

# BRINKWOOD

THE BLOOD OF TYRANTS

*ALMANAC*

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## CREDITS

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**Writers:** Erik Bernhardt and Brian Yaksha

**Editor:** Michelle Bernhardt

**Layout:** Francita Soto

**Artists:** Sabaa Bismil, Steph Cheung,  
Myca Labelle, Olivia Rea, Mohamed Saad,  
Byron Swain, Brian Yaksha

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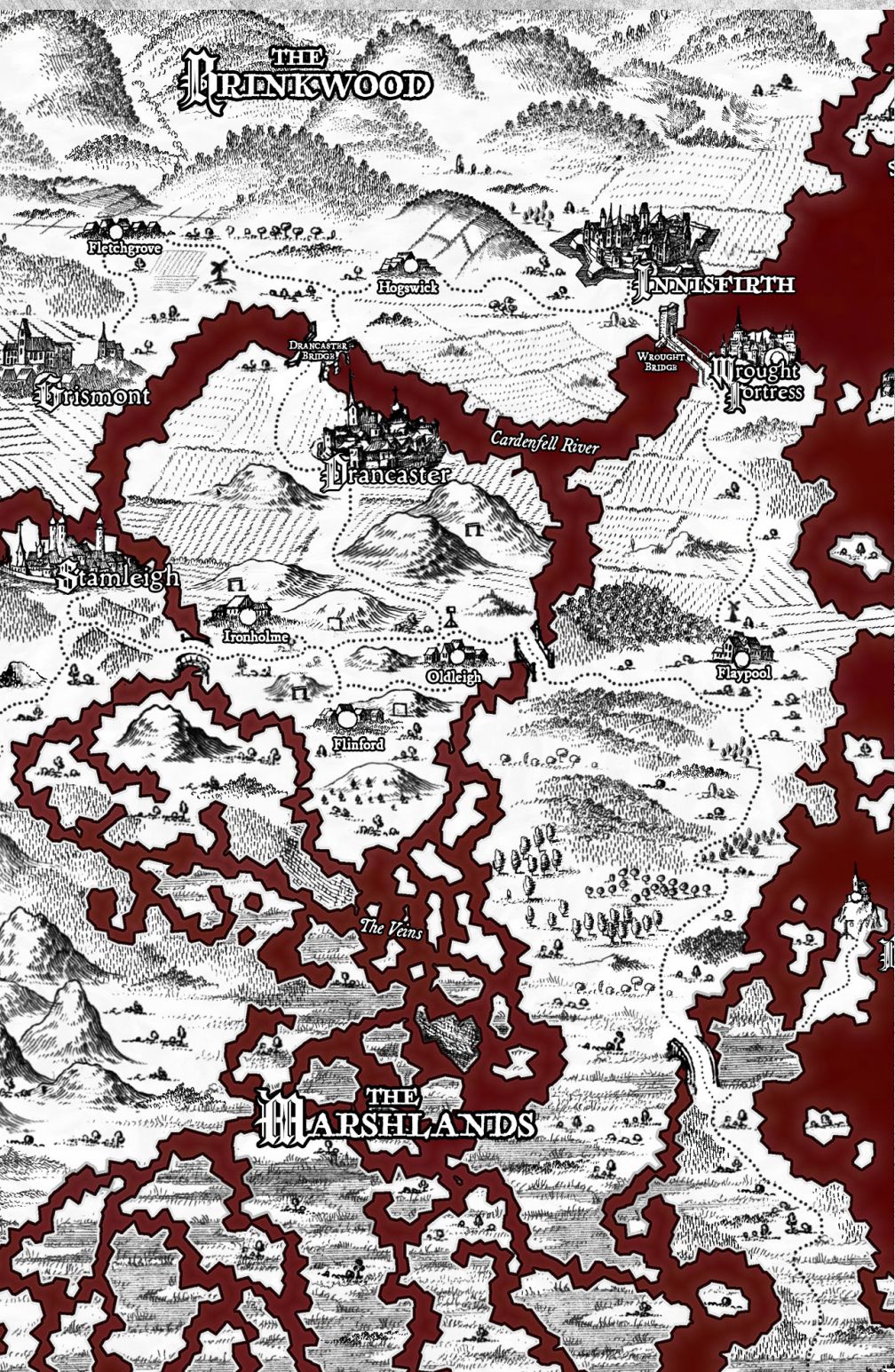
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# THE BRINKWOOD



# AN ALMANAC OF CARDENFELL

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*Cardenfell is the beating heart of our vampiric enemies, the very heart of our oppressors. As it is said, the Blood flows from Cardenfell. If revolution is to come to Orslae, it must begin in Cardenfell. And we must do all we can to see that it does.*

*-Avan of Myra*

This almanac is designed to present additional information about Cardenfell and its immediate surroundings, including the factions, lands, towns, and villages that lie within its borders. Within, you will find descriptions, tables, and advice on how to bring Cardenfell to life.

# FACTIONS

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## COGGERS

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**Notable Assets:** Militant leadership of old-time strikers; crude weapons and well-worn tool stockpiles; deep knowledge of factory inner workings.

**Allies:** Weavers, Guilders, Sappers

**Enemies:** Bailiffs, factory lords, dramcoat guards, and strikebreaker wisps

**Hideouts:** *Hidden union storerooms beneath warehouses or in forgotten dock-side taverns. The smell of ink, workmen, and rust. The quiet din of voices and barely contained fury.*

### BACKGROUND

The Coggers are a nascent worker's movement dedicated to alleviating the plight of the working poor in Cardenfell's towns. Centered mostly in the factories of Cardenfell, the Coggers came together over shared concerns such as dangerous working conditions, poor wages, and exploitation by the factory bosses and their vampiric overlords. Early attempts at peaceful organization and collective bargaining were ruthlessly crushed by the vampires, leading the Coggers to develop a more militant spirit and take their movement underground. While their numbers may be small, they have the potential to grow rapidly, as every man, woman, and even child that works in the factories of Cardenfell is a potential recruit.

