pleasure of his latest debauched act.

Sigvald turned his life over to his dark lord, Slaanesh. Every wish of the vain warlord was granted, and he has grown ever more handsome over the course of his disgusting lifetime. Clad in brilliant gold armour, wearing a mirrored shield, and armed with the legendary sword Silverslash, Sigvald is an awe-inducing sight on the battlefield. Caring for nothing without beauty, Sigvald puts anything that displeases him to the sword but neither blood nor filth besmirches his magnificent armour. Spoiled by his master, Sigvald is rash and petulant, but he remains an incredibly dangerous foe. Despite, or perhaps because of, his utter depravity, the prince inspires great devotion amongst his followers and they would give their lives to defend him. Sigvald himself is a mighty warrior in his own right, having trained and honed his skills over the centuries, and his boyish good looks belie the unnatural strength lies coiled within his body. Despite his polished exterior, his soul is utterly damned. A capricious and dangerous foe, Prince Sigvald is rightly feared by those who know his name and reputation.

Supreme Vanity: Sigvald is the vainest man in the Old World, and calls his troops to him at all times to pay compliments to him and to attend his every whim. Once per turn, Prince Sigvald may divert any successful attack made against him onto one of his followers who is in the same engagement.

Mirrored Shield: Sigvald's mighty, mirrored shield is polished to an incredible degree. Mostly, this is used so that the Scion of Slaanesh can stare lovingly at himself. However, whenever the shield is exposed to bright light, attacks against Sigvald gain:

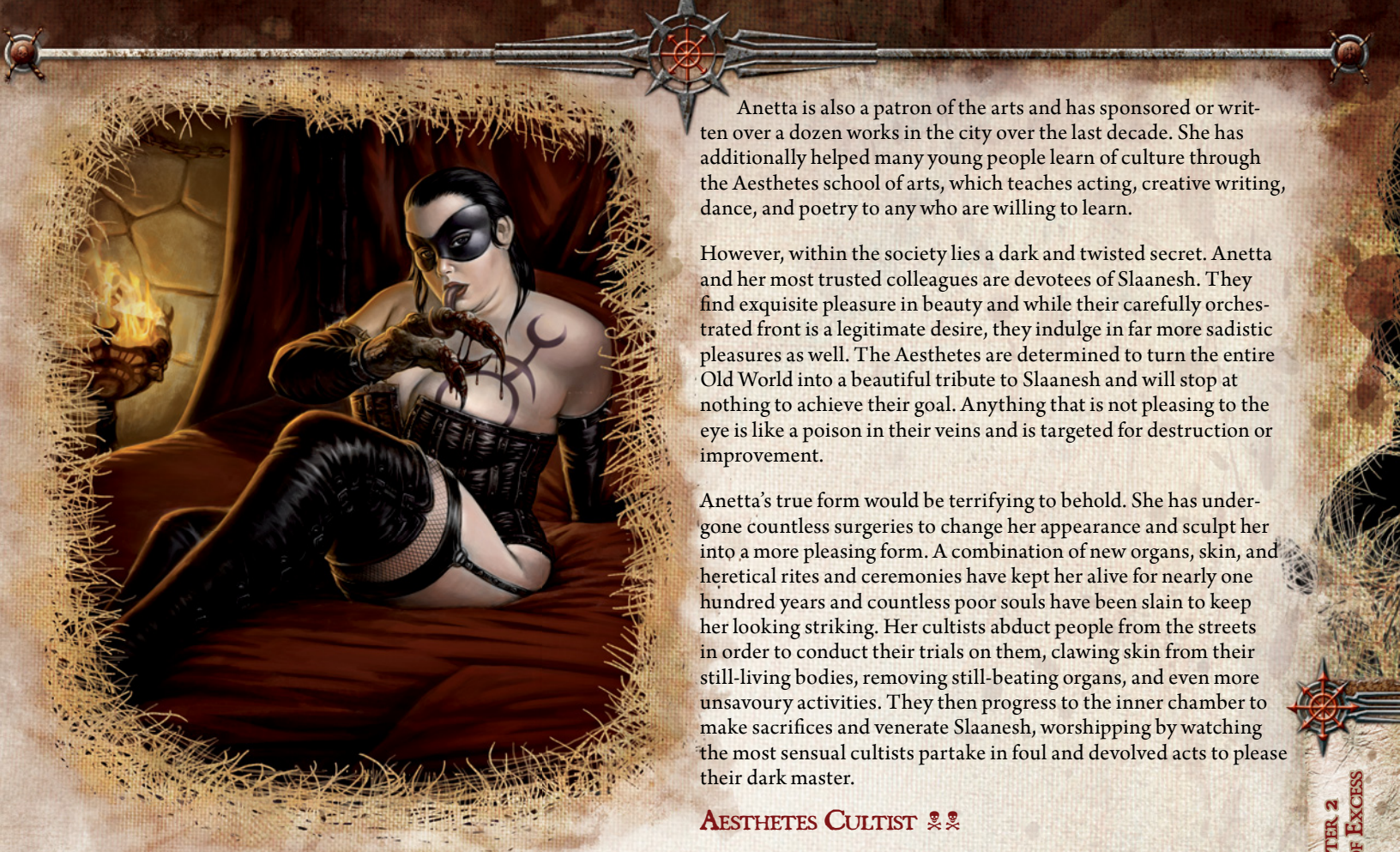
✧ Gain the Blinded condition for 2 rounds

Auric Armour: During his End of Turn Phase, Sigvald recovers one normal wound.

Suggested Action: Favoured Son

THE AESTHETES

The Aesthetes have found a home in Marienburg, arguably the grandest, most beautiful (and most decadent) city in the Old World. It is a centre of trade, where cultures meet as merchants from Araby, Tilea, and Estalia flog their wares on the stinking streets. Marienburg is home to several opulent theatres and galleries and fantastic operas, plays, and carnivals are put on to delight the viewer every year. Beauty, however, is in the eye of the beholder, and there is one group within Marienburg that values it above all other traits. The Aesthetes are, on the outside, like many other societies; prominent, opinionated, well-voiced, and harmless. Based in the exclusive Tempelwijk district, they regularly attend meetings and councils to help further their cause: the increased beautification of the city.



The average member is extremely well-dressed, following the latest fashions, and is attractive, to say the least. This is not always in a conventional way; while there are many slim, svelte individuals, others are much larger, but with a sultry essence and lasciviousness about them that simply cannot be ignored. Men and women often wear make-up, including thick crimson lipstick, and when out in town, Aesthetes can often be recognised on account of the many servants that hover around them, ensuring that no filth is splashed on their expensive clothing, and that no urchins can distract them from their business.

For all their oddities, the group has proved rather popular, especially amongst the poor quarters of the town. The group has loudly protested that several of the slums districts are unfit for human habitation. They proudly display eye-catching designs for how the area should be knocked down and rebuilt to increase living standards to make the whole of Marienburg more pleasing upon the eye.

The group is led by Anetta van Klausner, a voluptuous woman in her thirties, who, despite her size, is still of striking beauty. She has never taken a husband, though various men of the city have tried, and failed, to woo her. Rumours have it that she rivals even the Countess Emmanuelle of Nuln for the number of potential suitors that chase endlessly after her, eager for a night in her favour. She is normally clad in a tight-fitting velvet robe of some sort, although she insists on never wearing an outfit more than once before it is discarded. She is obviously a wealthy woman, but with no knowledge of her heritage, and no prior husbands, the source of her wealth is a mystery.

Anetta is also a patron of the arts and has sponsored or written over a dozen works in the city over the last decade. She has additionally helped many young people learn of culture through the Aesthetes school of arts, which teaches acting, creative writing, dance, and poetry to any who are willing to learn.

However, within the society lies a dark and twisted secret. Anetta and her most trusted colleagues are devotees of Slaanesh. They find exquisite pleasure in beauty and while their carefully orchestrated front is a legitimate desire, they indulge in far more sadistic pleasures as well. The Aesthetes are determined to turn the entire Old World into a beautiful tribute to Slaanesh and will stop at nothing to achieve their goal. Anything that is not pleasing to the eye is like a poison in their veins and is targeted for destruction or improvement.

Anetta's true form would be terrifying to behold. She has undergone countless surgeries to change her appearance and sculpt her into a more pleasing form. A combination of new organs, skin, and heretical rites and ceremonies have kept her alive for nearly one hundred years and countless poor souls have been slain to keep her looking striking. Her cultists abduct people from the streets in order to conduct their trials on them, clawing skin from their still-living bodies, removing still-beating organs, and even more unsavoury activities. They then progress to the inner chamber to make sacrifices and venerate Slaanesh, worshipping by watching the most sensual cultists partake in foul and devolved acts to please their dark master.

AESTHETES CULTIST ☠☠

Fast Talker: Aesthetes cultists have one rank of Charm and Guile trained.

Suggested Action: Peerless Strike

AESTHETES CULT LEADER ☠☠☠

Fast Talker: An Aesthetes cult leader has two ranks of Charm and Guile trained.

Suggested Action: Malicious Seduction

OTHER MORTAL WARRIORS

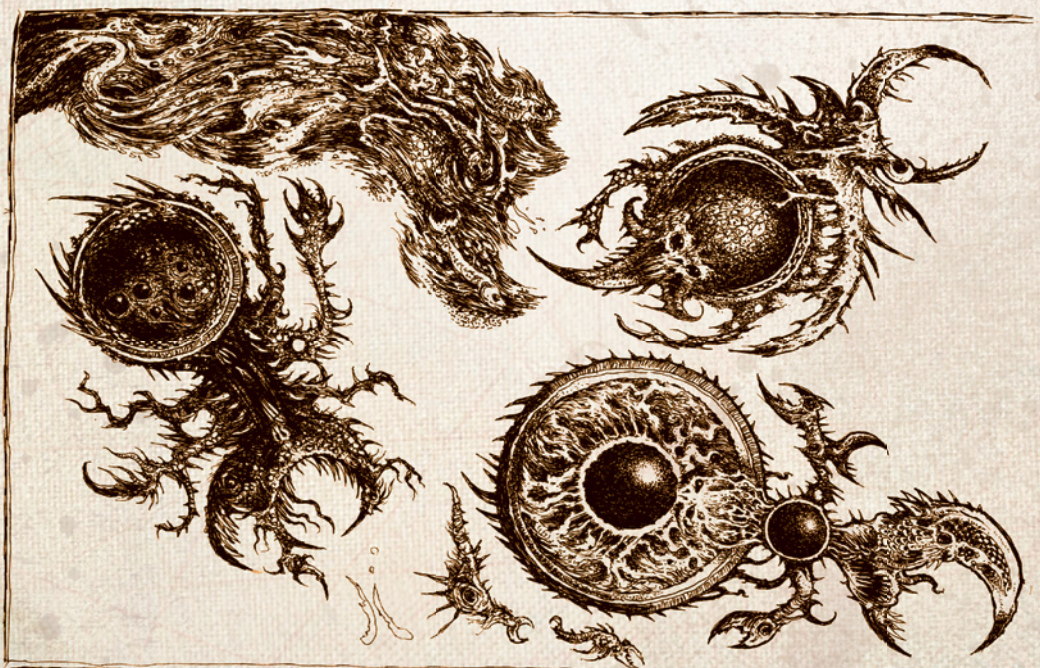
Slaanesh can command mighty armies of mortal creatures from the frozen wastes above the Sea of Claws. These warriors are just as brutal and even more depraved than worshippers of the other gods. During combat, Slaanesh can call upon Chaos warriors, Chaos marauders, Chaos knights and Chaos marauder horsemen to aid his other minions. The GM can use these existing creatures (found in the Core Product and Omens of War) to test his adventurers. He should also add the Mark of Slaanesh to them, the rules for which are found on page 15.

DAEMONIC SERVANTS OF SLAANESH

CREATURE	ST	TO	AG	INT	WP	FEL	A/C/E	WOUNDS	STANCE
DAEMONETTE	4 (5)	4 (1)	5 ■ (1)	3	3	5	4/3/1	14	C1
DAEMON PRINCE	7 ■ (8)	7 (3)	6 (3)	5	7	7 ■	6/8/5	30	R3
FIEND OF SLAANESH	4 (5)	4 (3)	6 ■ (3)	2	3	5	5/6/2	18	C2
KEEPER OF SECRETS	6 (3)	7 (4)	9 ■ (4)	7 ■	8	10 ■	9/9/9	36	C4
MASQUE OF SLAANESH	4 (6)	4 (5)	7 ■ (2)	4	4	6 ■	4/7/4	18	C2/R2
SEEKER OF SLAANESH	4 (5)	4 (2)	6 ■ (2)	3	3	5	5/4/2	16	C2
STEED OF SLAANESH	3 (4)	3 (2)	5 ■ (2)	3	2	4	4/3/1	14	C1

MORTAL SERVANTS OF SLAANESH

CREATURE	ST	TO	AG	INT	WP	FEL	A/C/E	WOUNDS	STANCE
AESTHETES CULTIST	3 (5)	3 (1)	4 ■ (1)	3	3	4 ■	2/4/1	10	C1
AESTHETES CULT LEADER	3 (5)	3 (1)	5 ■ (2)	4	4	5	3/6/3	12	C2
CHAOS SORCERER	3 (4)	3 (1)	3 (2)	5 ■	5	4	2/6/2	12	C2
EXALTED CHAMPION	7 (6)	6 (3)	4 ■ (3)	3	5	5 ■	6/4/2	20	R3
PRINCE SIGVALD	7 ■ (6)	5 (5)	5 ■ (2)	4	4	6 ■	3/8/5	20	C3





CHAPTER THREE

SECRET SOCIETIES

There are many secret societies within the Empire. Some are professional organizations, loose fraternities of like-minded fellows who band together to address matters that affect their trade or industry. Others bring together those of similar taste, whether in art, food, or society. Some are perfectly innocent and not even especially secret, such as the many dinner clubs that spring up wherever wealthy gentlemen with a love of good food, good wine, and good conversation are known to congregate. Others are of dubious legality, such as the Black Hat Society of Altdorf, a gang of gentleman-vigilantes.

Some secret societies live up to the name. Their existence is not widely-known, they recruit very selectively, and they even have an “inner circle” of veteran members entrusted with the true secrets of the order. While some may be suspicious of any group that takes its secrecy so seriously, even these secretive organizations run a wide gamut from well-intentioned to deeply-corrupt.

Of course, the most interesting secret societies are the ones with rot at their core. The societies that feature innocent facades and deep and corrupted secrets within their inner circle. The societies in which a character can be trapped, as the seemingly-innocent activi-

ties in which they’ve participated are revealed to be awful sins and crimes in which they are complicit. These are the societies that this chapter is concerned with.



You’ve heard the saying, ‘It’s not what you know, it’s who you know?’ Well, it’s also what you know about who you know, if you catch my meaning. People always has a few more secrets than you think they do.