### SPOKES

#### GUEN

##### *The Organizer*

**History:** Sold at an early age to a factory as a cogscamper in order to pay off some gambling debts, Guen survived the factories by being quick, friendly, and charismatic. He soon realized that the best way to stay safe was to work together with others. As Guen grew, conditions in factories deteriorated, and his friendships were tested and strengthened. He forged his growing circle of friends and comrades into a militant union, capable of working together to resist the worst deprivations of the bosses and foremen.



**Description:** Sharp and lean. Handsome, in a rugged way. Dresses simply, but with a dashing flair.

**Motivation:** Guen prefers bold, daring plans with a high reward for their worthy risks. He isn't necessarily a gloryhound, but he understands the importance of raising morale via both real and symbolic victories. Most of all, he seeks to bolster the enthusiasm of his constituents and draw more workers to the cause.

### SITUATION

Rumor has it that Guen has connections to the inner circles of the factory lords, by way of a sympathetic scion, Ophelia Cane. It remains to be seen whether Guen's rakish charm has won over Ophelia or if she truly endorses his ideals. Ophelia must walk a delicate balance herself, as the demands of bourgeois society are as numerous as they are potentially ruinous. For now, her insights and maidservant spies help keep the Coggers one step ahead of the factory lords, but only time will tell how long such love can last.

### CELLS AND GROUPS

The Seam Hewers, the New Workman Movement, the Bridgeworker's Commune, the Anointed Order of Coachmen and Teamsters, the Union of Engineers Pneumatica, the Cadre of Skilled Bargeworkers, the Mutual Tenancy Movement, the Movement for Equity and the Injured, the Martyrs of the Shredded Lung, the Boilerhouse Levy, the Innisfirth Children's Consideration Brigade, the Iron Temperance Association, the Affiliated Foresters Counsel, the League of Common Wills.

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## DIGGERS

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**Notable Assets:** Vast agricultural knowledge, a steady supply of food and other necessities

**Allies:** Farmers and peasants, Fletchers, Prayers

**Enemies:** Bailiffs, landlords, reformed faith clergy

**Hideouts:** *Remote communal farms in unlikely places: on craggy cliffs, in swamplands, in abandoned and disused locales once deemed worthless and infertile. The smell of baking bread and the sound of work-songs wafts over the breeze. Cheerful, welcoming halls with warm hearths and fresh ale.*

### BACKGROUND

The Diggers are a movement of farmers, peasants, agriculturalists, botanists, and visionaries who have sought to advance the development of agriculture and the interests of the peasants who tend the farms of Cardenfell. Core to the Diggers outlook is the issue of “common land.” Most fertile land on the Bloody Isles has been divided up into fiefdoms by landlords, who peasants and farmers must pay rent to in order to grow their food. Some small portion of land, usually deemed infertile or otherwise worthless, is reserved as “common land,” and no rent is charged for its use.

It is in the interest of landlords that this “common land” not be farmed, communally or individually. However, the Diggers have recently had great success in tilling and harvesting crops from soil previously thought unsuitable for cultivation, thus acting as a direct challenge to the landlords and their monopoly on productive land.

Also core to the Diggers movement are ideals of communal labor and sharing of bounty. Their farms and fields are tended cooperatively, with all taking a share of what is produced. Furthermore, the Diggers do not hoard their crops or seek to quickly convert it into currency. Instead, they either store or distribute what crops they cannot eat to those that are hungry or destitute.

It is agreed by most revolutionary thinkers that the Diggers will play a key role in any successful rebellion and its aftermath, as their model of agriculture and community living is both antithetical to the vampires’ way of life, as well as immensely productive. An army marches on its stomach, and it is the Diggers who keep armies fed.

## SPOKES

CLINDRE

### *The Farmer*

**History:** Clindre is an older woman, middle aged with several grown children. She has been a farmer her entire life, running a small parcel of land single handedly after her husband died. A generous spirit, she took in many peasants and sharecroppers on the verge of starvation, offering them fair shares of her crops for their labor, thus forming a small nucleus of Digger activity.

**Description:** She has sharp, quick eyes under a wrinkled brow, and speaks in a slightly hoarse tone of voice.

**Motivation:** Clindre is an eminently practical woman and vouches for goals and tasks that others might view as beneath their notice. She wants stomachs filled, feet shod in boots, and warm blankets over tired bodies.

YOAN

### *The Researcher*

**History:** Yoan is a young man and a student of botany and agriculture. Fascinated with plant life from a young age, his talent for coming up with new techniques of crop rotation, tilling, and fertilization made him both coveted and infamous among the landlords of Cardenfell. Among the Diggers, he found a group of kindred spirits, happy to let him experiment and research to his heart's content.

**Description:** Yoan's skin is broken up into layers of bright, emerald leaves. Upon his head is a gallant rack of antlers, rakishly sharpened and styled. He often wears simple but stylish coats, and no shoes upon his cloven hooved feet. He speaks in a high, sometimes lilting tone of voice.

**Motivation:** Yoan is a voice for progress, always pushing for more experimental techniques and approaches to solving problems. Gaining some new insight or a bit of knowledge is often worth any price, at least according to him.