- Klara Vogel, barmaid



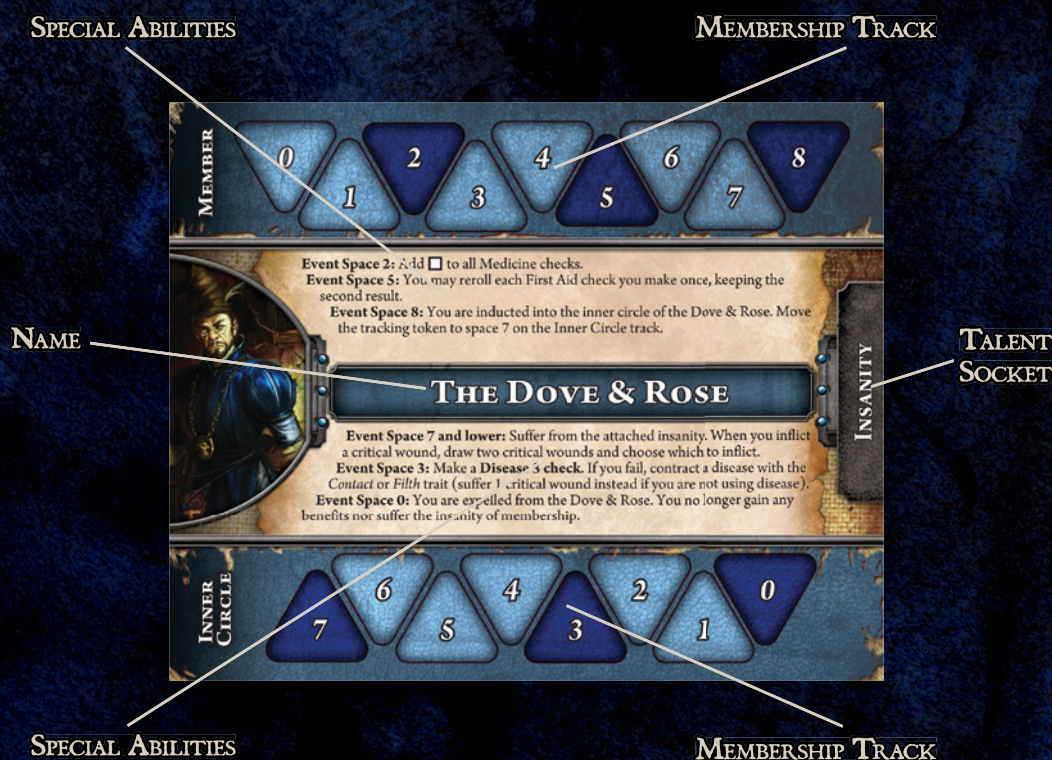
SECRET SOCIETY SHEETS

The use of Secret Society sheets (and secret societies in general) is optional and is one more tool GMs have at their disposal when designing adventures. Several example secret societies are presented in this chapter and each one has a corresponding sheet that can be used to track the depth of any PC who has joined its ranks. These sheets should remain hidden from the PCs.

MEMBERSHIP

PCs may hear about a guild or secret society from any number of sources. A member of The Dove & Rose may pass by just as a physician PC is performing a complicated street surgery and extend an invitation (it matters not if the patient lives or dies). The PCs may be investigating a rash of brutal murders that lead them straight to the University of Nuln chapter of Youngbloods. Or perhaps the PCs are simply interested in bettering their lowly lot in life and are told about the wonders of Johan Heck's School in this regard. No matter how a PC finds out about a secret society, once he has completed

ANATOMY OF A SECRET SOCIETY SHEET



Name. The name of the secret society or organisation that the sheet represents.

Special Abilities. Any special abilities or penalties that are associated with being a member of this secret society are described here.

Membership Tracks. How deep a PC is within the secret society is measured using progress tracks on the top and bottom of the sheet. Special abilities are tied to the progress track to determine when certain effects occur.

Talent Socket. Each sheet contains one or more talent sockets, often an Insanity slot, along the right side. The GM should select this talent and socket it to the sheet when the secret society is first introduced.

Set Icon. Each sheet is marked on the back with a set icon to quickly identify which product the sheet is from.

any initiation rituals and paid any membership fees, he becomes an official member and a tracking token representing his standing within the organisation is placed on Space 2 of the Member track. From here, the GM determines how a PC can advance within the guild. As a general rule, follow the guidelines below.

- ✦ Each time the PC works toward the goals of the secret society, the GM should move his tracking token to a higher number along the track as appropriate.
- ✦ Each time the PC works against the goals of the secret society (see Getting Out below), the GM should move his tracking token to a lower number along the track as appropriate.

If a PC ever reaches space 0 on either track, he is ejected from the secret society. This could have major repercussions.

While mainly used to keep track of a PC's involvement, the GM should feel free to add NPCs to the secret society progress track if desired.

Example: Mary's character Lillian, a courtier who desires to advance her standing in court, has worked for years to secure an invitation to the Gourmand Society. Finally having influenced just the right people, she receives an invitation delivered by carrier pigeon. The GM places Mary's tracking token on space 2 of the Member track on the Gourmand Society Secret Society sheet. Over the next several months, she attends each and every event, becoming more and more involved. The GM moves Lillian's tracking token up the Member track accordingly.

SPECIAL ABILITIES & EVENTS

Each Secret Society sheet lists special abilities or penalties that the members gain depending on their depth on the track. Whenever a tracking token reaches a particular coloured event space, that special ability activates for the PC who triggered it. Once triggered, these abilities are cumulative for as long as the PC remains a member of the secret society unless otherwise stated. A character who has activated a special ability and then moves below the coloured event space does not lose access to the special ability unless they reach space 0 at which point they are expelled from the Secret Society and no longer gain any benefits (or penalties) of membership. Refer to the individual Secret Society sheets for more details.

INNER CIRCLE

Members who advance within the organisation, reaching space 8 on the member track, are deemed worthy to be brought into the inner circle and move to space 7 on the Inner Circle track. This usually involves another elaborate induction ceremony or other transitional event. In many cases, at this point the final curtain is pulled back and all of the secrets and hidden agendas of the secret society are revealed.

Once a PC is inducted into the inner circle, they may no longer move back down to the Member track (they cannot unlearn the secrets they have learned), although inner circle members still retain the special abilities from the Member track unless otherwise noted.

Note: Each Inner Circle track counts down instead of up (see Getting Out below). Once a member is inducted into the inner circle, he cannot usually advance any further within the organisation along the track.

Example: Mary's character Lillian has now tried dozens of the most exotic and mysterious dishes imaginable and constantly craves more. Her palate has been refined to the point that even meals prepared by the best halfling chefs she can put on retainer are barely appetising. Lillian has reached space 8 of the Member track on the Gourmand Society Secret Society sheet. Deemed ready, she is invited to join the inner circle of the club. Lillian's token is moved to space 7 on the Inner Circle track and an induction party is thrown in her honour with only inner circle members invited. The true nature of the Gourmand Society is revealed when Lillian is unmistakably served dwarf brains in a greenskin reduction.

TALENT SLOT

Each Secret Society sheet may also include one or more talent slots. When a card is socketed into the sheet, all members of the inner circle are affected by it. In many cases, this manifests in the form of an insanity that all inner circle members share. The GM should select this insanity card or talent card as appropriate and socket it to the sheet when the secret society is first introduced. Appropriate insanities or talent cards are suggested for each of the secret societies below.

GETTING OUT

Occasionally a member comes to realise that their goals and beliefs no longer coincide with those of the secret society they are a part of. This is especially true when a member is inducted into the inner circle and shown the true ambition of the society. Of course, getting out is never easy and each group will try and keep its members compliant.

PCs on the Member track can simply stop attending meetings and refuse to participate in society events. This will quickly lower their standing in the guild and should move their token down the track until they are finally ejected.

PCs on the Inner Circle track are privy to dangerous and incriminating information and will find it considerably more difficult to escape. The PCs may stop attending meetings and refuse to participate in society events, and this will still move their token down the track, but their truancy will surely be noticed. Eventually, other members of the society will likely take action to reintegrate or failing that, eliminate the PCs. Even when the PCs token reaches space 0 on the Inner Circle track and they are ejected from the club, there may be long term repercussions. Getting out and staying out may be an adventure all its own.

Example: Mary's character Lillian, horrified by her discovery at her own induction party, realises that she must now get out of the Gourmand Society. Will anyone believe her if she brings accusations to the authorities? Surely her standing within the court will never recover from such a scandal. Besides... she still feels repulsively drawn to the invigorating fare of the club. As Lillian works to remove herself from the Gourmand Society, the GM moves Lillian's tracking token down the Inner Circle track accordingly. She'd best tread carefully however, lest she end up as the main course at the next party.

SAMPLE SECRET SOCIETIES

Presented herein are five secret societies ready to be dropped into an existing adventure. Alternatively, the GM may decide to develop an entire campaign story arc based on one of these organisations.

YOUNG BLADES

It is a sad truth of the noble classes that sometimes, young men with too much money and too few responsibilities descend to idleness and dissolution. While many noble parents endeavour to find gainful employment for their sons, either as students at various academies and other institutions throughout the Empire, or sponsoring their enlistment in the Pistolkorps or the army, these efforts are not universally successful. Occasionally, the rich fops and diletantes of a city will unite into a semi-formal society based on their shared high birth and studied boredom. Here they are free to drink, gamble, and whore the nights away with likeminded young nobles with far too much time and gold at their disposal. These groups are strongly fraternal, and nobles often retain links to their societies after they move on, aiding one another in many small ways as the young men (for they are nearly always men) grow into adulthood. There is normally some kind of society uniform and a strong rivalry with other, similar societies.

One such society, the Young Blades, has endured for several decades in Nuln and has acquired a thin veneer of respectability. Many of its members of today are the sons and nephews of the original Young Blades, and membership in the society is seen by some as a great coup. After all, a young noble who spends a few years carousing with the Young Blades develops friendships with many other men who will go on to very important posts throughout the Empire – or at least, that's the theory.

The society itself is quite fractured, despite owning a grand property where the current members and alumni can meet to while their time away. Much of the society is happy to enjoy life, playing cards and dice with their fathers' money, relaxing with a fine Bretonnian brandy or Estalian wine.

There are others, however, who use the opportunity to rebel against the polite society upbringing that they have enjoyed, spending their days causing mischief and committing petty crimes, safe in the knowledge that they are practically above suspicion. Even if unlucky enough to be caught, a Young Blade would no doubt be able to bribe his way out of trouble.

Bored of gambling, the stakes for these 'games' can quickly get out of hand. Pranks and initiation forfeits that the newest members may have to endure include leaving an inn without settling the tab, beating a local prostitute, or some petty theft. These tasks, common enough, however, can become like a drug to those with more addictive personalities.

The Young Blades have been known to cause a great deal of embarrassment, but most problems are quickly forgotten thanks to some 'generous donations' from the families or even the society itself. The society was almost disbanded due to a serious incident in 2457, but the event was struck from all known records. If any members know about this grievous incident, they choose to keep their lips tightly sealed.

Theft and non-bloody violence soon lose their appeal when higher stakes are available. Duelling is a popular sport amongst the nobility, but some of the Young Blades have taken things a step further. They will deliberately set up incidents to provoke duels, and will insist upon fighting to the death, as their honour has been so besmirched by these falsified confrontations.

The most loathsome members carry their twisted bets into the impoverished streets beyond their regular haunts. Normally regarded by most citizens as a blight, the city's wretched homeless are seldom missed when they disappear. Unfortunately, many of these lost souls are all too often dragged to an untimely death. The Young Blades make nauseating wagers to see if they can first stomach, and then get away with, the bloody business of murder. They sometimes kidnap the poor victim first, subject him to brutal torture, and then give him false hope with a period of good treatment. A square meal, ale, and the promise of employment would warm the heart of many a commoner, let alone a hopeless street vagrant. But their hearts are soon cooled by the Young Blades' knives and their blood spilled in the name of pleasure.

Suggested Insanities: Easily Goaded, Irrational Compulsion, Manic Fervour

KILL THEM ALL!

Some groups may be appalled at what they find when they reach the inner circle of a secret society. For example, few PCs will be content members of Martin Van Der Beek's Gourmand Society when they discover the true nature of his exotic menu. And while their first impulse might be to draw arms and destroy the guild from within, this could be a very dangerous course of action. Not only would the PCs likely be vastly outnumbered, but many of these groups, including the Gourmand Society, are quite practised at covering their tracks. Unless the PCs have a good deal of physical evidence against the society, violence will likely only result in the PCs themselves having to answer to the city guard.



THE GOURMAND SOCIETY

High society has always been partially about one-upmanship, and the banquets and parties thrown by the nobility have long been a part of the courtly game. Some nobles become sponsors or members of exclusive dinner clubs, as a way to publicly tout their superior taste. The best of these societies are by invitation only, and none more so than that of Martin Van Der Beek, a Marienburger chef whose rapid rise to fame has been remarkable.

His dinner club has, for the last year, been the most desirable and over-subscribed. The waiting list stretches to over two hundred and it is rumoured that even Graf von Jungfreud has been forced to wait for entry. Parties are held regularly at secret locations chosen by Van Der Beek himself. Invitations are sent to members via carrier pigeon, all part of the thrill and intrigue of this most secretive and yet well-known clubs in Reikland. Members must arrive in unmarked coaches, and the dinners are conducted in masquerade, much to the delight of the diners.

The reason for the popularity of the Gourmand Society is the fantastic food. Van Der Beek is very secretive about his contacts but claims to serve food from Lustria, Albion, Cathy, and Araby; exquisite delicacies from around the globe. Even the well-heeled guests have rarely seen or tasted such unusual foods.

As a part of the theatrics, Van Der Beek never gives out a menu, just a summary of the ingredients' origins. If the ingredients are (or are purported to be) from Ulthuan, for instance, the delighted guests spend the evening discussing the identity of the elven finery they just consumed. The Gourmand Society has plenty of competitors, so Van Der Beek relies on showmanship to differentiate himself; in recent months, the menus have grown increasingly outlandish. As the guests' palettes become harder to please, the presentation of the food grows more and more ornate.

There is good reason why Van Der Beek never issues a menu at his Gourmand Society. Many of the guests believe the club is innocent, albeit expensive, fun. The actual ingredients, however, tell a different tale.

In truth, Van Der Beek is a worshipper of Slaanesh. His pleasant-mannered, Marienburger exterior conceals the soul of a depraved maniac who takes pleasure in feeding his guests all manner of twisted meals. Due to the masked nature of the feasts, no one knows that some of the guests are cultists posing as nobles to loudly praise all of the foodstuffs presented.

Past courses have included roasted belly of halfling, jellied eye of high elf, salad with warystone dressing, and rack of lamb with dwarf-blood jus. Even the fine vintage wines served contain tiny concoctions of poisons, drugs, and blood to accentuate the taste. Despite the wonderful sensations derived from the food, the kitchens are an obscene place, daubed with blood and crude signs of Slaanesh, created to bless the food as it leaves.

Van Der Beek started his diners off gently but gradually increased the more extreme qualities of his dishes until he saw a change in them. Unaware of the Prince of Pleasure's growing influence over them, they cry out for more and more exotic pleasures. It is Van Der Beek's foul prayer that through his subtle work, he can bring untold numbers of wealthy Reiklanders to worship Slaanesh himself.

Suggested Insanities: Unnatural Cravings, Thrill Seeker, Lethargy

MARTIN VAN DER BEEK

Martin Van Der Beek arrived in Altdorf two years ago and has since taken the culinary world by storm. His style of exotic flavours has seen him cooking for some of the Empire's pre-eminent citizens, and he has become somewhat of a minor celebrity himself, given his exuberant appearance and personality. Grossly overweight, the Marienburger appears to live by his motto: "Never send the food without tasting the food!" Van Der Beek sports a huge, waxed moustache that rivals Kurt Helborg's for Altdorf's best facial hair. Playing up to his reputation, he often emerges from the kitchens at his parties to rapturous applause, laughing and smiling as his belly strains at the seams of one of his bright tabards.

THE DOVE & ROSE

Medicine is still a relatively new field of study in the Old World. While the proper treatment of wounds and infections through the application of sanitary bandages and surgery has been known to many races for millennia, it is a skill that humans have largely ignored. Healing has been left either to the priestesses of Shallya or the crude barber-surgeons and their less than subtle instruments.

Most settlements do not have a skilled doktor, however, and those who are willing to travel, or have superior skills, can command a premium price. As a result, there are many eager students of medicine hoping to one day make their fortunes. As it stands, however, much of the establishment is still wary of these 'new' methods of healing, and so research and progress is slow.

The Dove & Rose provides a safe haven for those wishing to study the latest techniques or converse with their peers. Occupying a large townhouse near the University of Altdorf, the Dove & Rose provides an elegant, but understated frontage to any inquisitive soul who wanders by its doors. Inside, visitors are presented with thick carpets, panelled walls, and a vast array of texts by various medical professionals. The offices are luxurious and people of influence can be seen entering for various meetings. Medical professionals have recently been using their wealth to buy favour and acceptance and great banquets are thrown inside the building on such occasions.

Most of the building, however, is off-limits to those who cannot produce society membership and only doktors may apply for membership. Tests are stringent, requiring a large donation and a thorough examination with a senior member to ensure that members meet a minimum standard of knowledge and skill.