## SITUATION

A blight ravages the crops of Cardenfell, seemingly striking at random and decimating entire fields. Clindre favors more traditional solutions, namely burning infected fields and letting them lie fallow. Yoan, on the other hand, wishes to study the plague and find a more sustainable cure.

## CELLS AND GROUPS

The Cardenfell Levellers, the Young Harvesters, the Orchard of the Shrike, the Pairing of Oak and Elm, the Seaming Pulse, the Winnower's Mill, the Hookey Cart, the Plough's Share, the Thresher's Sledge, the Neck Cryers, the Feasting House of Autumn, the Titheless Bushell, the Society of Fruit First Borne, the Scarecrow Collective, the Sallow Field Share, the House of Equinoxes, the Fielding Gease, the House of Sickles, the Bull's Roaring.

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## FLETCHERS

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**Notable Assets:** Skilled hunters and archers; trained scouts; knowledge of woodcraft, fletching, and forest survival

**Allies:** Forest spirits and dryads, Diggers, Witchers, Poisoners

**Enemies:** Huntsmen, wisp spies, powdermen

**Hideouts:** *Remote forest camps built into their surroundings and protected by natural camouflage. Small huts with the smell of roasting meat and the sound of quiet conversation. Village hold-outs hidden in basements, disused granaries, or secret rooms. Small shrines to forgotten gods, passed on the wayside.*

### BACKGROUND

Before the Crimson Crown, the strength of the Bloody Isles was in its archers. Longbows forged of yew were in the hands of every child from an early age, and folk were taught to practice the arts of archery and fletching by royal decree.

Whether because they feared a populace capable of putting arrows into their hearts, or because of the more subtle motivation to break local traditions and isolate folk from their heritage, the Crimson Crown banned all bows from their domain.

Those who refused to give up the bow are known as Fletchers, and they are hunted relentlessly by the Crown. They share a close kinship with the forests, and with the Brinkwood in particular, showing reverence to nature and the fae. Their numbers are few, but they have survived this long... And no one is better at killing vampires.

### SPOKES

AZA

#### *The Bowyer*

**History:** For decades, Aza was a respected master bowyer. He crafted many masterworks: fine longbows of ashwood, deft crossbows of yew, and he fletched many an exquisite arrow. But with the rise of the Crimson Crown his craft was banned, and his fellow masters were hunted to near extinction. He lives quietly now on the very edge of the Brinkwood and dreams of reigniting his time-honored craft.



**Description:** A tired, old man with rough hands and sad eyes. He wears a loose cloak, fraying at the edges, and always seems to have a piece of wood and a chisel-knife in his hands.

**Motivation:** Aza just wants to make bows. Preferably in peace. That said, more than anything he wants to pass down the legacy of his craft. He will support plans that bring in young blood, and shuns any plan that might risk seeing his apprentices lose their lives.

#### HAFT

##### *The Hunter*

**History:** Once, Haft was a skilled hunter, a master of the bow and the hunt. His skill with arrow and blade were unmatched, and he was a caretaker of the forest. When the vampires seized power his trade was outlawed, and his fellows abandoned him to join the Huntsmen. Haft, alone with a few others, stayed behind quietly nursing a grudge.

**Description:** A huntsmen covered in furs, smudged with dirt and muck.

**Motivation:** Haft favors a careful, slow approach. He favors assassinations, banditry, robbery, and misdirection. He advocates for a slow, sure approach to carefully stalking the rebellion's prey.

#### WILLOW

##### *The Dryad*

**History:** The dryads do not experience time as mortals do. For centuries, Willow stood as a guardian of the Brinkwood, safeguarding the fae and the forest from all dangers.

But alas, her defense failed. The vampires came, stole away her sisters, and maimed Willow in the process. Now the joy and song which once filled her heart is replaced with fury and fire.

**Description:** A woman of burned ash and frayed bark, with hot coals for eyes.

**Motivation:** To see the vampires suffer as she did. She will support any plan that promises violent retribution.

## SITUATION

Someone is hunting the Fletchers. Huntsmen have been spotted along the roads and have made deeper and deeper inroads towards the Fletchers and their camps. Fletchers are ambushed or go missing, and many suspect treachery or spies are to blame. Aza will hear none of such concerns and instead guides the Fletchers to be more and more insular, guarded, and cautious.

## CELLS AND GROUPS

The Deadeyes, the Flinford Frogcutters, the Luminary Design, the Venomous Barbcasters, the Far Forest Wardens, the West Wind Reavers, the Feathered Crest, the Vein Darters, the Grismont Crows, the Tonguecutters, the Gauntjacks, the Ashen Arc, the Grove of Old, the Vicious Nettles, the Brinksedge Snipers, the Marshland Bowyer Rebels, the Dawnwolf Gang, the Birch Boltcasters, the Ghoulcullers.



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## GUILDERS

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**Notable Assets:** Skilled craftsmen and artisans; financial strength; respect and power in towns

**Allies:** merchants and craftsmen, Poisoners

**Enemies:** Factory lords of Cardenfell, industrialization, Powdermen gangs

**Hideouts:** *Guild halls with a graceful, functional beauty to them. Dust-covered tomes and quiet, nervous conversation. The soft clink of coins or the shuffling of paper. The occasional raised voice, quickly hushed.*

### BACKGROUND

The Guilders compromise the more radical strains of the traditional mercantile and craft guilds that once dominated the economy of Cardenfell. While some in the rebellion are loath to rub elbows with the merchants who fleeced them in ages past, or the artisans who still live (relatively) comfortably under the vampire's rule, it is hard to argue with the coin and expertise they bring. For the Guilders part, they are savvy enough to see the writing on the wall for their trades and guilds, as more and more industries rapidly industrialize and small merchant companies are gobbled up into monopolies. Many Guilders act like they have something to prove, and those who expect a lack of zeal on their part are often caught off guard by their nascent radicalism.

### SPOKES

#### ENVEL GODEST

##### *The Accountant*

**History:** Envel always had a talent for numbers which could have secured him a place in the court of half a dozen lords. However Envel chose the life of a guild countsman, preferring the solidarity and bustle of a guild hall to the luxury and intrigue of noble accounting vaults. He is fiercely loyal to his people, tending to the concerns of any who come to him with their problems. Some murmur that Envel spreads himself too thin and perhaps some delegation would do him good.

**Description:** Envel is rail thin, with a well-groomed mustache and a pair of brass spectacles framing a handsome, middle-aged face. His fingers are often mottled with ink stains, though his clothes are kept to a professional level of cleanliness. He speaks with a quiet but determined voice.

**Motivation:** Envel knows the time of the Guilds is rapidly coming to a close and seeks to ease the transition to a better way of life. He prizes ingenuity as well as tradition, and seeks to use both traditional appeals to Guilder solidarity, as well as warnings of the vampires' crimes, to radicalize more and more of those who share his class interests.

## SITUATION

The Guilders biggest obstacle is the inertia and indifference of those they work alongside. Whether through hopelessness, comfort, or simple ennui, many merchants and craftspeople would rather continue as they always have even as their savings, power, and influence dwindle with each passing year.

## CELLS AND GROUPS

The Needlecrafter's Confraternity, the Cardenfell Textile Authority, Innisfirth Sanctified Ironworkers, the Three Sisters Guild of Earthenworkery, the Hogswick Union of Butchers and Knifewielders, the Flaypool Dyemonger's Union, the Bargemens Guild of Charters, the Guild of Embellishments and Filigree, the Bootmakers Gremis, the Worshipful Company of Tallowrenderers and Candlemakers, the Journeyman's Roadstone Inspector Association, the Guild of Lettered Patents and Printed Works, the Anointed Society of Barber-Chirurgeons, the House of Bards and Songlarks, the Gongfarmer's Collective, the Guild of Liverycrafts, the League of Heralds and Chantry.

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## POISONERS

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**Notable Assets:** Skilled alchemists, a variety of poisons and antidotes

**Allies:** Guilders, Stokers

**Enemies:** Vampiric investigators and huntsmen

**Hideouts:** *Small huts in distant locales, hidden labs crammed between industrial tenements, the scent of toxic fumes and sickly-sweet ichor. A coppery taste to everything. The sound of bubbling liquids and clinking vials. Herbs, toxins, and strange specimens line shelves alongside arcane tomes written in invisible ink, splatters of color everywhere.*

### BACKGROUND

The preparation of blood sterling is a highly technical and precise process requiring years of study and experience in the alchemical arts. While alchemists were the first to unlock the powers of blood sterling, not all agree with its current use. Bearing the burden of a guilty conscience, many alchemists and their students swore to be the vampires' undoing by whatever means possible. Through ingenuity, determination, and experimentation, these alchemists discovered that by "tainting" the blood used in blood sterling production, one could create poisonous and noxious effects that would harm any would-be vampire that ingested it. These alchemists christened themselves the Poisoners and set to work experimenting, tweaking, and formalizing methodologies for poisoning their own blood and slipping this poison into the greater supply of blood sterling.

### SPOKES

SOLENA

#### *The Biologist*

**History:** Fascinated by nature from an early age, Solena grew up on the edges of the Brinkwood, risking danger and driving her parents to distraction. She was well-liked in academic circles until the Crimson Crown put forth a new ideology: nature must be bent to serve. Solena's research into the natural poisons of various creatures was soon co-opted and twisted by the vampires, much to her horror. Now she puts her skills to use, ironically enough, poisoning the vampires right back.

**Description:** A sickly, salt-folk woman with a quiet, quaking voice. She carries examination tools and small vials filled with “samples” wherever she goes.

**Motivation:** Solena loves to observe nature and will support any plan that leads to greater understanding of the natural world.

## SITUATION

The life of a Poisoner is not an easy one, as it requires dedication, care, and attention to detail. For these reasons, it often attracts educated alchemists, theorists, and students. Solena, however, knows that if their burgeoning strategy is to succeed, it must spread and expand to others. She seeks ways to make her poisons less toxic to the imbiber, their side effects less painful and severe. Her detractors dismiss this as idleness, or at worst, counterproductive, as they theorize that more diluted or less powerful poisons will not be powerful enough to affect vampires.

## CELLS AND GROUPS

The Feverfew Cabal, the Hermetic Order of the Blessed Clove, the Quicksilver Collective, the Willow Bark Hermitage, the Paeon Brotherhood of Beatific Venoms, the Asclepian Collegium, the Martyrs of Bittermost Veins, the Pesthouse Propitiates, the Substitutionary Chalice, the Host of the Worm Most-Turning, the Arsenic Debtors Collective, the Pit of Our Anointed Vipers, the Hospitable Order of the Rose and Citron.