Competition between doktors is fierce, especially in Altdorf, and many stay up until the small hours working on new medicines and procedures or studying whatever texts they can lay their hands upon. All members know that the Dove & Rose is renowned for being able to procure almost anything in the name of research thanks to the various contacts that the guild has made over the years. Dead bodies, or body parts, and all kinds of rare ingredients are brought into the rear entrance of the building under the cover of night, where eager students await their grisly prizes with glee.

In recent times, the entire basement has been locked away to all but the most senior members for research purposes. Various labourers have been seen hauling crates and manuscripts into the darkened rooms for months, but the only entrance is always blocked by a heavy-set, well-armoured mercenary.

The basement of the Dove & Rose holds a great many secrets within its underground confines. The more scholarly types go to great lengths to import various texts that can be used for research. Mostly, these texts are harmless and permissible under Imperial law. However, smuggled inside secret compartments of the crates of books are rather less salubrious texts on the treatment of wounds and diseases. Long banned manuscripts and ancient tomes make up the huge basement library. Many hundreds of these books are so rare that the Witch Hunters have marked them as no longer being in existence.

The books, however, despite their chilling nature, are not the most disturbing aspect of this room of horrors. The rest of the space is given over to a cacophony of medical instruments. Racks, iron maidens, flails, whips, knives, scalpels, and jars filled with steaming liquids, gelatinous gloops, and brightly coloured broths adorn the room.

Several years ago, a certain Doktor Gregor Klauss, one of the pre-eminent scholars and members of the Dove & Rose of his day, wrote a treatise arguing that patients could be cured through pain. This study, highly controversial at the time, was banned soon after its publication. However, some of the medical fanatics within the society still try to maintain these ideals and hope to refine Klauss' theorem through further research. Live subjects, normally captured vagrants, are delivered into the basement, where crazed doktors conduct horrific experiments in the name of research, cutting up their "patients" to examine the still-beating organs, and the inner workings of the body.

Suggested Insanities: Rotting Body, Mental Mutation, Unhinged

THE BROTHERHOOD

Once a tiny society focused around Nuln, The Brotherhood now has chapter houses in several other cities throughout the Empire. While the chapter houses are often large, impressive buildings, the society is very secretive, especially about its membership.

Those that wish to join must go through a lengthy initiation procedure, make several proclamations to other members, and finally, learn various secret gestures and keywords so that they can be identifiable to other members of the society.

The chapter house is not just a place to relax and converse with like-minded citizens, however. The Brotherhood has several tenets to which members must adhere, including remaining upstanding citizens of the Empire, following a strict moral code, demonstrating a willingness to help other members, exhibiting a passion for self-improvement, insisting upon charitable donations, and taking an oath to keep the secrets of the society safe.

As a result, the group has become rather popular with the mercantile and tradesman classes. This group in particular desires respect, both for their status from those below them and for their achievements from those above them. The Brotherhood is the perfect vehicle to help gain the respect that these artisans desire, especially through the charitable foundations and projects funded through member donations. Recent projects have included

a new well dug in the poor part of Ubersreik, a statue of Karl Franz raised in Carroburg, and large donations to the libraries of the Imperial Universities.

The reason, however, behind the desire for self-improvement is that The Brotherhood does not trust the pantheon of Imperial gods to guide its members through life and provide for them. Junior members are subjected to long, dreary talks about 'the clockwork universe' that governs the destiny of the world, and all that live upon it. This is reflected in the sign of the guild, which is a single, open eye set upon a clock face.

To the inner circle of members within each chapter house, the true secrets of the 'clockwork universe' have been revealed. Each member must renounce any loyalty to Sigmar, Shallya, Rhya, Ulric, or any other deity they once served. Once the atheistic oath has been taken, the members are inducted into the chapter house's 'inner sanctum', where they are told about 'the Clockmakers.'

The group believes that the Old World has long been abandoned by any divine power, and that humanity, along with the other races, was left to its own devices after the world was created millennia ago. This belief is expressed in one of the many phrases uttered between Brotherhood fellows: "Man hath no destiny except thine own."

This tenet was written by the Brotherhood's founder, Henrik Von Staffen, a failed engineer who awoke one day to find he had been press-ganged onto a ship heading for Lustria. Von Staffen led a mutiny on the voyage back to the Old World and returned wealthy beyond his dreams, both in terms of gold and knowledge. No one outside the Brotherhood is certain what von Staffen found in Lustria, but some whisper of strange temples with golden plates telling the history of the world in pictures. With his own "expertise" (to be generous), Von Staffen identified the figures on



the plates as the creators of the world, and being a worker in clockwork himself he dubbed them 'the Clockmakers.' He used his fortune to found the Brotherhood in his home town of Nuln, where 'The Great Text,' the book that holds both the secrets of the society and of the Clockmakers themselves, remains to this day. No one except the current Grand Master may even touch the book, and it is kept under constant guard, even though the tome is written in a code known only to the leadership core.

The Brotherhood believe that the Clockmakers left coded messages and signs of their return around the Old World before their mysterious disappearance aeons ago. Ciphers are regularly sent to the various chapter houses when new parts of the 'Great Text' have been translated. The members, skilled in building works and excavations, are then sent to uncover whatever mysteries remain at these prehistoric sites. The exact locations are always kept a secret from even junior members; the information returned is also coded so that only inner sanctum members can increase their knowledge of the Clockmakers, and ascertain when (or if) they may return.

Suggested Insanities: Delusions of Grandeur, Terrifying Visions, Omens of Doom

THE BOOTSTRAPPERS' GUILD

In the Empire, class is everything – or at least it is to the upper classes. In nearly all cases, a man born a peasant will die a peasant. A man born to a cobbler will die a cobbler. Upward mobility is a dream or a myth, and to those on the bottom it can seem that every law, rule, or social stricture is designed to keep them there.

Enter the Bootstrappers' Guild, a loose confederation of criminals, confidence men, and ne'er-do-wells devoted to bettering the plight of the lower classes. The Guild approaches promising (mostly young) men and women who dream of something better and offer the impossible: a new life, a better life, in a better class of society. In short, the Guild offers to help the lower classes pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

Prospective bootstrappers are often suspicious, and they're wise to be so. However, and incredibly, the Bootstrappers' Guild can often deliver on its promises. Trained actors are employed as dialect coaches. Gifted forgers invent credentials of birth and even ennoblement. Disgraced and impoverished nobles offer lessons in etiquette and fashion. Previous bootstrapper success stories offer their assistance, invitations, and connections to society. Through hard work and an able mind, some lowborn people are able to transform themselves with the Guild's assistance into something indistinguishable from the real thing – a well-off burgher or even a minor noble.

Once the transformation is complete and the bootstrapper has become settled in his or her new elevated position, the Guild pays another visit...this time looking for payment. Everything the Guild has given, they can take away. The bootstrappers find themselves indebted for life to the criminals and blackmailers of the Guild, passing money, privileges, and information to their handlers. Still, the clever ones (and many of them are clever, to be successful) have likely already figured out that this is the cost of doing business, and the improvements offered by the Bootstrappers' Guild to a poor person's quality of life are not to be underestimated. Many find it a fair trade.

What few suspect is that the Guild is not just a gang of cutthroats and con men, but is planning a far grander crime than any yet seen. The Guild is the brainchild of Johann Heck, a one-legged, three-toothed vagabond of the worst sort. But Heck, in truth, was born a noble's natural son and had every advantage in his youth. The stark difference between how Heck was treated and his trueborn brothers convinced the young man that birth, class, and station were falsehoods. He went to university, fell in with the wrong crowd, took to a life of crime, and eventually became a committed anarchist. Heck wants to tear down the fundamentals of Imperial life and society, to replace the Empire with an egalitarian utopia with no laws.

Of course, to the Witch Hunters, Johann Heck is nothing more than a dangerous criminal and fit for nothing but burning. Therefore, Heck keeps his true ambitions a secret to all but his most trusted confidants within the Bootstrappers' Guild.

Suggested Reputation Cards: Confident, Connected, I Know a Guy..., Silver Tongue

Suggested Insanities: Delusions of Grandeur, Sadism, Impatient





CHAPTER FOUR

MIRROR OF DESIRE

“Mirror of Desire” introduces players to the noble affairs of Ubersreik, or marks a return to that fair town for the players if they have played either the *Eye for an Eye* or *Edge of Night* adventures, though neither is necessary to run the scenario. If you intend to be a player in this scenario, **DO NOT READ ANY FURTHER**. The following information is for the GM’s eyes only.

BACKGROUND

Something is awry among the Ubersreik nobility. Esmeralda Fenstermacher, a minor nobleman’s daughter, has bewitched the town’s noble sons and is beset by suitors for her hand. The situation has perplexed the town’s nobility because Esmeralda is an average girl with little wealth to her name and has long been passed over for a match. Foremost among her suitors are Leopold von Bruner, youngest son and hope of the failing von Bruner family, and Maximillian Aschaffenberg, a wealthy nephew to Lord Rickard. Heissman von Bruner had pinned his hopes on Leopold marrying into wealth or influence to restore the family’s fortunes (after that nasty business at the hunting lodge), those hopes now seem to be dashed. Lord Rickard just wants his nephew to marry someone worthy of his status, which Esmeralda clearly is not. Determined to

set their young men right and dispel this pointless infatuation, both patriarchs have decided to call upon outside assistance—enter the PCs.

The PCs will find themselves dealing with not just Leopold and Maximillian but multiple suitors for the hand of Esmeralda; as they try to help or hinder each in turn, suspicions are raised as to exactly what is going on between Esmeralda and some of the most wealthy sons of Ubersreik. The situation demands both tact and cunning from the PCs if they are to solve the mystery and save the suitors both from each other and from the true dangers hiding behind Esmeralda’s new-found charms.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Mirror of Desire is an open adventure, with multiple routes for the PCs to take to its conclusion and a variety of endings determined by their actions. The principal choices largely concern the suitors, as each has his own agenda and helping or hindering them will lead the PCs to different encounters. To make the GM’s job easier, he should familiarise himself with the suitors and their motivations

(detailed information on the top four suitors can be found starting on page 29) as well as the object of their desires: Esmeralda and the forces controlling her. Knowing the NPCs well, and how they think and react, helps the GM respond to the PCs' actions should they choose to head off in an unexpected direction or come up with a plan outside the purview of the main plot.

In addition to becoming familiar with the major NPCs, the GM should also take the time to understand the Obsession Tracker. This is a Progress Tracker which measures the influence of the daemon controlling Esmeralda (see below) and its effects on both the suitors and the PCs. Depending on its position, the Obsession Tracker can dramatically influence certain encounters and the reactions of NPCs. Finally, the GM should read the entire adventure thoroughly before play so he has a good idea of what is coming next and how it might affect the characters.

"Mirror of Desire" is divided into three parts:

PART ONE: LOVED AND LOST

The PCs meet with Heissman von Bruner and Lord Rickard Aschaffenberg to help them stop their noble sons from pursuing Esmeralda Fenstermacher, an average girl and poor match by all accounts. They are also approached by Ludmilla (Lord Rickard's wife) with a plea to let love take its course. Things become even more complicated as they meet each of the four young would-be suitors and discover their obsessions with the girl. The PCs must then help, hinder, or bargain with each of the suitors, keep them out of trouble and away from each other's throats, and generally stop the lovers' chaos from getting out of hand.

PART TWO: TRIALS OF THE HEART

Esmeralda finally declares herself for one of the suitors but first demands he undertake three tasks to prove his love for her before she commits to him completely. As the suitor works to complete the trials, the PCs can either provide assistance or work against him. The PCs also get their first real clues that something distinctly unusual is going on and can conduct investigations into the truth behind Esmeralda's sudden allure.

PART THREE: FRAGMENTS OF DESIRE

After completing the trials, Esmeralda declares her affection for the suitor and the PCs are allowed to witness the meeting. The force behind the lovers' mayhem, the Slaanesh daemon Kelsydra, is revealed as she traps the PCs themselves in the magic mirror while she herself is freed. Now they must escape, save the lovers, and stop Kelsydra before her dark plans come to fruition.

EYE FOR AN EYE AND EDGE OF NIGHT

It is possible that the PCs have completed either *Eye of an Eye* or *Edge of Night* and come into contact with the von Bruners or other Ubersreik NPCs. If so, the GM should use these associations to draw the PCs into events, especially if they are friends of one of the noble families or have made a good impression with Heissman for 'dealing with that nasty business at the hunting lodge.' The GM should also consider how the actions of the PCs in either of the

previous adventures might change the opinions of the residents of Ubersreik about them or affected their reputation, as this information could come into play when dealing with the suitors.

RECENT EVENTS

Prior to the PCs' arrival in Ubersreik and Heissman von Bruner's call for assistance, things have been typically quiet for the provincial city. Beastmen still prowl the woods, bandits occasionally plague the roads, the Emperor's taxes remain higher than most would like and the common men and women of Ubersreik continue to toil in the shadow of the Grey Mountains. Unbeknownst to the common folk, however, the town's nobility is in a stir and the fortunes of its most eligible sons in danger. Less than a month ago, the courtships of several young noblemen ended abruptly as Esmeralda Fenstermacher appeared on the scene. A plain and dull girl, and sole daughter of the ailing Fenstermacher family, Esmeralda has actually lived (almost completely unnoticed) in Ubersreik nearly all of her life. Scant weeks ago, she emerged from her family's dilapidated manor and immediately started drawing the eye of every eligible young man in the city. Four young men have risen above the throng of suitors she has attracted to vie for her hand: Leopold von Bruner, Guthrie von Hammastrat, Tomas von Karstadt, and Maximillian Aschaffenberg. Understandably, their families are ill at ease with such a match, given the Fenstermachers' lack of wealth and power, as well as the plainness of the girl (to which the youths are somehow oblivious).

None are more concerned about this match and its dismal possibilities than the von Bruner family, most notably Heissman von Bruner. Given the waning fortunes of the von Bruners (still suffering from the incident at the hunting lodge) and their diminished



standing among the nobility of Ubersreik, Heissman had hoped to marry Leopold off to a far more promising prize, boosting the wealth and prestige of the family through an alliance with a more prosperous house. The boy seems well and truly smitten, though, and Heissman's every effort has fallen flat. The old man cannot fathom the source of Esmeralda's appeal or why it has bewitched not just his son, but also the sons of many of the other noble families. Regardless of the cause, he wants it stopped; Leopold is his only hope to see the family's fate improved before he dies.

What neither Heissman nor the other nobles realize is that Esmeralda and her charms are just the first signs of a much larger peril bearing down on Ubersreik, a peril imprisoned for decades under their very noses and plotting its revenge against them: the daemon Kelsydra.

KELSYDRA—THE MIRROR OF DESIRE

Kelsydra, a Slaanesh daemon trapped in a magical mirror, is the true source of Ubersreik's troubles. Centuries ago, Kelsydra was made manifest in the Empire by the flawed desires of men and women, which she manipulated for her own ends and dark amusement. She roamed from town to town and cult to cult sowing havoc until she came to the town of Ubersreik five hundred years ago and wormed her way into the lives of the von Bruners. Taking an interest in the family, she tormented them for generations (always without their knowledge) seducing their sons and daughters and toying with their line, though never outright destroying them lest her fun come to an end. Eventually, however, she chose the wrong von Bruner, a young and honest man by the name of Heller. Heller was not only true of heart but also a Light Wizard, newly trained at the Colleges of Magic. He saw the daemon's true nature and though he still loved her (or his memory of the woman he thought she was



AN ETERNAL PROMISE

As part of her plan to escape the mirror, Kelsydra has recently managed to cultivate a rebirth of the Cult of Eternal Promise (though to date she has only managed a handful of members). Most of the members are well integrated into the community of Ubersreik, waiting impatiently for the promised sign of her impending release. Until then, they stay hidden and relatively inactive, except for Jory, a meek looking footman who, through the influence of Kelsydra, has gained employment at the Fenstermacher household. More information about Jory can be found on page 42.

before he discovered her true nature), he devised a plan to trap her so she could do no more harm. He fashioned a magic mirror using his craft and tricked Kelsydra into gazing into its reflection, using his love for her to draw in her essence and seal it away. Unfortunately for Heller, the same magic that keeps Kelsydra trapped within, prevents the mirror's destruction. As he was not able to smash the mirror and kill the daemon, he hid the mirror and eventually in a fit of despair killed himself rather than live with the knowledge of the daemon's hold over him.