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## PRAYERS

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**Notable Assets:** Libraries of ancient lore, trust and faith of most commonfolk

**Allies:** Diggers, Scribblers

**Enemies:** Reformed Faith inquisitors, wisps

**Hideouts:** *Remote abbeys and monasteries hidden away on small islands, atop craggy peaks, or near ancient forest groves. Isolated shrines in the faithful's homes, deep caves, or hidden clearings. The smell of incense and forest pine mingling with food and shared feasting. The sound of quiet prayer and fierce, hushed sermons. Whispers in hallways and ivy grown over stone.*

### BACKGROUND

While vampiric control of the Reformed Faith has rendered most organized religion in Cardenfell a tool of oppression and social control, the foundations of the Old Faith have thus far resisted vampiric corruption. In isolated abbeys, village chapels, and old stone circles, practitioners keep the faith. Holding strong to the tenants of generosity, communal accord, and individual expression of faith, they resist the encroachment of the Reformed Faith's influence. Many Prayers act as shepherds and organizers for their community, ensuring that they are fed in both body and soul. Others are itinerant preachers, travelling from village to village, preaching when there's call for it in a sort of constant pilgrimage. They carry with them letters, literacy, and teachings that run contrary to the accepted orthodoxy of the Reformed Faith.

### SPOKES

BROTHER ESTIN

#### *The Abbot*

**History:** Orphaned at a young age, Estin was raised in the walls of Hallen's Abbey. He was a quick study, and soon became an artful illustrator and scribe. Many of his peers expected his talents would land him a position as a clerk in some noble's court, but Estin's willful nature and disdain for any work that didn't catch his fancy always landed him back on the abbey grounds. As he grew, his temperament did not mellow, and many thought him a rather stodgy and hard-headed traditionalist.



As the Reformed Faith spread, Estin became a firm opponent and frequent decrier of the “Blood-drinker Faith,” as he called it. To this day, he is seen as a nuisance by the vampires and their clergy, though his exact motives for opposing the Reformed are somewhat vague. As the Prayers became a full-fledged movement, Estin’s peers named him “Old Ash,” a title of the circle and forest faiths. Estin somewhat dislikes the title, and always harrumphs a bit when addressed as anything but “Brother Abbot,” but he takes his duties as a leader of the Prayers seriously, if not pridefully.

**Description:** A bent, rammed-horned abbot with a dour expression and a pair of spectacles. Speaks hoarsely, but with passion and a determined look in his eye.

**Motivation:** Estin’s exact motives are a bit of a grab bag. He has long resented the nobility and has always been a staunch traditionalist. His dedication to the Old Faith and to the Rebellion are no less firm for his somewhat crotchety nature, and he can often be seen lecturing others on the duties of generosity, humility, and community responsibility.

SÈVE

### *The Apothecary*

**History:** Sève was an apprentice botanist, a monk who practised at the refining and cross-pollination of herbs and medicinal plants. Their work produced new, wonderous strains of crops and medicines, but was decried as heresy by the Reformed Faith. So they fled, taking their research with them to the remote abbeys of the Prayers. Now they continue their research, happy enough to be left alone to brew up a new poultice or carefully note down the results of some new botanical experiment.

**Description:** Finned, azure skin. Wide, observant eyes. Hands stained with dirt, and an ever-present notebook and herb pouch around their waist.

**Motivation:** Values careful experimentation and new methodologies. Favors plans that are likely to produce new and interesting results.

## SITUATION

The Prayers are ruthlessly hunted by inquisitors and frequently denounced as heretics in areas where vampiric control is at its height. However, the situation is often reversed in the far-flung villages of The Veins or the coastal villages, with Reformed Faith missionaries finding a cold welcome, or outright hostility among those folk who still hold to the Old Faith. The result is an uneasy detente, but as Old Faith worshippers in towns come under greater persecution, and the noose of vampiric tyranny tightens, many look to the Prayers for guidance and assistance.

## CELLS AND GROUPS

The Mummer's Crusade, the Choir of Wrens, the Hold of Inner Prosperity, the Clade of the Unanointed, the Friarship of the Gelid Heart, the Esoteric Order of Shepforth Isle, the Hidden Chapel, the Almshouse Sisterhood, the Order of the Heart and Censer, the Hermitage of Old Irons, the Circle of Yarrows, the Order of the Silvery Tempest, the Fell's Hollow Heresy, the Hylician Order, the Drancaster Choir Club, the Conclave of Moon-and-Star.



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## REAVERS

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### BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, long before the Crimson Crown, and before even the Old Kingdom, Orslae was defended by the *Reeves*. The peoples of Orslae elected these protectors from among their number, empowering them to carry blade and bow in order to keep the peace between folk.

As the Old Kingdom rose, they all but destroyed the Reeves, but a few scattered members fled, either into the forest, the wilderness, or the sea. They became bandits, raiders, and smugglers, waging a long, slow guerrilla war. As time passed, the line between warfare and petty banditry blurred, and the once-proud Reeves are now denounced as Reavers, preying upon folk and vampire alike.

Still, the Reavers remember some of their past, dividing their loot equally, electing their leadership, and committing as little bloodshed as is necessary. If the Reavers could truly reclaim their once-beneficent heritage and remember why their ancestors fought so long ago, they would most surely be powerful allies.

**Notable Assets:** Smugglers and hidden routes for contraband; dangerous gangs of cutthroats

**Allies:** Sappers, Stokers

**Enemies:** Powdermen, guards, law and order

**Hideouts:** *Smuggler dens alongside dockside taverns, smoke-filled gambling halls and discreet warehouses. Road and riverside camps blended into the scenery against casual inspection. The sound of clinking coins, muttered whispers, and occasional laughter or a raucous brawl. The scraping of steel against steel, hard looks from hard folk. The smell of powder, oil, sweat, and blood mixed together.*

## SPOKES

ELEN

### *The Smuggler*

**History:** The child of sea-born Reavers, with deepfolk blood running in her veins, Elen displayed a precocious curiosity and a talent for hiding things that would serve her well her entire life. Now, she acts as a smuggler, filtering the goods, weapons, and other contraband in and out of Orslae.