The mirror remained hidden in Ubersreik for decades while Kelsydra tried to free herself without success, though in time she managed to send out tendrils of her power and draw those faithful to the Dark Gods to her side. So it was that during the rise of the Cult of Eternal Promise the mirror was found and spirited away. The new cult adopted the mirror as a relic and worshipped before it. Kelsydra had also learned by this time to manipulate people using the mirror and imprint upon them an obsession should they gaze upon their reflection—inflaming their normal desires to fever pitch and infecting them with a madness to follow the object of the obsession no matter the cost. In this way she slowly gained control over those outside the mirror and was able to learn more of how she might escape. Before she could enact any plans, however, the cult was destroyed and the mirror hidden once again.

A few months ago, Rupert Fenstermacher, Esmeralda's father, found the mirror in the attic of his dilapidated manor while looking for things to sell to bolster his family's fortunes. As he looked into the mirror, Kelsydra fuelled his obsession to make his daughter happy and burned a vision of Esmeralda married to one of the powerful noble families of Ubersreik into his mind's eye. He knew then that if he took the mirror to his daughter, his vision would somehow come to pass. This is all part of Kelsydra's plan, for true love holds the key to opening the magic of the mirror, just as Heller used his own love to trap her in the mirror in the first place. To unlock the mirror's magic and be free, she must make someone profess his true love (and be completely sincere) before the mirror. Now stuck with Esmeralda, she plots to get a suitor to fall for the girl and make his pronouncement of love in her presence. To help the girl snare a man, Kelsydra has imbued her with a daemonic allure, just enough to attract men but not so much that it pollutes the course of true love.

Kelsydra wants Esmeralda's strongest suitor to profess his love before the mirror because she cannot risk that a lesser man's love might not free her. To that end, she is playing the suitors off against

each other and plans to make them prove themselves first. As an added prize, she has also discovered the von Bruners are still in Ubersreik and plans to make them pay for what Heller did to her.

THE OBSESSION TRACKER

Kelsydra is a powerful daemon of Slaanesh able to manipulate the moods of men as a painter might choose colours from his pallet. Although she is trapped in the magic mirror, she can still exert her power through Esmeralda (quite without the girl's knowledge) over the suitors and even the PCs.

To create the Obsession Tracker, make a Progress Tracker 10 spaces long with event markers at the 3rd, 7th, and 10th spaces on the track. Place a single tracking token at the start of the tracker, this represents Kelsydra's influence over the suitors and their relative level of obsession.

Below are several occurrences that advance the tracking token. The GM should not feel restricted by these and can make up his own occurrences if he feels one of the suitors has made a grand expression of love or madness. Advance the token when:

- ✦ A suitor (with or without the aid of the PCs) hurts or embarrasses another suitor for Esmeralda's hand.
- ✦ A suitor makes a grand gesture in Esmeralda's presence (something suitably impressive).
- ✦ A suitor completes one of the tasks set by Esmeralda in **Part Two: Trials of the Heart**.
- ✦ A suitor injures himself in the pursuit of his love for Esmeralda.

The effects of the Obsession Tracker vary from suitor to suitor, and with affected PCs, but all are expressed in three levels of increasing madness linked to the three event markers on the tracker. When the tracker reaches an event marker, it affects the obsessions of all involved in the story; when it reaches the next event marker, everyone is affected again, adding the new level of obsession to the old.

OBSESSIVE PCs

The suitors are not the only ones who will be affected by the Obsession Tracker, and as it advances it can (if the GM chooses) begin to have an impact on the PCs. The GM should apply the effects below to the PC's actions as the Obsession Tracker advances, each one adding to the one before it.

- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the first event marker:** PCs become absorbed by tasks and find it difficult to stop doing something if they do it for more than a few minutes (eating, laughing, crying, etc) requiring an **Easy (1d) Willpower check** to stop.
- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the second event marker:** As above, but to stop they must pass an **Average (2d) Willpower check**.
- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the third event marker:** As above, but to stop they must pass a **Hard (3d) Willpower check**.



SUITORS FOR THE HAND OF ESMERALDA

The appearance of Esmeralda Fenstermacher has had a scandalous effect on the young nobles of Ubersreik. Men of good breeding and sound minds have scorned the will of their families to pursue the girl, leaving a trail of jealous, heartbroken maidens and fuming noble patriarchs in their wake. The upset has increased tensions between some of the town's more influential families as arranged matches are broken and promises undone, all in the name of 'true' love. Of the dozen or so eligible young men Esmeralda's charm has attracted, only four have received a response from the girl that their advances 'might' be welcomed. Three of these young men were carefully chosen by Kelsydra for the measure of the love they might possess for Esmeralda and the other (Leopold) to settle an old score. The four suitors are:

LEOPOLD VON BRUNER

The youngest son of the failing von Bruner family, Leopold is a dreamer and has shirked the responsibilities his family and his obligations to his father for the ideal of true love. A struggling poet, he has only his love to offer Esmeralda. His family is the unwitting target of Kelsydra.

BACKGROUND

Leopold von Bruner has only recently come of age; many of the family's misfortunes occurred before his time and are now mentioned only in the grumblings of his father and the other elders of the house or in hushed whispers over dinner. Even if he was aware of his family's dismal reputation (due in no small part to that unfortunate business at the manor—as detailed in the *Eye for an Eye*



adventure), it is likely that he would not be overly concerned. Although he does love his father, and his family, he simply has no taste for the politics of the nobles or the endless games of wealth and power it seems they must play in order to maintain their titles.

Instead, Leopold is a delicate, sensitive soul given more to contemplating the clouds in the sky or the wind through the grass than the house ledgers or the power struggles between free city and state. He likes poetry, singing, and dreaming of the romantic ideal of love. It is little wonder then that his father Heissman wants to marry him off as soon as possible and cement an alliance with an influential family before Leopold gets a reputation as a complete and utter fop. Leopold has responded to his father's demands with an uncharacteristically stubborn resolution that he will marry for love and nothing else. Secretly, however, he also has his doubts about the von Bruner family name and contemplates distancing himself from it.

Leopold appears as a slight, spindly youth with soft features only now hardening into manhood. The shadow of a moustache graces his upper lip while his mousy brown hair is slightly too long for the current fashions and hangs limp, constantly getting in his eyes.

ROLEPLAYING LEOPOLD

Leopold is the most pitiable of the four suitors, but also the most honest and potentially the most likable. The GM should play him soft spoken and earnest, and though he is intelligent (and may even be able to aid the PCs as Kelsydra's plot comes to light), he is not in any way cunning or duplicitous (traits common to much of Ubersreik's nobility). He is also a bit dramatic at times and, like many men his age, tends to exaggerate: There has never been a love like his for Esmeralda! He has never known such sorrow as when she turned her face from him! He is literally sick with the jealousy he feels for the other suitors!

The other major part of Leopold's personality is that he is a dreamer. The GM can have him become distracted and trail off while talking (or being talked to) as he spots a perfect flower, the reflection of light off a broken window, or hears a familiar tune from a nearby tavern. He will be completely useless in the presence of Esmeralda, spending the entire time gazing wistfully at her, his hands clutched to his breast. These distractions will also prompt him to create impromptu poems about the beauty of the world (he has hundreds composed on the subject of Esmeralda) and likely subject the PCs to a recital whether they want to hear it or not.

LEOPOLD'S POETRY

Two examples of Leopold's poems are provided below. Several additional examples can be found on page 47.

The Sun Faced Maiden (an ode to fair Esmeralda)

Oh, lady! Oh, vision! What day dawns so fair!

Her face is the sun, my love is the sky, together and one,

She is the mirror of my heart that fair maid,

Turned back to me like the sun (which is her face) upon the sea.

Oh, maid! Only in my dreams have I held her,

My fair, fair Esmeralda!

Upon a Chance Meeting with a Mote of Dust

Light you are the master of the sky,

But the ground is not your realm, for we mortals do dwell here!

The other day a beam of you did shine upon a mote of dust,

And I was taken by its beauty as it floated here and there.

A wanderer like me, into this world so cruelly thrust,

That brave, brave mote of dust!

LEOPOLD'S OBSESSION

Leopold's obsession is his art. As the Obsession Tracker advances, he becomes more driven to grand gestures of (bad) poetry and song for Esmeralda, going to greater extremes to prove his love. At first, his actions seem comical, but after a time they can become dangerous and potentially lethal to both Leopold and those around him. The GM should apply the effects below to Leopold's actions as the Obsession Tracker advances, each one adding to the one before it.

- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the first event marker:** He stops constantly to compose poems or appreciate the beauty of the world, even in dangerous situations.
- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the second event marker:** He starts talking in rhyme or song, dancing instead of walking, and spontaneously hugging and kissing people that he likes.
- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the third event marker:** He is overcome by emotion at the slightest thing, crying over his love, laughing at delight when seeing a butterfly, or filled with uncharacteristic uncontrollable rage at the mention of another suitor. His extreme mood will only change when replaced by a new one.

GUTHRIE VON HAMMASTRAT

A brave and burly warrior, Guthrie is a pistolier in the Ubersreik garrison and an honest, if simple, young man. Guthrie usually solves his problems with a sword and has been at a loss as to how he might win Esmeralda's hand. He is open to any help the PCs might be able to offer him.

BACKGROUND

Born in the downriver city of Auerswald to the well-reputed Hammastrat family, Guthrie had a typical noble upbringing. Strong and brave (though not overly bright), he made his father Xavier Hammastrat proud by quickly becoming a fine warrior and excellent swordsman. Guthrie embraced the noble warrior's lifestyle and was quick to travel to Altdorf to join one of the city's prestigious pistolier regiments when he came of age. Over the last few years, he has served in the armies of the Emperor and campaigned across the Empire and as far away as the Border Princes.

Since his son's return to Reikland, Xavier has hoped to marry Guthrie into a prosperous Ubersreik family and extend Hammastrat influence into the neighbouring city. To this end, Guthrie has been sent to serve a term in the garrison and court the local noble women belonging to certain houses chosen by his father. Guthrie likes Ubersreik; it is a welcome change after years of sleeping on the hard ground and drafty tents during his campaigning. He even

likes some of the locals and has made efforts to woo some of the ladies put forward by his father. Unfortunately for Xavier, and unexpectedly for Guthrie, the boy has fallen completely for Esmeralda. Until now, Guthrie has never been in love, not counting the feelings he has always had for a fine blade, of course.

Guthrie is a broad-shouldered and lantern jawed young man with a head of close-cropped black hair. He has the piercing blue eyes of a hawk, though they seem to hold about as much intelligence, their flat expression making him look a bit like he has fallen asleep with his eyes open.

ROLEPLAYING GUTHRIE

Guthrie is the strongest and bravest of the suitors, with good breeding and the forthright manner of a young soldier. The GM should play him as loud and to the point, perhaps even a little tactless at times. He is likely to act first and talk later, springing into action before the PCs can formulate a plan and likely making a bad situation worse (often by starting a fight). He is also quick to accept a challenge, real or imagined, and cannot let his honour be besmirched—Guthrie could never accept it if anyone ever thought him a coward.

Adding to Guthrie's reckless bravery is his stupidity. Well schooled by his family, he is nevertheless extremely slow to pick up on things and is extremely gullible. The GM can make this clear to the players when he doesn't seem to understand big words, misunderstands slang, and generally leaps to the wrong conclusion again and again. The PCs can also take advantage of Guthrie's gullibility to manipulate him into doing what they want, though they should be careful when doing so as he is rather good with his sword.

MARTIAL PROWESS

Guthrie is quick to show off his martial prowess, especially to prove his love for Esmeralda. Some examples include:

- ✦ **Fancy Horse-work:** Guthrie is an expert horseman and has masterful control over his mount, leaping on and off mid-gallop or jumping obstacles while firing his pistols.
- ✦ **Hurling:** With a good eye and strong arm, Guthrie can throw most things with keen accuracy (tankards, chair, small animals, etc) and is always ready to prove his boasts.
- ✦ **Lifting:** The best way to prove one's strength is to put it to the test! Lifting up carts, barrels, or even PCs are all ways in which Guthrie might show off his brawn.
- ✦ **Marksmanship:** Years of practice have made Guthrie a keen shot, something he can prove with all manner of targets—or for an added degree of risk, an apple balanced on a PC's head!

GUTHRIE'S OBSESSION

Guthrie's obsession is the thrill of battle and the adrenaline of victory and he is completely taken with his own martial excellence. As the Obsession Tracker advances, he becomes driven to prove his strength of arms or display his ability so that Esmeralda might take note. At first, this is limited to displays of flashing blades, target practise, and tight shirts which show off his muscles, but as the adventure progresses and the obsession increases, it can turn deadly as Guthrie turns on those around him to prove his fighting skill. The GM should apply the effects below to Guthrie's actions as the Obsession Tracker advances, each one adding to the one before it.

- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the first event marker:** He engages in displays of martial prowess, sometimes even when danger is quite close and with disregard to people or property.
- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the second event marker:** He shows off constantly and dangerously, using his sword to open doors, firing across a crowded room, or pushing over laden carts just to prove he can.
- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the third event marker:** Whenever he encounters someone that looks tougher than him, he challenges the newcomer to a duel and must to be dragged away before he is killed or kills someone.

TOMAS VON KARSTADT

The son of one of the wealthiest merchant families in Ubersreik, Tomas is filled with a sense of his own entitlement and the power the wealth of his father has afforded him. Tomas has tried to use his wealth to buy his way into Esmeralda's good graces, though thus far without success.

BACKGROUND

The son of Alfred Karstadt, current head of the Ubersreik Merchant Guild, Tomas has been raised in a custom befitting a noble son, despite the fact he is, in essence, of common birth. It is actually this gulf between his status and that of the noble sons of Ubersreik that has dogged him all his life, and though he stands to inherit his father's position and wealth, he covets the respect that nobles receive. Tomas knows a lot about money and how to manage it,



and even at his young age has amassed a substantial amount of personal wealth. He plans to use this wealth to 'buy' his way into a noble family and finally gain a title for himself.

Like many of the other suitors, Tomas was taken by surprise when he fell in love with Esmeralda. He had been looking to marry into a more prosperous line but as he now so clearly sees, love is love, and even the poorest, lowliest noble woman is still a noble woman. Contrary to his son's desire to marry into nobility, Alfred would rather he simply find a pretty farm girl or merchant's daughter instead. The old merchant has nothing in particular against Esmeralda or her family but he knows too well that nobles are trouble and fears that such an alliance will drain his own coffers with little gain in return.

Tomas appears as a short and slightly overweight youth, his sallown skin already sagging and giving a hint of the fat-faced rotund man he will become. He has short curly hair and small piggish eyes, which are never still, always looking for profit.

ROLEPLAYING TOMAS

Tomas is the most intelligent of the suitors and can use his cunning to make things difficult for the PCs, especially if they try to take him out of the running for Esmeralda's hand. With a deep cruel streak (though not genuinely evil), Tomas is a resourceful young man with no end of ambition and will stop at nothing to get what he wants. Raised by shrewd merchants, Tomas sees the value of everything and weighs it against the things around it, making his judgements based in terms of returns and inherent worth. Like his father, he is a man of letters and debts and knows well the power of both.

The GM should play Tomas as clear thinking and intelligent, carefully considering his words before he speaks and seeing straight to the heart of most matters. He is more than a little smug and arrogant towards those he sees as beneath him (likely he will see the PCs as just another commodity to be bought and sold). The GM can use Tomas' arrogance towards the PCs to brag whenever he gets a chance. He will prattle on about things like his many possessions ("I think this carriage belongs to our family... we have so many you see..."), the wealth and power of the Karstadt family ("Yes, father could buy half this town if he chose...not that we would want to...") or what his wealth has afforded him ("You haven't had blue salmon until you've had it brought from the ice-flows of Norsca, not that you would know where that is...").