**Description:** Deep, wide-set eyes. Seaweed green hair. A cheery smile, some forged writs, and a bag full of silver drops and drams (useful for bribes) always at the ready.

**Motivation:** Elen is a practical sort under her sunny disposition. She will enthusiastically support any plan, but will try to subtly direct towards schemes with the best chance of success.

ROWSONG

### *The Privateer*

**History:** Raised in the comfort of a merchant household, Rowsong's only connection to her Reeve ancestry was from her grandfather, who told stories of daring pirates, noble Reeves, romance and adventure. It was, therefore, no surprise to anyone when she stole her family's heirloom blade and pistol, kept hidden for decades, and joined the first ship crew that would take her aboard.

The life of a privateer was a bit different from the stories, but Rowsong remained undaunted, finding kinship and admiration among her peers for her talents and hard work, until at last she was elected captain.

**Description:** A classic, ancestral Reaver coat depicting the legends and deeds of her bloodline, carefully maintained. Etched, blue-ink tattoos and tailoring telling the history of her crew. A cutlass engraved with her family's name in the old-tongue, a winning smile, and a shock of wild red hair under a tricorn hat.

**Motivation:** Rowsong longs to bring the Reavers closer to the tales she heard from her grandfather and will endorse plans of pageantry, nobility, or that just sound like a hell of a lot of fun.

### *The Highwayman*

**History:** As a quiet young student in the academy, Guethenoc studied history, poetry, and the sciences. The third scion of a proud family of land-owners, Guethenoc was, on his thirteenth birthday, kidnapped by a band of Reavers and held for ransom. When his family refused to pay, Guethenoc used his quiet charm, wit, and skill to win the hearts of his kidnappers.

Within a few short months, he had been elected as commander of the Reavers who had abducted him. His crew has amassed fortune with minimal bloodshed, because after all, who best knows how to rob the vampires than a Scion?

**Description:** A young man with a quiet demeanor. Rail-thin, dressed in simple, yet fashionable clothes. A subtle, faded Reaver tattoo on his back. A marked contrast to the two rowdy, heavily-tattooed bodyguards who always travel with him, Heve and Salm.

**Motivation:** Guethenoc never gave up his love of history and poetry, and would be happy to see the Reavers return to their rightful role as protectors of Orslae... if he can be convinced it's possible.

### SITUATION

The Reavers are split into fractious and sometimes hostile gangs. Petty disputes and old enmity split what would be a powerful alliance down decades-old fault lines. Still, the most prominent leaders of the Reavers are known for their canniness, and sometimes, their mercy. Anyone can see that alliance and cooperation are more useful than bloodshed and territorialism. The ancient Reaver lore might still bind them into a force to be reckoned with, if it can be recovered and shared amongst the vying captains and bandit chiefs that control the Reavers.

### SHIPS AND GANGS

The Bonny Purse, The Drowned Rats, Grand Demoness, Gallowglass, Lilly-pad Hoppers, Turn-wheels of the Great Bridge, The Oarsman's Union, Ferry-and-Dash Crew, Proprietary Shares

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## SAPPERS

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**Notable Assets:** Skilled miners and sappers; complex machinery, inventive tinkers

**Allies:** Stokers, Coggers

**Enemies:** Mining lords, bailiffs, foremen, strikebreakers

**Hideouts:** *Abandoned tunnels, false entrances, and elaborate trapdoors marked with subtle code. Quiet, fierce whispering. The sound of picks echoing in darkness. The flicker of a lamp or the quiet song of a canary. The flash of mirror and flint striking steel.*

### BACKGROUND

The mines of Cardenfell scar its mountains with cavernous tunnels, deep trenches, and an ever-expanding web of mineshafts. For those who live and work in these mines, the bounty of the earth itself is a lifeblood stretching back into time immemorial. It has always been dangerous, dirty work, prying up the precious metals and minerals of Cardenfell, but those who made it their business have always had a pride and esprit de corps to their culture and work.

But when the Crimson Crown took control, they sought to break the miners. Vicious foreman, cruel quotas, and greedy nobles squeezed the Sisters and the miners for all they were worth. Perhaps they would not have squeezed, had they known the consequences.

The Sappers are the sons and daughters of miners, trained in the arts of carving through the earth. Now, no crypt, hollow, or other vampiric sanctuary is truly safe from them. They dig through dirt, mortar, and stone, down into the sanctuaries where vampires take their rest, and flood them with mirrors that will char and singe vampiric flesh with concentrated daylight. A high price rests on a single Sapper's head, but as long as the Bloody Isles craves silver and iron, there will be miners to dig it out, and Sappers to dig under the defenses of the rich and powerful.

## SPOKES

ILAN

### *The Foreman*

**History:** Ilan has been a miner all his life. A dangerous life, to be sure, but one made only more deadly by the vampire overseer's abuses and demands. Ilan was pressed into rushing a mining crew digging a rich vein and promised riches if he hurried the dig. His greed cost men and women their lives when a cave-in collapsed the tunnel.

**Description:** Middle-aged, ram-horned, with a tawny white beard and a balding pate. Hard, worn eyes and hands. A perpetually dirty cover-all and tools always close at hand.

**Motivation:** Motivated by grief, guilt, and a slow-boiling fury, Ilan has pledged to see all the vampires buried, one way or another. He supports violent plans, but is hesitant to support any plan that risks lives.