EXPENSIVE GIFTS

Tomas likes to show off his wealth and has bought many elaborate gifts for Esmeralda, some examples of which include:

- + **Wondrous Beasts:** The woods around Ubersreik hold many strange and dangerous beasts, some of which may appear quite cute when not bearing a mouth full of fangs.
- + **A Pie that Sings:** Is there anything more romantic than something stuffed with birds? Unfortunately, this can lead to a mess, a violent avian explosion, or just an unusual container of bird corpses.
- + **Grand Gifts:** Tomas is not above giving away property such as bridges or buildings as gifts, though he will insist it be wrapped properly, perhaps in lace...

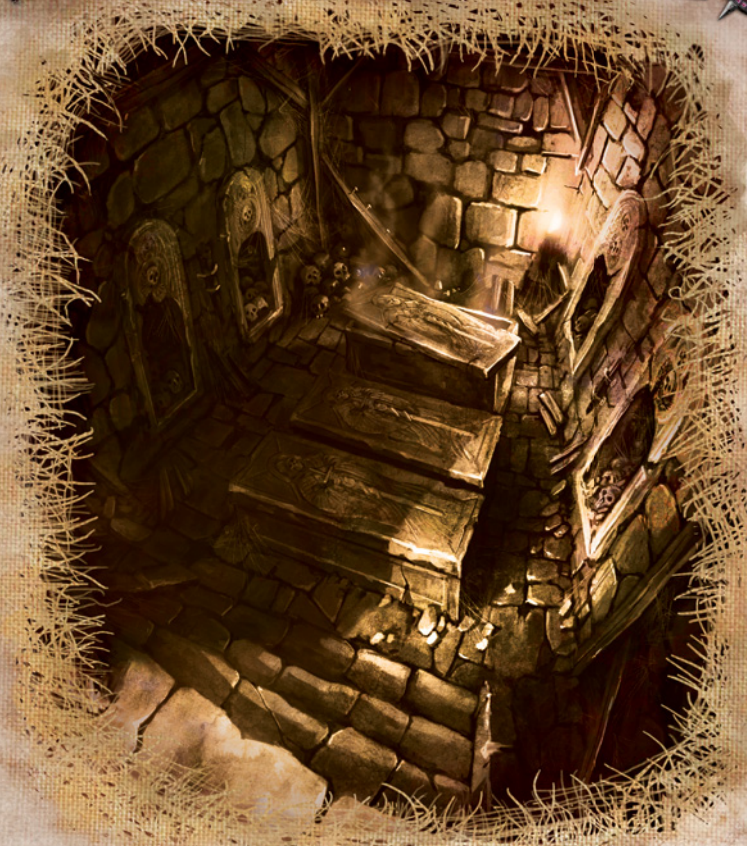
- + **Rare Fragrance:** There are many rare flowers that grow only high in the Grey Mountains and are quite beautiful to look upon—sadly some are also very poisonous.

TOMAS' OBSESSION

Tomas' Obsession involves exquisite clothes, exotic gifts, and the finest things his wealth can acquire. As the Obsession Tracker advances, he becomes more flamboyant and outrageous in his use of money (much to the distress of his father), creating more and more elaborate gifts for Esmeralda. Aside from the problems these gifts will cause, the great expenses they will incur (and the lengths Tomas will go to for the money to pay for them) will lead to both the ire of his family and the attentions of shady lenders. The GM should apply the effects below to Tomas' actions as the Obsession Tracker advances, each one adding to the one before it.

- + **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the first event marker:** He begins giving more and more outrageous gifts, going to great lengths to make sure they are perfect.
- + **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the second event marker:** He starts to beggar himself and his family for the money to buy the gifts, going to dangerous or criminal lengths to find it.
- + **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the third event marker:** His gift giving reaches extreme and macabre heights as he considers cutting off body parts to prove his love.





MAXIMILLIAN ASCHAFFENBERG

The brat nephew of Lord Rickard, Maximillian is a long-standing rival of the von Bruners and initially saw the chance to steal Esmeralda away from Leopold as an opportunity to further humiliate the family. Unexpectedly for the young Max, he has fallen for the girl.

BACKGROUND

A scion of the powerful and influential Aschaffenberg family, Maximillian is the nephew of Lord Rickard and very much among the most powerful future nobles of Ubersreik. Arrogant and rude to anyone he considers beneath him (the majority of the town), he has been the bane of his family's life in recent years; Lord Rickard has had to bail him out time and again from 'misunderstandings' and 'accidents' with other noble families and the locals of Ubersreik. Filled with a sense of his own importance, Maximillian believes he can get away with insulting or being cruel to those around him, and while he stops short of the actual criminal, he is thoroughly out of control.

Maximillian's match with Esmeralda is perhaps the most disastrous for the nobles of Ubersreik and certainly the Aschaffenberg line. Lord Rickard always intended to marry the boy to someone from another town or city to extend the family holdings, or at very least cement a relationship with one of the other major families of Ubersreik. Despite his roguish ways, Maximillian thinks the same way and initially only courted Esmeralda to spite Leopold von Bruner, whose family he despises for their fall from grace. After seeing Esmeralda's face, however, his act of spite turned into a true pursuit of love.

Maximillian appears as a handsome, blond haired youth with cruel blue eyes and an almost permanent sneer on his features. He always dresses impeccably to show off his wealth and has a habit of looking at people of common birth like something he might wipe off his shoe.

ROLEPLAYING MAXIMILLIAN

Maximillian is a rich brat, thoroughly dislikeable but also completely untouchable because of his family. The GM should play him as arrogant, always ordering people around or being condescending and cruel when he speaks to anyone beneath his station. He knows one day he will be one of the most powerful people in Ubersreik and everyone had better damn well remember it! He does what he wants when he wants to, seldom paying for things or asking permission before entering an abode or snatching something he finds intriguing. Most of the time, Maximillian has a gaggle of servants following him around that report to his uncle and smooth things over in the brat's wake.

Maximillian might work with the PCs if they ally themselves with him, but he will never be their friend and will constantly boss them around. Ideally, the GM should make the PCs want to give him a good kick, but they should also be reminded that doing so would probably get them hanged.

PRANKS AND CRUEL JOKES

Maximillian enjoys pranks and cruel jokes, a major pastime for him. Some examples of the pranks, jokes and insults he might use include:

- ✦ **Past Disgrace:** Maximillian has become quite the scholar of family histories in his efforts to formulate cutting insults. For details on some of the noble families of Ubersreik and their past see Chapter 2 of *Lure of Power*.
- ✦ **The Evil Double:** A good way to sully someone's good name is to dress up as him and do bad things! The disguise doesn't even need to be good if witnesses are far away or it is dark.
- ✦ **Spoiled Food:** A simple prank and easy to arrange given the amount of rotten food in Ubersreik, the real skill comes in disguising it as fresh.
- ✦ **Double Talk:** A childish prank at best but infuriating nevertheless, Maximillian repeats everything the person says to him in a condescending tone of voice.

MAXIMILLIAN'S OBSESSION

Maximillian's obsession is cruelty and insults. As the Obsession Tracker advances, Maximillian's cutting wit and cruel practical jokes escalate from the tasteless and relatively benign to the downright deadly. What begins as salt in wine or a jibe about someone's mother will become a bed full of poisonous spiders and a brutal verbal assault intended to cause the maximum amount of emotional distress. The GM should apply the effects below to Maximillian's actions as the Obsession Tracker advances, each one adding to the one before it.

- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the first event marker:** He plays pranks constantly, seeing every new meeting as a chance to try one out.

- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the second event marker:** His pranks and jokes become more elaborate and dangerous, with the potential to actually hurt people.
- ✦ **When the Obsession Tracker reaches the third event marker:** His pranks and jokes become deadly, though he doesn't see them as such, laughing as a cart crushes someone or a ravenous wolf hidden in their privy attacks them.

THE OBJECT OF AFFECTION: ESMERALDA

Esmeralda Fenstermacher was a shy and unassuming young woman, fading into the background of the Ubersreik nobility and largely unnoticed by her peers. Neither unduly ugly nor excessively pretty, she is what her childhood friends would condescendingly refer to as 'common'. Her average looks, combined with her father's failing fortunes have caused few, if any, young noble men to spare her a second glance. It seemed that Esmeralda was destined to die alone, a spinster overseeing the final days of the Fenstermacher line.

Kelsydra changed all that. Now it is as if a light has gone on in the young woman, and she is filled with a confidence and resolve that seems to bleed from her every pore. Her peers, which only weeks ago would have been hard pressed to put a name to her face, now whisper about her as she passes and compete for her attention. The older nobles, largely unaffected by her surge of confidence and popularity, still see only her weak line and dismal inheritance, dismissing the fascination of their sons and daughters as fanciful infatuations. From Esmeralda's perspective, although she is a bit confused by her newfound attention, it is as if she is finally getting her due and is basking in every moment.

Esmeralda is a slight woman in her early twenties with mousy brown hair and hazel eyes. While her skin is fair and her features delicate, it is the confidence in her eyes which people remember.

ROLEPLAYING ESMERALDA

Esmeralda exists simultaneously to torment the suitors and reward them for the excesses of their deeds. In the role of the suitors' object of affection, she appears from time to time to remind them why

they are fighting, shyly giggling over their jokes or swooning over their pronouncements of love. If they try to corner her, she will slip away, dodging kisses or embraces and leaving them to puzzle out her true intent. Despite this behaviour, she genuinely likes the four suitors. In fact, she might like them too much: She adores Leopold's poetry. Guthrie's simple-minded demonstrations of prowess make her all aflutter. A gift from Tomas can make her swoon. She finds Maximillian's pranks hilarious. The GM should play her as fickle and flighty, smiling and swooning over one suitor one minute only to be distracted by the deeds of another moments later, always oblivious to just how desperately the four youths pine for her.

The GM can use Esmeralda throughout **Loved and Lost** and **Trials of the Heart** as much or as little as he likes, though she will not commit to a suitor until he has proven himself at the end of part one. Esmeralda's appearance can be used as a catalyst for the suitors' obsessions and their crazy behaviour, and the GM can have her appear either before or after an encounter to encourage the suitor or validate his actions. The GM can also use Esmeralda to disprove the PCs' suspicions if they begin to think (rightly so) that other forces are behind the suitors' madness. There is nothing supernatural about Esmeralda and she has no idea she is a pawn of Kelsydra, unaware that the daemon is the true source of her confidence and allure.

HILDA

Wherever Esmeralda goes, she is accompanied by Hilda, her personal maid. Hilda is a robust woman with brawny arms and thickly plated hair. She exists to keep the young woman out of trouble and is more than capable of turning away amorous suitors. Whenever the PCs want to deal with Esmeralda and she is 'indisposed', they must deal with Hilda. The GM should use the maid to bustle Esmeralda away if things get dangerous, act as an intermediary for the suitors or the PCs, and, if required, crack some heads if the young men step out of line. Hilda is not under the control of Kelsydra (nor does she care for stories of daemons and magic nonsense); her duty is to protect Esmeralda, as she has done for much of the young woman's life.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

While the adventure revolves around the four suitors and the object of their affection (Esmeralda) there are a number of other characters that play a role in the proceedings.

HEISSMAN VON BRUNER

The father of Leopold, Heissman is a stern man and patriarch of a once proud family. He is also the driving force behind the efforts to halt the madness caused by the suitors and their pursuit of Esmeralda, albeit for very personal reasons. Underneath his hard exterior, he is very worried for the fate of his family and though he loves his son, he does not want to be remembered as the von Bruner who brought about the downfall of his house. The GM should have Heissman constantly checking up on the PCs during their efforts to deal with the lovers, sending servants or even appearing personally to see how they are progressing. He will get particularly aggravated if they help Leopold, however, and may even try to throw them out of town if they get Esmeralda to declare her love for the boy.

How Do You Solve A Problem Like ESMERALDA?

Many groups will be immediately suspicious about Esmeralda's appeal and influence over the young nobles of Ubersreik, especially if there is a Witch Hunter in the party. Unfortunately, the PCs will likely never get a good chance to talk with her for more than a moment, Hilda always whisking her away. Even as the situation with the suitors escalates and their behaviour becomes increasingly erratic, the PCs will have a difficult time convincing anyone that Esmeralda might be a witch or an agent of Chaos. The Fenstermacher's are and have always been devout Sigmarites and close friends with the high priest of the Ubersreik Temple of Sigmar, Gunther Emming. Gunther will not only object to an accusation of foul play against Esmeralda, but will outright oppose any such action without hard evidence.

LORD RICKARD ASCHAFFENBERG

Cousin of Lord von Walder and a rising star among the Ubersreik nobility, Lord Rickard's fortunes have become intertwined with the stricken von Bruners. Not a petty or selfish man, Rickard has put his weight behind Heissman to help prevent Leopold and Maximilian from ruining their families' futures. It is possible the PCs have already had dealings with Lord Rickard (based on their experiences in *Eye for an Eye* and *Edge of Night*) and he may be willing to give them more help if he feels he owes them for past deeds. When playing Lord Rickard, the GM should not have him be as intense or driven about the situation as Heissman; while he does care about the boys' future, his wife has also mellowed him somewhat on the subject and, after all, there are always more Aschaffenberg.

LUDMILLA ASCHAFFENBERG

Lord Rickard's voluptuous wife Ludmilla has become a bit of a social climber in recent years, helping her husband improve the fortunes of the Aschaffenberg name while distancing herself from the von Bruners. Despite this, however, she is, deep down, a romantic and married for love rather than wealth or power. She shares the same hopes for her family, both old and new. The GM can use Ludmilla as a counter point to Heissman and Rickard, appearing to give the PCs aid if they help one of her relations (Leopold and Maximilian) win the affections of Esmeralda. She may even help them to thwart the schemes of her husband and cousin, if it is for love, perhaps even allowing them access to the von Bruner family records or helping them get the locket from Heissman's study (see page 41 for more information on the locket).

ALFRED KARSTADT

Alfred is a distinguished, if portly, merchant and father to Tomas. Like his son, he is a clever businessman and adept at talking to people. Unlike his son, he does not have a cruel or dark side, at least one that has ever seen the light of day. His main goal these days is protecting the fortune his family has won over the years and paving the way for its future. Alfred knows many of the town's luminaries and power players; if the PCs wrong him, or his son, he can make life in Ubersreik hard for them. Equally, if they get on his good side, the GM can use him to provide unexpected help, as Alfred usually knows someone who knows someone who can help. Additionally, he should be able to track down any resources, supplies, or special equipment the PCs may need.

RUPERT FENSTERMACHER

Rupert dotes upon his only child, Esmeralda, and has never been able to refuse her anything. He is now an aging man; his wife and other children are dead and his remaining hopes are pinned on Esmeralda. Rupert is pleased to entertain any suitors that come to the manor, even if Esmeralda does not want to see them, and the PCs may have trouble getting away from him as he bores them with stories and peppers them endlessly with inane questions. His mind is also prone to wandering and the GM can have him mix up PC and suitor names, fail to hear, or mishear, things and generally frustrate the PCs whenever they try to get any sense from him.

PART ONE: LOVED AND LOST

The adventure begins with the PCs' arrival in Ubersreik and an invitation to the von Bruner manor to discuss a delicate matter. There are a number of ways for the GM to get the PCs to this point and draw them into the story, depending on the type of group and whether they have a past with any of the characters or families of Ubersreik. Some possible adventure hooks include:

- ✦ **Fellow Suitors:** One of the PCs is of noble blood, arriving in Ubersreik upon hearing of Esmeralda's legendary beauty and should be more than happy to help remove the competition. This would suit a party with a character in a career with the **Noble** trait or a party of Brash Young Fools (For more information on Noble PCs see chapter 5 of *Lure of Power*).
- ✦ **Trusted Friends:** The PCs are friends of the von Bruners (this could be the result of their actions in *Eye for an Eye* and *Edge of Night*) or have a reputation for honour and integrity of which Heissman approves. This would suit a party of Servants of Justice.
- ✦ **Cold Hard Cash:** As outsiders with a reputation for getting things done, the PCs have been hired to sort out the noble sons of Ubersreik. If Heissman and Rickard are taking this route, it is likely so they can avoid the blame from their sons. This would suit a Gang of Thugs party.
- ✦ **A Stake in the Future:** There is more at stake here than a few broken hearts; educated PCs know that the results of marriages today can have serious repercussions in years to come. Heiss-



man has contacted the PCs because they understand the seriousness of the situation. This would suit a party of Intrepid Explorers.