## SITUATION

The Sisters bleed and chafe under incompetent, callous rule as foreman and vampire alike squeeze the decaying tunnels and rotten earth for everything they're worth. The season is rife for the Sappers, as the cruelties of the vampire nobility swell their ranks. The Sappers plan audaciously, mapping the quarries and tunnels of Cardenfell, searching for routes with which to strike the vampires at their heart. Intel is not the Sappers strong suit, and they will need direction and assistance if their dreams of a better tomorrow are to come to fruition.



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## SCRIBBLERS

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**Notable Assets:** Teachers, writers, and educators; ideological theory and debate

**Allies:** Guilders, Stokers

**Enemies:** Bosses, wisps, and other treacherous agents of the Crimson Crown

**Hideouts:** *Quiet academic parlors and cramped student tenement halls. Library back rooms with stolen printing presses. The sound of urgent, passionate debate. The crinkling of papers and ink-stained fingers scratching out bold missives and manifestos. The smell of coal and cinders burned low.*

### BACKGROUND

The industrial machinery of the new age brought forth a requirement for a new type of worker, workers who labored not with body, but with their mind. The ancient colleges and academies of old that once trained alchemists and future kings now add engineers, writers, and other “mind workers” to their student body.

While many dismiss students as fruitless and vain, they quickly turned their dormitories and parlors into hotbeds of anti-vampiric sentiment. As knowledge spreads via printing presses and in reading circles, more and more young students come to the same inalienable, scientific conclusion: Their vampiric masters are parasites, and if they are not removed, their oppressors will drink the world dry.

So they labor, a small but growing nucleus of professors, muckrakers, engineers, and students. They write pamphlets and pass notes, philosophize and debate, waiting for their moment to turn the world upside down.

## SPOKES

AODA

### *The Historian*

**History:** A sickly child, Aoda spent most of her childhood buried in books. She was thrilled by historical epics, disdaining fairy tales and myths. As she grew to adulthood, she found many of her fellow scholars believed history was “ending,” and that the Crimson Crown would reign forever. Her (academic) contempt for such an ahistorical opinion drew the ire of the vampires, but she was welcomed into the ranks of the Scribblers. Now she seeks to record and document the ebb and flow of her historical moment, for she knows she is blessed to live in such interesting times.

**Description:** A bespectacled academic in fraying robes, with a thin nose and a hefty tome always in her arms.

**Motivation:** Aoda isn’t particularly moved by passion or spirited pleas. If it were up to her, she would remain on the sidelines, simply recording events as they happened. However, her command of history and strategy enlisted her as a leader among the Scribblers. She advocates for plans based on logic, reason, and above all, historical precedence.

NOLWEN

### *The Engineer*

**History:** A quiet chemist and engineer, Nolwen seemed destined for an ivory tower of academia, until of course, she blew it up. She helped organize a student rebellion, and led many of her comrades out of the collegia and into a world with desperate need of her skills. She is one of the few among the Scribblers with a talent for bombastic or constructive endeavors, and has taken on an unwilling role as an agitator of action.

**Description:** Smudges of soot and sulfurous smells. A messy tangle of black hair and bits of a plague doctor’s costume.

**Motivation:** Nolwen wants to build the Scribblers beyond a quiet group of rabble-rousers and philosophers and into a capable and decisive force for putting practical knowledge and literacy into the hands of the people. Any plan that seems likely to help her meet this ambition will have her approval.



## SITUATION

While a skill and passion for debate, literacy, ideology, knowledge, and history are invaluable to the efforts of the revolution, they are useless if hoarded. The Scribblers often find themselves bogged down in minutiae, internal politics, and petty grievance, and are widely derided as useless. While their critics often overstate their ivory tower distance from the peasants they claim to support (after all, there is little difference between a starving student and a starving peasant), it is obvious that they need to do more to share what strengths they do have. Past efforts to spread literacy and practical knowledge have crumbled under the hubris and pride of the Scribblers, and more lasting, enduring bridges and relationships must be built between the academy and those it so desperately wishes to aid.

## CELLS AND PARLORS

The Stoic's Slate, the College of Willful Ego, the School of the Reasonable Affront, the Tutelage of the Condemned Man, the Scholar's Parliament, the Surgeon's Order of Mortal Dignity, the Antiphlebotomian Brotherhood, the Sullied Muse Collective, the Sisters of Cardenfell Sophist Society, the Primrose Pen Collective, the Hornbook Pledge, the Parish House Scholastic Endeavour for the Betterment of Generations To Come, the Pulpit Pulpist Peership.

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## STOKERS

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**Notable Assets:** Arsonists, renegades, and powder experts; a small but practical smuggling operation

**Allies:** Scribblers, Reavers

**Enemies:** Collaborators, factory lords, and anyone else that needs to have their things set on fire.

**Hideouts:** *Hidden cave entrances and grotto warrens, abandoned warehouses and hollowed-out passages. The smell of powder, powder everywhere. Soot and singe and grime. Careful, precise instrumentation alongside fury and wild abandon. The sound of fierce, fiery argument and of sparks being struck.*

### BACKGROUND

The Stokers are a loose collection of rebels, anarchists, revolutionaries, and bandits, united only by their hatred of the Vampires and their love of blowing things up. They are a somewhat divisive group in Cardenfell, with some hailing them as freedom fighters and heroes while others decry them as little more than wanton terrorists and arsonists.

Black powder is at the core of the Stokers identity, as many are veterans of the mines where it is harvested or the factories where it is employed. Many Stokers see black powder as a neutral force, just as capable of ending the vampires' reign as it is of extending it. The seizure of black powder, its stockpiling, and its use are chief among their concerns, though it has been observed that they seem to use it almost as quickly as they obtain it.