- ✦ **Your Reputation Precedes You:** The PCs are known trouble-shooters, having helped powerful figures in the past and brought resolution to such situations (possibly also a result of their actions in *Eye for an Eye* and *Edge of Night*). This would suit a party of Swords for Hire.

Whichever adventure hook the GM uses, the end result should be that they agree to meet with Heissman and hear what he has to say. After working out why the PCs are there, the GM can pick up the action as the PCs make their way to the von Bruner manor, a large and imposing building in the noble district of Ubersreik, where they are ushered inside by the family's sullen servants and guided to Heissman's study.

AN OLD MAN'S BARGAIN

Astute PCs, passing an **Easy (1d) Observation check**, notice upon their arrival at the von Bruner mansion that it is showing signs of decay (dirty, cracked windows, wilted and overgrown gardens, and cheap, surly looking servants), a sure indication that the family has fallen on hard times. The PCs are ushered upstairs into Heissman von Bruner's study, where he waits for them. Also present, standing slightly in the shadows, is Lord Rickard Aschaffenberg. The GM can read or paraphrase the following:

Seated behind his desk, the gaunt Heissman von Bruner is the first to speak.

"I am a forthright man, gentlemen, and I would hope you will be the same with me. My youngest son Leopold has fallen for an ill-suited match, a local girl named Esmeralda Fenstermacher and I wish you to end the affair forthwith."

At this point Lord Rickard speaks up in a booming deep voice.

"Sadly, von Bruner is not alone. My nephew, Maximillian, as well as the sons of several other noble men of the town, have likewise become infatuated. You understand that we could never allow such wanton unions to go ahead; these young men are the future of our families and must marry according to OUR wishes and not the fancies of some summer fling."

"What we want you to do," says Lord Heissman, "is break them up! Prevent the match! Esmeralda Fenstermacher can marry anyone she chooses, as far as I'm concerned, just not one of our boys. We will of course cover your expenses, such as they might be and within reason, of course, and provide you lodging during your stay. In return, of course, we ask for your discretion in all these matters. These are the noble sons of Ubersreik we speak of here, not mere common boys, and should be treated as such. Your job is to save them from themselves and each other, as much as from this girl."

I also remind you that you must follow the laws of Ubersreik in this matter and we will not abide acts of murder or theft, nor will we protect you from the authorities if you should be caught engaging in illegal activities. Of course, you will be well compensated should you succeed in ending these ludicrous affairs."

At this point, the PCs can ask any questions they might have about the situation and both von Bruner and Aschaffenberg will answer as best they can. What the two nobles know is limited and certainly neither has even the slightest inkling of the presence of Kelsydra or the magic mirror. They can tell the PCs much of what everyone knows about the suitors (see pages 29-33), though they will not speak badly of either of their own children, and what limited things they know about Esmeralda (which is essentially that she is some very minor noble girl of little notice). After Heissman and Rickard have made their offer, the PCs are free to accept or decline as they see fit and the noblemen will even offer them lodgings for a few days if they want to think the matter over before giving their answer. However the meeting concludes, they are ushered out the way they entered.

WHY US?

One of the first questions the PCs might ask is: "Why us? Why have we been chosen by such luminaries of Ubersreik when surely the nobles have dozens of trusted servants and hirelings?" The answer is that neither Heissman nor Rickard wants to alienate his son or nephew or be responsible for any complication that might arise from the process of breaking up the young lovers. Outsiders will also likely be unknown to the suitors and so not immediately connected with the noble families. Most important of all, however, is that Heissman and Rickard need professionals that will get the job done.

WHAT DO WE GET?

The other obvious question is what payment the PCs can expect to receive. As a default reward, Heissman and Rickard offer 2 gold coins to each member of the group (though persuasive PCs can talk them into doubling that offer). Alternatively, at the GM's discretion, the reward could also come in other forms: a gift of ancient trinkets, the aid of the noble houses at some point in the future, or even a promise of marriage for themselves (with a distant cousin of course) and the chance to become nobility.

LOVE CONQUERS ALL

On their way out, the PCs encounter Ludmilla Aschaffenberg (formerly a von Bruner), Rickard's wife and aunt to Maximillian. She takes the PCs aside and makes an offer of her own. The GM can read or paraphrase the following:

I'LL WED HER MYSELF!

It's entirely possible that one of the PCs will take it into his head to marry the girl himself (and, given the cultural standards of the Empire, this is an option available only to male PCs). Such a decision will actually do relatively little damage to this adventure as written – simply substitute the PC in question for the suitor wherever appropriate throughout Parts Two and Three. Of course, before a PC can set himself up as Esmeralda's suitor he must first deal with the competition. Furthermore Kelsydra's plan will only work if the love proclaimed before the mirror is true... which by then it certainly will be, on Esmeralda's part if not the PC!

Ushering you aside, the noble woman introduces herself as Ludmilla Aschaffenberg, wife to Lord Rickard. Once she is sure she is out of earshot of the study and the servants, she begins to whisper urgently to you.

"I know why my husband and my cousin have brought you here, and I think it's monstrous that they plan to break the heart of our nephews so. I don't know this Esmeralda girl, but I ask you to consider the feelings of these young people before you tear them apart. Remember that my husband is not the only one with power in this town and not the only one with a hand on the purse strings. Think about what I have said, I'll be watching your progress, as will others."

Before they can question her or speak further a servant bustles in and she uses the interruption as an excuse to disappear. The PCs are then be dismissed from the von Bruner mansion and can take up their lodgings in the town and plan their next move.

TAKING SIDES

The PCs are under no obligations to back the von Bruners or any of the other noble families and can agree to help whomever they choose. They will likely take the noblemen's offer (cash and favour going a long way), but if they do not, the GM shouldn't feel the need to force them and can allow them to explore the situation and meet all the players before making up their minds. The GM should have each of the suitors make the PCs an offer when they first meet, promising all manner of rewards if the PCs will help them take care of the other suitors or make some grand gesture of love.

After hearing Heissman, Rickard, and Ludmilla out, the next step is to meet with the suitors, either to find out more about them, help them, or thwart their affections for Esmeralda.

DEALING WITH THE SUITORS

Whether it is to help or hinder the suitors in their efforts, the PCs need to find each in turn and deal with them. Each suitor represents an encounter, which can escalate depending on the actions of the PCs. The PCs may also meet with one suitor, play out some of the encounter, and then move on to another suitor to return and conclude the encounter later. All of the encounters are also influenced by the disposition of the other suitors (as noted under **Rivals**). There are no set locations or times of day for the encounters with the suitors (unless specifically noted), though they will likely all occur within the walls of Ubersreik or nearby.


OUT AND ABOUT IN UBERSREIK

The adventure takes the PCs from one end of Ubersreik to the other and even outside the city walls. The GM shouldn't worry too much about the exact layout of the town, however, and can insert locations and encounters where and when he chooses, focusing more on the mood and setting than street names or compass headings.

A map of Ubersreik is provided on page 47 of the Lure of Power book that provides some of the major locations, but feel free to populate the rest of the city any way you choose to suit your adventure.

MAGICAL SIGHT

Over the course of the adventure, PCs with access to the Magical Sight skill may attempt to determine the colour of any magical auras surrounding some of the major players and artifacts contained within. Some of the likely candidates are listed here:

The Mirror - Any PC who is able to investigate the mirror may make an **Average (2d) Magical Sight check**. Success reveals that the mirror is imbued with *Hysh*, the Wind of Light. Additionally, on a , the PC notices a trace amount of Dark Magic.

Esmeralda - Although partially under the influence of Kelsydra, Esmeralda does not have a Dark Magic aura to detect. She does however have a very faint Light Magic aura from her time spent in front of the mirror which can be detected by making a **Daunting (4d) Magical Sight check**.

Kelsydra's Locket - While this locket is required as part of the ritual that activates the power of the mirror, it does not have any magical properties itself, and thus possesses no magical aura.

I'VE GOT A PLAN!

Each of the encounters with the suitors presents an opportunity for the PCs and a way to take them out of the running or help advance their affections for Esmeralda. The PCs discover these opportunities after talking with the suitor or asking around about them (remembering that none of suitors will be dissuaded with talk alone and the PCs are strictly forbidden to kill anyone). The GM should not feel restricted by these encounters however, and if either he or any of the players come up with their own means of dealing with a suitor, they should feel free to go with it and use the outcomes detailed here as guidelines.

THE HOPELESS ROMANTIC: LEOPOLD VON BRUNER

The PCs can find Leopold either in the von Bruner manor, if they want to wait for him to show up, or in one of the many taverns of Ubersreik, composing poetry by himself at a table while the bar-keep scowls at him for not buying any drinks. He has no issue with talking to them (likely reading them some of his appalling poetry, see pages 30 and 46-47) and is not surprised if they say they are working for his father. The GM should let the PCs try to talk him out of his courtship of Esmeralda if they want, though words alone are ineffective—the boy is quite hopelessly in love.

If the PCs try to find more information on Leopold by asking around, greasing a few palms, or even talking further with Heissman, they can obtain most of the information about his personality and activities detailed on page 29. If the PCs ask the right people, on an **Average (2d) Charm check**, they are told by more than one person about the lad's obsession with poetry and how he never goes anywhere without that book under his arm (keen eyed PCs may also notice this if they spend any amount of time with Leopold). Should they get their hands on the book of poetry, they are able to

learn a little more. A comprehensive read of the book reveals (apart from the obvious crimes against the written word) lots of references to mirrors and reflections and also several references to a mysterious 'she' or 'her' who will help him be with his Esmeralda.

ENCOUNTER: GRAND INSPIRATION

After talking with Leopold or learning a bit about him from his peers, the PCs learn that he wishes to compose a grand poem to send to Esmeralda. Such a poem requires suitable inspiration and Leopold plans to travel out of the city to a remote clearing. This is a good opportunity to either help the boy by ensuring his safe return or possibly getting him 'lost' and remove him from the picture. As friends of his father, Leopold is more than happy to have the PCs along for his night of inspiring poetry.

The site of this great inspiration is a desolate clearing in the foothills of the Grey Mountains about half a day's walk from the town. It affords a good view of both the mountains and Ubersreik in the distance, though it is outside the areas commonly patrolled by the town garrison and therefore potentially dangerous. The GM can play out this encounter in one of two ways depending on if they are helping him or not.

If they have decided to help the boy, then they must see him through the night, seeing off both a goblin scavenging party (attracted by Leopold's terrible poetry) and at least one attempt by a suitor to eliminate him as a rival (see **Rivals**). The goblins (see "The Bestiary" chapter of the Core Product), equal in number to twice the size of the party, will show up shortly after midnight and begin by stalking around the camp spouting poetry back to Leopold and trying to unnerve the PCs. After a while, they attack and then run away, trying to lure the PCs away from the camp and

THE GRUNWALD LODGE

If the PCs have played through *Eye for an Eye*, they may consider bundling Leopold off to the Grunewald Lodge depending on how they left it. Alternatively, the GM could use the lodge as the setting for the Grand Inspiration encounter by having Leopold suggest a trip to the lodge, a location close to his heart. In both cases, if there were any loose ends left after *Eye for an Eye*, the GM could have them come back to haunt the PCs.

give them the chance to kidnap Leopold and take him back to their cave. If the goblins are successful, this could lead to the PCs hunting him down and a trip to the goblins' cave.

Alternatively, the PCs can let the goblins take Leopold or let the rival succeed, although if Leopold is killed, Heissman will be out for their blood. If they simply want to get him 'lost,' they can use the remote location to truss him up and hide him somewhere (any of the other suitors can offer such a place) until Esmeralda loses interest.

RIVALS

The other suitors may also have a hand in the encounter when they learn that Leopold is going to be out of the city:

- ✦ **Guthrie** may try to kidnap Leopold during the goblin attack and hide him in an old fort about a day's walk further into the mountains. Unfortunately, he failed to scout the fort ahead of time and it is overrun with goblins. Without the aid of the PCs, his plan could lead to both their deaths or capture.
- ✦ **Tomas** may hire some local brigands to ambush Leopold and beat him within an inch of his life (though not kill him) so he is no threat. The brigands are cowards; they might fight at first but will likely cut a deal with the PCs if they are losing and reveal their employer's identity.
- ✦ **Maximillian** and some of his friends plan to dress up as a group of goblins and give Leopold a terrible scare, wrecking his poem. Tragically, this prank coincides with the actual goblin attack and in the dark will lead to mayhem.

THE BRAWNY FOOL: GUTHRIE VON HAMMASTRAT

Guthrie is usually either in the city garrison or drinking in one of the taverns with his fellow pistoliers. The PCs can introduce themselves and he is pleasant enough to them, especially if they are carrying weapons or look like soldiering types. After a while, it becomes apparent he only wants to talk about two things: his days on the campaign trail and Esmeralda. He cannot be talked out of his courtship and likely, unless the PCs are very blunt, does not realize they are trying to tell him the union is a bad idea. Asking around, especially at the garrison, the PCs can learn most of Guthrie's background as detailed on page 30.

ENCOUNTER: THEY SAY MEN FEAR THE BEAST!

After a meeting with Guthrie, the PCs learn that he wants to hunt down and kill a fabulous beast for Esmeralda, a beast known as the Quarg. He has learned that the beast lives in the sewers of Ubersreik and only comes out at night to feed on stray cats, dogs, and the occasional beggar. Rare and wondrous, its pelt is said to glow in the dark and its eyes are actual diamonds! The beast is, of course, completely fictitious, made up by the men at the garrison to make fun of Guthrie. Nevertheless, he is determined to hunt it down. The 'hunt' means a night in the sewers and some potentially deadly encounters. The GM can play out this encounter in one of two ways depending on if the PCs are helping him or not.

If they are aiding Guthrie in his hunt, then they will need to protect him both from himself and the denizens below the town. The main danger is a group of six skaven, (see "The Bestiary" chapter of the Core Product), survivors of the events of *Edge of Night*. They have heard that the great diamond eyed Quarg is about and believe it to be Guthrie (after all who but the Quarg would say the word Quarg so much?). The skaven spring their trap for Guthrie in a sewer cross roads, attacking from all sides and using nets. If they capture him, their first order of business is to pry out those diamond eyes.

If the PCs want to get Guthrie out of the picture, they can leave him (or lead him) to his fate, though this may have other consequences (see **Ruffling Noble Feathers** on page 40). They can also simply just try to get him lost (he is quite dim) with an **Average (2d) Guile check**, and if successful it will be days or weeks before he emerges, fifthly and emaciated, but still alive and unharmed.

RIVALS

The other suitors may also have a hand in the encounter when they hear about the "Quarg hunt":

- ✦ **Leopold** is far too gentle a soul to consider hurting his rivals; his only response might be to compose a (bad) poem about the hunt.
- ✦ **Tomas** can use his connections throughout the city to bribe the Ubersreik sewer jacks to flood the tunnels during the "hunt". This washes everyone out into the river unless they can outrun the tide of water, desperately turning down side tunnels and looking for way out.
- ✦ **Maximillian** has bought a herd of Nordland Blue pigs, painted them red, tied bells to their hoofs and ears, and plans to release them into the sewers during the "hunt".

THE WEALTHY COMMONER: TOMAS VON KARSTADT

Tomas only frequents the best taverns, but can also be found in the Karstadt warehouses or other family holdings overseeing business. He is suspicious of the PCs and if they have visited another suitor first, he knows why they have come to see him. Rather than go on about his love or try to convince them of his sincerity, he cuts right to chase and offers them a deal—help him take care of the other suitors (keeping Heissman and Rickard happy) and win Esmeralda's hand, and he will pay them well.

The PCs have little trouble finding out the basics of Tomas' background (as detailed on page 31). What is harder to discover is that beneath the praise of a good businessman and good son there is talk of a deep ruthless streak, not to mention a substantial personal fortune gained from shady dealings. The Karstadt family, however, has a good reputation; few people speak badly of the boy openly and finding this out will require either a **Hard (3d) Charm check** or an **Average (2d) Intimidation check**.

ENCOUNTER: BAD DEBTS

Tomas has a problem. Some out of town merchants from Marienburg led by a man named Krebs Malrich are giving him trouble over unpaid debts. If the PCs agree to help Tomas, he tells them about the merchants and asks them to "take care" of the matter, though he does not go into great detail about exact nature of the debts, only to say they were for presents for Esmeralda and taken on in good faith. If the PCs refuse to help him or want to remove him as a rival, they must to do some digging to find out about the debts either by talking to Tomas' father, Alfred, or breaking into the family offices and finding Tomas' hidden books.

Krebs and his men are staying in a townhouse on the edge of Ubersreik while they conduct business with some local merchants. The PCs can go there and kill them without immediate repercussions (provided they get away before the watch show up) or they can try to intimidate them with the threat of violence and get them to leave, which requires a **Hard (3d) Intimidation check**. Either action results in an investigation by the watch; for the rest of the adventure, regardless of their subsequent actions, the PCs are dogged by suspicious guardsmen and merchants.

Krebs is an honest merchant and his claims are completely valid. If anything, Tomas is the criminal cheating decent businessmen. If the PCs do not scare or kill Krebs, he asks them to help recover his debts and offers them a reward if they can. This requires either



stealing the money from Tomas (who will not give it up willingly) or going over his head to his father, Alfred. In either case, the PCs must tread carefully as the Karstadts are well connected and Tomas will likely do everything in his power to hurt the PCs if they are successful.

RIVALS

The other suitors may also have a hand in the encounter if the PCs tell them about Tomas' debts:

- ✦ **Leopold** wishes no ill will upon his fellow suitors, though he may sing a song about how a debt of coin is but nothing compared to the debt his heart owes Esmeralda.
- ✦ **Guthrie** sides with Krebs and the merchants and tries to get the matter brought into the light. If the PCs kill or scare off Krebs, Guthrie makes sure to help with the investigation, though smarter minds than his will need to connect the dots.
- ✦ **Maximillian** offers to make Tomas' debts go away in exchange for his assistance. This leads to a temporary alliance between the two suitors to eliminate Leopold and Guthrie. Once the one or both of their competitors are out of the running, Tomas and Maximillian turn on each other once again.

THE NOBLE BRAT: MAXIMILLIAN ASCHAFFENBERG

To find Maximillian, the PCs need only follow the sounds of revelry. He can be found either boozing in a tavern or laughing with his friends at one of the noble manors. He has no interest in seeing the PCs unless they can convince him they are going to help him get rid of his competition for Esmeralda. He is especially hostile towards them if he learns that his uncle sent them.

Most people only have nice things to say about Lord Rickard's nephew; they praise his good nature and kind heart with smiles plastered upon their faces. A few coins or a few drinks later, an **Easy (1d) Charm check**, and Maximillian's true background will start to emerge (as detailed on page 33). The list of his pranks and misdeeds is a long one indeed and most of the common folk of Ubersreik know well to avoid him.

ENCOUNTER: THE LAST LAUGH

Maximillian is planning a grand prank to prove to everyone how unworthy the other suitors are of Esmeralda. It involves dressing up as Esmeralda and inviting the three other suitors to a rendezvous in a local tavern. He then plans to lure them each up to a room without the others' knowledge, steal their clothes, and then pretend to set the building on fire, forcing the three to run naked out into the street, where he has invited Esmeralda to meet with him. He hopes to prove to her how much smarter (and funnier) than the others he is when she sees them fooled by him so easily. He only lets the PCs in on the prank if he trusts them and they agree to help. The PCs can also find out about the prank from one of Maximillian's companions after a few drinks (Max is not the best at keeping secrets).

Executing the prank is quite a challenge for Maximillian and requires a web of lies and the ignorance of the other suitors. If the PCs have gained the trust of any of the other noble youths, Max asks them to help lure his rivals to the tavern. He also needs the PCs to deliver forged notes from Esmeralda and profess to their authenticity. Guthrie and Leopold are easy to fool unless the PCs

RUFFLING NOBLE FEATHERS

Depending on how far they go in their efforts to dissuade the suitors, the PCs may get themselves into trouble with the noble families. The GM should impress upon the PCs at the start of the adventure (via Heissman and Rickard) that they must obey the law while in Ubersreik and the nobles will not protect them if they start killing people or setting things on fire. Unless the PCs embark on a psychopathic rampage, however, the GM should make this a gradual sliding slope and allow the PCs a few warnings, first from the nobles and then from the town watch if they start breaking things or committing minor offences (of course, committing a crime undetected is another matter). They should also be aware that their actions could have a lasting effect on their reputation not just in Ubersreik, but also in the surrounding area.

give them reason for suspicion. Tomas is much harder to convince and the PCs must create some "proof" of Esmeralda's involvement (such as a token of clothing or a letter with the seal of her house) before he will acquiesce.

There are many things that can go wrong with this prank, with or without the intervention of the PCs, and the GM should feel free to make any or all of them happen. A few examples include, but are not limited to: the fake fire becomes real; the arrival of Heissman, Lord Rickard, Alfred or Ludmilla as the naked youths make a run for it; a fight breaks out between the youths when they encounter each other (naked or otherwise); or the youths pursue Maximillian (dressed as Esmeralda) into the crowd and attack the noble women in their efforts to unmask him (or worse, pursue Esmeralda thinking she is Maximillian!).

RIVALS

The other suitors may also have a hand in the encounter if they learn of Maximillian's prank:

- ✦ **Leopold** simply fails to show, but will not help the PCs or anyone else ruin the prank; such a thing is an affront to his love for Esmeralda and just cannot be.
- ✦ **Guthrie** brings a stout club to give Maximillian a thumping when he sees him. This can lead to all sorts of trouble given Guthrie is not too bright and all noble women tend to look the same to him.
- ✦ **Tomas** is a bit more cunning than the others and plays along with the prank until he is sure Guthrie and Leopold are present. He then locks them in their rooms, hoping to let the fire, which he does not realise is fake, do its work.

THE MAIDEN'S NOTE

After the PCs have dealt with the four suitors and one has come out on top (or is the least scathed), the GM should start this encounter. The leading suitor receives a note from Esmeralda, which he shares with the PCs the next time they meet (even if on unfriendly terms with the PCs, although in this case the tone is one of bragging, not enthusiasm). The GM can read or paraphrase the following:

DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Even though Esmeralda declared herself for a suitor, this does not stop the others from pursuing her (provided they are not dead or missing). In each of the three trials, the GM can have one or more of the rejected suitors show up to complicate things, usually by trying to start a fight or humiliate the chosen suitor in some way. The GM should also take note of the Obsession Tracker; depending upon its position, the suitors act more and more outrageously.

My dearest (insert suitor's name here), your efforts to win my heart have not gone unnoticed. It is my dearest wish and sincerest hope that you will come and meet me tonight at Fenstermacher manor so that you might court me properly. Signed—Esmeralda Fenstermacher

There are a number of reasons for the PCs' to attend the meeting depending on how they have dealt with the suitors up to that point. The most obvious reason for them to get involved is that they are personally asked to aid the leading suitor, who wants them to come along as his guests in order to ensure the courtship goes smoothly. While this may be at odds with the PCs primary task, especially if Leopold or Max comes out on top, the young suitor may offer to match any money currently set against him (whether he can actually afford this is another matter). It is also quite possible that Ludmilla gets involved at this point, approaching the PCs with a purse of gold and a "give love a chance" request. Alternatively, if they have sought to sabotage all of the suitors, then this will be a chance to eliminate the last one; whether for Heissman, Rickard, or their own sense of completeness. By this point, some of the things they have heard about Esmeralda have likely raised their interest in her and they may want to use this opportunity to find out more about the girl. Finally if they feel they have done their duty to Heissman and Rickard, the noblemen will step in again and tell them the deed will not be done until they have made sure Esmeralda understands she's not to engage with their son and nephew ever again.

PART TWO: TRIALS OF THE HEART

Throughout the first part of the adventure, Kelsydra took a largely passive role, waiting for the suitors to thin out and present her with a likely candidate to effect her escape. She now takes a more direct hand, testing the candidate through a number of trials to measure his love for Esmeralda before inviting him to profess his love for the girl before her mirror. She also needs the PCs to gather the one final item, a small locket, that her cultists where unable to procure to prepare for her release. When the PCs and the suitor arrive at the Fenstermacher manor, they are met by Esmeralda's maid, Hilda. She tells them that before the girl allows the suitor to court her properly, he must complete a task for her to prove that his love is true.

When Esmeralda was first given the mirror by her father, it was accompanied by several other small packages. These turned out to be filled with many of the original love letters, tokens, and other memories collected by Heller during his ill-fated courtship of Kelsydra. Especially taken by Heller's love letters, Esmeralda has

become somewhat obsessed, deciding to use the couple as a model for her own romance. Fueled by Kelsydra, Esmeralda has crafted the three tasks that the suitor must accomplish based on these letters. While her belief is that she is honouring a passionate love story, each of these trials serves a darker purpose.

THE FIRST TRIAL: A LOST LOCKET

Esmeralda wants the suitor to find a locket that is very dear to her. The locket is a small silver charm, fashioned into the shape of a strange looking bird and clearly not of Imperial make. She believes that the von Bruners might have the locket and their manor would be a good place to start. The locket was actually given to Kelsydra by Heller and contains a meaningful line from one of his poems to her.

My eyes desire to look upon no other, so fair is my Kelsydra, all others pale beside her.

Kelsydra was wearing the locket when she was imprisoned within the mirror, and she has reasoned (correctly) that it will be critical to any attempt to escape.

The locket is currently kept with a collection of family heirlooms under lock and key in Heissman's study. The PCs can learn of its location either by asking Heissman directly or doing research on the von Bruners by asking some of the other families, an **Average (2d) Folklore check**. To get the locket, the PCs must either convince Heissman to give it up or steal it. Heissman is very reluctant to surrender it unless the PCs can convince him it is all part of their plan to make sure Esmeralda will disavow her interest in the noble sons, a **Hard (3d) Charm check**. He will not even see them if something bad has happened to Leopold.



Stealing the locket is equally difficult and requires breaking into the manor and ransacking Heissman's study. Unless they are very careful, the crime is traced back to them (especially if they earlier asked Heissman about the very locket which is now missing). The consequences of getting caught could be dire and may alienate them from much of Ubersreik's nobility, depending on what kind of mess they leave in their wake after acquiring the locket.

When they attempt to return the locket to Esmeralda, they must briefly wait outside before Hilda returns. She accepts the locket on behalf of Esmeralda with another note and a second task.

THE SECOND TRIAL: ANCESTRAL BLESSING

The next task involves receiving an ancestral blessing for the union. Esmeralda wants the suitor to go to Morr's Field, find the tomb she has specified (which happens to be the von Bruner mausoleum), and read a love poem written by Heller to Kelsydra. To help them, one of Esmeralda's servants and unknown to her, a secret cultist of the Eternal Promise (see page 28), is sent along with them. Actually, this is part of an elaborate ritual engineered by Kelsydra to desecrate the von Bruner tomb, more for revenge than any part of her plan. If the PCs examine the poem, they find nothing sinister or out of the ordinary, except that apparently Heller was no better a poet than Leopold. To convince Esmeralda that they have completed the task they are instructed that Jory must witness the event.

Getting into the Field is no great challenge, as for a nobleman and his followers it is completely permissible to visit the tombs of one's ancestors. Things escalate, however, when the suitor begins to read the poem over the tomb of the von Bruners, the air begins to chill and the light from the stained glass windows darken. This is due to the fact that as the suitor delivers the poem, Jory quietly intones his own chant and surreptitiously marks the tombs with blood. If the PCs notice this, a **Hard (3d) Observation check**, they can stop him and end the wicked rite. If found out, Jory will do anything he can to avoid capture, in fact he has already picked out a suitable escape route through the rear of the tomb, and will not openly attack the PCs unless cornered (Jory uses the Cult Follower stats from The Bestiary chapter in the Core Product). If captured, he will seek to cut out his own tongue at the first opportunity, but if made to talk, he has very little real information to present; Kelsydra has muddled his mind and he will have no memory of the mirror he stood before to receive his orders. He will however freely and with great pleasure repeat the following over and over:

"She comes. My Mistress will return and you will see it so!"

If the ritual is completed, things become more complex. The desecration ritual in conjunction with his poem awakens the spirit of Heller, or a shade of his former self, which descends on the PCs and the suitor in a rage (causing Fear 3). Jory is genuinely as shocked as the PCs by the conjuring of Heller. Having completed his ritual as directed by Kelsydra, Jory flees through his escape route, returning to the Fenstermacher estate. The suitor as well is shaken beyond the capacity for rational thought and flees the tomb. PCs that have taken the time to research the family history of the von Bruners or have otherwise been made aware of Heller's woeful tale, may recognise and be able to reason with him. If communicated with, he will provide the PCs with information on the origin of the poem that the suitor was made to read as well as any other information the

GM wishes to impart on the PCs at this point. Heller has only the vaguest memories of his past, but if the PCs ask the right questions, he can be used give them clues about Kelsydra and the mirror.

Eventually, the disturbed spirit draws the attention of several nearby priests of Morr, who rush into the tomb and may well attack the PCs for practising necromancy unless they can quickly diffuse the situation by explaining themselves. Either way, the priests quickly put Heller's spirit to rest once again.

THE THIRD TRIAL: PLACES OF POWER

As long as the PCs and the suitor return to the Fenstermacher manor with news of the reading and what transpired at the tomb, they will be presented with the final trial. Hilda is at first very leery of any outlandish claims of Chaos rituals or long-dead spirits rising from the grave, but will eventually acquiesce to its veracity and promises to pass along the entire tale to Esmeralda.

The final trial involves proclaiming the suitor's love for Esmeralda to all of Ubersreik...in song. The suitor is given a list of half a dozen locations throughout the city and the verses of a love song written by Heller. He must travel to each location in turn and sing the song.

While again, innocent and simply verse written by another man deep in love, the song is also a code that has been delivered in dreams: it alerts the members of the cult that Kelsydra has cultivated in the city that her release is close at hand and they should prepare for her. It amuses the daemon that the very people she will be revenged upon (the nobles of Ubersreik) will herald their own demise by singing it from the street corners. The real danger here is not from Kelsydra or her followers, but from the other suitors (see the Down but Not Out sidebar on page 41). This final encounter is



a chance for any remaining suitors, spurned nobles, or people the PCs might have wronged so far to have their revenge. The GM should have them all come out of the shadows, possibly springing ambushes, stirring up the locals, and generally making life hard for them depending on who they are and what they want. Since this is the last chance for the other suitors to stop their rival, the GM should pull out all the stops.

Some examples of the kinds of trouble the suitors or wronged parties might cause include:

- ✦ **Guthrie** is very drunk, but he manages to get together with a group of equally drunk guardsmen to beat up the suitor, and the PCs if they get in the way, before throwing them all in gaol.
- ✦ **Leopold** the love-sick youth follows them around reciting hateful poetry before trying to commit suicide by jumping off a roof. Unless he is saved in some way, he could seriously injure himself...or worse.
- ✦ **Tomas** returns from one of his family's holdings outside the town with a herd of cattle and runs them through the streets in an attempt to either trample the suitor and the PCs or ruin their serenade.
- ✦ **Maximillian** writes a letter, nominally from the guard captain in Stromdorf and addressed to Lord Rickard, naming the suitor or one of the PCs as the leader of a gang of bandits harassing Stromdorf. Maximillian will affix his uncle's seal to the letter, indicating that it has been read and approved by Lord Rickard, and use it to induce some watchmen to arrest the "bandit". Of course, the letter is a complete fabrication (unless the PCs actually do have a bad reputation in Stromdorf, in which case...).
- ✦ **Krebs** wants restitution from the PCs if they bullied him while assisting Tomas. He has brought in some extra muscle from Marienburg, which could contribute to a conflict between merchants and nobles if things get out of hand.
- ✦ Priests of Morr are angered by the desecration of Morr's Field. A Witch Hunter has arrived in Ubersreik to investigate their claim that the suitor and the PCs are necromancers!

AND NOW FOR YOUR REWARD...

Once Esmeralda (or rather, Kelsydra) is convinced that the trials are completed, she deems the time at hand and sets up a meeting with her chosen suitor. Unless the PCs have made it particularly obvious that they believe Kelsydra exists or that a daemon is behind the lovers' obsessions, she does not try to stop them being present. The meeting takes place before the mirror in the Fenstermacher manor. Depending on what the PCs know, or think they know, about Esmeralda, they can take as much time as they like to prepare before departing.

PART THREE: FRAGMENTS OF DESIRE

The time has finally arrived for Esmeralda to meet her suitor and for Kelsydra to make her escape. The suitor (with the PCs in tow) is led to her room. Depending on what the PCs know, they may be prepared for a fight, perhaps expecting Esmeralda to be some hid-

eous daemon or the head of a hedonistic cult, but they are instead ushered into an unremarkable sitting room. The GM should read or paraphrase the following:

You enter Esmeralda's unremarkable sitting room to find the girl waiting for her suitor. As he steps forward to profess his love, you take in the large number of mirrors hanging on the walls and standing in the corners...far too many for a room this size. Esmeralda clasps the silver locket in one hand, her face glowing as the suitor kneels taking her other hand into his. Then everything seems to shift, like light moving over water. You blink, and suddenly both Esmeralda and the suitor have vanished.

Looking around you notice your reflections in the mirrors, or rather the absence of your reflection. Instead you can see the sitting room reflected through the mirrors and your unconscious forms, along with Esmeralda and the suitor lying on the floor, out of reach beyond the glass. Standing above the crumpled mass of bodies, is a perversely beautiful androgynous figure. Bending slightly, it nudges Esmeralda with the tip of a crab-like claw and its lips twist into an attractive yet wholly disturbing smile.

"Thank you my dear. You have no idea how good it feels to be free after all these years."

Kelsydra has trapped the PCs inside the magic mirror.. Depending on how much information the PCs may have already learned about Kelsydra, Heller, or the mirror, the daemon can fill in the gaps, even answering PC questions. In no apparent hurry, Kelsydra delights in taunting the prisoners, telling them that they will never be able to escape. She relishes every moment of the group's anguish.



Eventually, she moves towards the door at the far end of the room, turning one last time towards the mirror to address the PCs. When she does, read or paraphrase the following:

"I suppose I could slit all of your throats right here and now, but it would be a shame to destroy such wonderful playthings. I must leave you for now, but fear not, I will be sure to return from time to time and give you the attention you so desperately crave." She then slips out the door and the PCs are left all alone.

This experience causes Fear 3.

INSIDE THE MIRROR

Apart from everything looking reversed to the PCs (birth marks and scars on opposite sides of the body, handedness changed, etc), other things operate differently inside the mirror. The GM should have each PC reverse their Stance Meter, so that conservative becomes reckless and vice versa.

MAZE OF MEMORIES

This reflection of the real world was created by Kelsydra's memories. Luckily for the PCs (and what Kelsydra fails to realise) escape from the mirror will be much easier for them. The major artifacts and players needed to work the magic of the mirror are all present, having already been painstakingly brought together by the daemon. The PCs simply need to bring them together once again on this side. To escape from the mirror, the PCs must find Kelsydra (Esmeralda) and Heller (the suitor); only when the two are brought together, back in the reflection of the sitting room, can their love unlock the mirror and return them all to the real world.

Now that Kelsydra is free, her influence on the mirror world has already begun to fade and as such, there are only three locations that the PCs can explore on this side of the mirror. Each holds an important component needed to break free of the trap. The PCs are free to move between these rooms as they wish, although as they begin to work the magic of the mirror, areas will become sealed.

SITTING ROOM

The inside of the mirror looks like an exact copy of the sitting room in Fenstermacher manor except that there are two doors leading out of the room, one on each side (leading to the Ballroom and the Gardens) The PCs will quickly notice that everything is a reflection of what it was on the other side of the mirror, even book titles and text are reversed. Players who investigate carefully though will discover that there are two artifacts hidden here that do not behave in the same way.

The PCs can make an **Average (2d) Observation check**, or simply announce that they are searching the room, to easily discover both Kelsydra's locket as well as a copy of Heller's love poem (the one read at the tomb during the Ancestral Blessing). As the only items in the room whose text does not run in reverse, both of these items easily stand out as unique in the mirror world.

THE BALLROOM

When the PCs step through the first door, read or paraphrase the following:

You step into a grand ballroom. Nebulous figures dance around the room in pairs to muffled music. Only two figures are sharp and distinct among the haze. A young man wearing simple white robes bearing a golden serpent sits in a chair and watches a beautiful young woman across the room. As you look on, the man turns to the table next to him, picks up a jewelled brooch, stands to his feet, pauses to gain confidence, and then walks over to the woman presenting her with the gift, asking her to dance. She looks at the brooch, turns up her nose and dismisses him. Disheartened, he returns to his seat, sets the brooch down on the table and as he does so, it transforms into a golden comb. A few moments later, the man rises and tries again, this time presenting the new gift. Again, she turns up her nose and dismisses him. This scene seems to repeat over and over again in front of you, each time with a new gift and each time he is turned away.

The young man is Heller von Bruner and the young woman is the illusion of Kelsydra that he fell in love with. The PCs must assist Heller in offering a gift that Kelsydra will not refuse in order to complete this part of the mirror's magic. The PCs can speak with this shade of Heller though he will only really be able to comment on his situation at the moment.

Ultimately, Heller will be doomed to repeat this endless pantomime until he gives Kelsydra the locket. If the PCs found the locket in the sitting room, they can hand it to Heller, who will immediately bring it to Kelsydra. Alternatively, if the PCs simply suggest the locket to Heller, the next item to appear on his table will be the locket. Either way, once Heller presents Kelsydra with the locket and she accepts, everything in the room begins to dissolve. When only Kelsydra remains, she transforms into Esmeralda who is still clutching the locket.



Once the PCs bring Esmeralda into the sitting room, the door to the ballroom shuts and will not open again.

THE GARDEN

When the PCs step through the second door, read or paraphrase the following:

You are standing in a lush garden terrace at night. The von Bruner estate looms behind you in a misty haze. A cool breeze, rustles through the trees and even though everything is bathed in moonlight, all is grey and muted. Only two figures stand out amidst the sombre scenery, a young man in white robes on his knees before a lovely young woman sitting on a stone bench in the centre of the patio. The young man pulls a book from his pocket and begins to read a poem to the young woman. Clearly unimpressed, she turns on the bench, now facing away from the disheartened suitor. He quickly rises, closes the book, and places it into his pocket. Moving around to the other side of the bench, he takes her hand in his, kissing it as he kneels before her once again. The young man pulls out his book and begins another verse, until the young woman again turns away from him in disapproval. This scene plays over and over before you.

Again, this scene will repeat indefinitely until the PCs present Heller with the page of poetry they found in the sitting room. Alternatively, they can recite the poem from memory, although this is a **Daunting (4d) Intelligence check** as they must get every syllable correct in order for the magic to work properly.

Either way, once Heller reads the proper poem to Kelsydra, the garden begins to dissolve. When only Heller remains, he transforms into the suitor, looking confused and out of sorts. Once the PCs bring the suitor into the sitting room, the door to the garden shuts and will not open again.

THE WAY OUT

When both Esmeralda and the suitor have been brought together in front of the mirror, read or paraphrase the following:

Esmeralda and her suitor look enlivened the moment they are brought together, quickly rushing to each others arms. As they embrace, everything in the room seems to shift once again and suddenly you find yourself on the floor, reoccupying your corporeal bodies on the other side of the mirror.

CONCLUSION

Once the PCs escape the mirror, they have successfully concluded the adventure...but there may still be any number of loose ends to wrap up!

KELSYDRA

Many PCs may be interested in what has become of Kelsydra, whether so they can be certain to avoid her or to track her down and end the threat she represents. Kelsydra, now wearing the guise of a beautiful and glamorous woman, could be anywhere. If she has no particular reason to think the PCs are cunning or powerful enough to escape the mirror and pose a threat, then she may still be in Ubersreik, building herself a new identity through which to wreak additional havoc on the von Bruner family. If she is wary of

the PCs, then she will have fled for now. In either case, pursuing or discovering Kelsydra can be the basis for an entire adventure in its own right.

A FINAL CONFRONTATION

For a more immediate conclusion, consider the following series of events. Kelsydra, impatient after her long imprisonment and delirious with her newfound freedom, acts unusually directly for a change. First, she locates and assembles all the unsuccessful suitors, each of whom is already partially in her thrall, and brings them together in the Fenstermacher manor. (She will already have tortured the Fenstermacher family and staff to death.) Once she has her "team" assembled, she proceeds to the von Bruner estate in the guise of Lord Rickard and secures an audience with Heissman von Bruner. With the aid of the other suitors, she overpowers and binds von Bruner hand and foot, then assumes his form and orders all the servants and other staff to leave. Then she settles in for a leisurely week or so of torturing Lord Heissman to death.

When the PCs escape the mirror and seek to report to Lord Heissman, they will find the other suitors loitering in the otherwise suspiciously-empty von Bruner estate. The suitors will do their best to discourage the PCs from investigating any further, lying, bluffing, or intimidating the PCs into leaving. If the PCs press the matter or sneak past them and discover Kelsydra and Lord Heissman, violence will likely ensue.

Use either daemonette or daemon prince of Slaanesh characteristics for Kelsydra, depending on the level of challenge your PCs are comfortable with.

ESMERALDA

Esmeralda will be confused and surprised when the PCs explain what has happened. She has full memory of everything except for her experiences on the far side of the mirror, but truly was unaware of any influence on Kelsydra's part. She is, in fact, truly and innocently in love with her suitor and will do everything in her power to make him a good and virtuous wife. With Kelsydra gone, the daemon has no more influence over the girl or her life.

The PCs may, justifiably, conclude that the girl is tainted by Chaos and report her to the proper authorities. If so, Esmeralda and her suitor may well go on the run, possibly aided by her father, and live out adolescent fantasies of romance in some far-away town.

Any Witch Hunter's examination of the situation, after the fact, will turn up virtually no evidence aside from the PCs' own testimony... which could as easily damn them as the Fenstermachers. (Not that Witch Hunters always need evidence...)

THE SUITORS

Esmeralda's beloved will behave much like Esmeralda herself - he has only dim memories of the mirror experience, and may look back with some sense of shame over the actions of himself and his fellow suitors under Kelsydra's influence, but won't be inclined to believe that he or his love have been manipulated by a daemon. PCs who press the issue could cause the suitor to doubt his own feelings and ultimately sabotage his relationship with Esmeralda, if they really want to.

The other suitors, the ones not chosen, will slowly return to their natural, unexaggerated selves as Kelsydra's influence fades. They, too, will fail to realize anything was amiss. (Unless Kelsydra has turned them into her thralls as described above, of course!) Their feelings for Esmeralda will fade with time and they will move on with their lives.

THE VON BRUNERS & ASCHAFFENBERGS

If the PCs have managed to keep both Leopold and Maximillian from untoward "entanglement" with Esmeralda, Lord Heissman and Lord Rickard will provide the promised reward. Ludmilla, for her part, will be happy so long as she's convinced that true love won the day.

If the PCs have failed to keep Max or Leopold from declaring his love for Esmeralda, the lords' wrath will be tempered only by the PCs' roles in keeping their kin from harm at the daemon's hands. Lord Heissman will express dismay at yet another Chaos taint on the family name. If the PCs have managed to discover Kelsydra's history with the von Bruner family, Lord Heissman may be very interested indeed. He may even contract the PCs to do something about it... something suitable for the next adventure!

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

The following section details the stats and special abilities of the NPCs that the PCs will encounter over the course of the adventure.

Many of these NPCs have Creature Cards included (see page 11 for a description of Creature Cards).

LEOPOLD VON BRUNER ☠☠

Poetic: Leopold gains ☐ to all *Social* actions when discussing poetry or the arts. *Social* actions targeting Leopold gain ☐ when referencing poetry or the arts. Leopold is immune to the Book of (Awful) Poetry.

Suggested Action: Intuit Intention, Teller of Tales

GUTHRIE VON HAMMASTRAT ☠☠☠

Peacock: Guthrie gains ☐ to all physical actions while a member of the fairer sex is nearby.

Suggested Action: Dramatic Flourish

TOMAS VON KARSTADT ☠☠

Braggart: When Tomas spends at least 1 Cunning on a check, he gains one additional ☐.

Suggested Action: Perfect Gift

MAXIMILLIAN ASCHAFFENBERG ☠☠

Condescending: All of Maximillian's *Social* actions gain:

♣ The target suffers 1 stress

Suggested Action: Belittle/Berate

ESMERALDA FENSTERMACHER ☠☠

There's Something about Esmeralda: Add ■■ to all *Social* actions as well as Fellowship and Intuition checks targeting Esmeralda due to her enchanting presence.

Suggested Action: Flirt

HILDA ☠☠

Hilda uses the Townsfolk stats but has a Strength and Toughness of 4 and has 15 wounds.

RUPERT FENSTERMACHER, HEISMAN VON BRUNER, & LUDMILLA ASCHAFFENBERG ☠

These NPCs use the Noble stats.

LORD RICKARD ASCHAFFENBERG ☠☠

Lord Rickard uses the Noble stats but has a Strength and Toughness of 4 and has Charm, Discipline, and Leadership trained.

ALFRED KARSTADT ☠

Alfred uses the Merchant stats. If you do not have *The Creature Guide* or *Creature Vault*, he instead uses the Townsfolk stats but has an Intelligence, Willpower, and Fellowship of 4 as well as 3 expertise dice.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

NPC	ST	TO	AG	INT	WP	FEL	A/C/E	WOUNDS	STANCE
LEOPOLD	2 (3)	3 (1)	3 (2)	4 ■	4	3	0/4/2	10	C2
GUTHRIE	4 ■ (5)	4 (2)	4 ■ (1)	2	3	3	5/2/1	15	R2
TOMAS	3 (3)	3 (1)	3 (0)	5 ■	3	4 ■	1/6/3	12	C2
MAXIMILLIAN	3 (5)	4 (1)	3 (0)	3	4 ■	3 ■	2/4/2	12	R1
ESMERALDA	3 (3)	3 (1)	4 ■ (0)	3	3	4 ■	1/4/2	9	C1

The Silver Morning Dream in the Twilight of Stirring Love

*I awoke this morning, or perhaps I did not,
Offtossed the bedcloth, my toes groped for slippers.
As a child on Geheimstag, I ran to the window.
It was not glass, but a reflection, of myself, and no other (just me).*

*As I stared into my own eyes, she appeared behind me,
My fair Esmeralda, as I turned to brush my fingertips upon her lips.
She was gone.*

*I want to wake, or perhaps I do not.
Alone she now stood in the window, reflected instead of myself.
I touched the cool glass, never to touch her, but always to look upon her.
Can she be free? Oh how I long to touch her. So far from me, yet so close.
My fists hammer upon the glass, it ripples as water.*

*I awoke then, or perhaps I did not.
Rain upon the window, no soul stood behind that mirror:
Servants with a morning meal, biscuits as ash, jams as dust.
No pleasures, after my separation. No pleasures without her.*

*Like a fish swimming past my memories,
I see only the faintest of wakes.
Deeper the dream dives.
Into darkness.*

I awoke this morning, or perhaps I did not.

I do battle (for your heart)

*As the day breaks, the sun
Illuminates the shining armour of the brave suitor fair
(tis I)
As he does prepare to do battle
For your heart.
His armour, parchment sheets
His rapier, a quill
The brave suitor (still me) sallies forth from his fortress
At the head of his army of prose.
In the distance, the unassailable edifice surrounds your heart.
Dare he assault it? He dares!
No siege for the brave suitor fair;
He (I) storms the battlements
to claim the glorious prize (your heart).*



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