The role of the Stokers in any revolutionary movement has yet to be determined. Some fear that they will flame out dramatically, while others believe their talents and verve for mayhem only lack more organization and "constructive" application. Either way, the Stokers are a powderkeg.

## SPOKES

### PHOENIX

#### *The Arsonist*

**History:** No one is quite sure of the Phoenix's history, and they seem to prefer to keep it that way. A folk hero to many, tales of their dashing deeds, heroic heists, and fiendish forays abound in the taverns of Cardenfell. Some say they are a myth, while others argue that they are more than one person, as any Stoker may claim the deeds and identity of the Phoenix as necessary.

**Description:** A red scarf pulled over their face, a pair of smudged goggles over their eyes. The smell of brimstone and gunpowder, and an ever-present brace of pistols.

**Motivation:** Wherever the Phoenix appears, they advocate for direct action. Sabotage, explosives, and propaganda of the deed are their choice in plans, and they will support any goal that promises to “go off with a bang.”

### ALAMIN

#### *The Revolutionary*

**History:** Alamin is a traveller, recently arrived to Cardenfell from a distant outpost of the Crimson Empire; they bring with them revolutionary ideas and practical teachings. It is no secret that indigenous revolutionaries in the colonies of the Crimson Empire have fared much better than those closer to the heart of the Crown, and Alamin seeks to correct that. He is well-respected by the Stokers, and any revolutionary would do well to try and earn his trust.

**Description:** Fiery red hair wrapped in cloth, somewhat odd clothing. A pistol, some gunpowder, and a lesson always close at hand.

**Motivation:** Alamin's aim is to build a revolutionary movement and to try and guide it towards progressive ideals and practical strength. He advocates for democracy, butter, and bullets, and is keen to support efforts to bring in new allies and to bolster those already won to the movement.

## SITUATION

The Stokers know that Cliffsblack and its rich saltpeter caves and mines are key to their success. They operate a successful smuggling operation, trading necessities and contraband with the miners for black powder. They are also a constant thorn in the side of the Bitter Lord of Cliffsblack, and it is only a matter of time before the Stokers will have to contend directly with him. Rumor has it that the Bitter Lord seeks a wife on Cliffsblack, though his motives for doing so are unclear. Perhaps such a bride would be in an excellent position to “inherit” Cliffsblack for the Stokers? Such schemes and intrigues are beyond the Stokers reach... but with a little help, who knows?

## CELLS AND GROUPS

The Manglescar Clan, the Joyous Flag, the Cardenfell Seditionists, the Syndicalist Solidarity Survey, the Floodgate Conspirators, the Bridgeburner Gang, the Apostasy of No Uncertain Terms, the Unbloodied Hand, the Drancaster Commission of Unified Peerage, the Huddled Conclave, the New Liberators Union, the Gristlegrease Burners, the Knights of Mutual Commensality, the Glasscasters, the Tontine Collective, the Folk of All-Banners, the Gunneryhaus Gang, the Shivmongers, the Dead Generation, the Tar-'n-Burn'em Boys.

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## WEAVERS

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**Notable Assets:** Talented organizers and messengers, able to communicate and coordinate silently or over a tremendous din or great distances using knocks, patterns, and woven codes.

**Allies:** Coggers, Witches

**Enemies:** Bailiffs, factory lords, wisps

**Hideouts:** *Textile mill stockrooms and weaving circles in quiet homes. The ever-present knock of the loom and tapping of feet in uncanny rhythm. Hushed whispers drowned out by clacking noise and knitting needles, yarn and thread spooling and unspooling. Song and stomped rhythm, errant lines of thread carrying complex messages in hidden codes.*

### BACKGROUND

In the times of the Old Kingdom, most clothing was homespun and of simple make, with only a precious few artisanal tailors and the like serving the noble aristocracy of old. But demand for cheap clothing and cheaper textiles drove the construction of the weaveries, the first factories to dot the Bloody Isles. These large constructs use waterwheels to drive the powerful, dangerous looms inside, looms that are tended to and worked by the Weavers.

Weaving is hard, dangerous work, with little room for error. Some young women are especially sought for work as Weavers, as their smaller frames allow them to fit the small spaces of the clanging looms and shuttles. Injuries are frequent, vicious, and brutal, with many a young Weaver being dragged out of the weavery, screaming and bloody, while her sisters continue to work for fear of vicious reprisal.

But a workforce can only be pushed so far. Sabotage and work slow-downs are the favored weapons of the Weavers, though they have been successful in organizing militant strikes and work stoppages as well. Their knowledge of the Weaveries and other factories is uncanny, and their organizing experience and secrecy are unmatched.



## SPOKES

MELAINE

### *The Saboteur*

**History:** A veteran of textile mill strikes and sabotage, Melaine learned quickly that a spanner in the works was often the surest way to effect change. She quickly became an expert at sabotage, using ingenuity and coordination to disable mills and looms when hours grew long and wages grew thin. She has acquired near-legendary status among certain groups of workers, and “accidents,” both intentional and otherwise, are often blamed upon her.

**Description:** A rather nondescript Salter woman who is recognized mainly by her crimson shawl. It is said that it was hand-stitched from thread soaked in the blood of a hundred maimed Weavers, each one Melaine has sworn to pay the vampires back for ten-fold.

**Motivation:** Melaine sees herself first and foremost as a protector. She took to sabotage because it allowed her the chance to stop the machines that tore off limbs and mauled bodies. She will endorse most plans that lead to a reduction in life lost, and will be quick to suggest the destruction of property over the taking of lives.

THE THREADMOTHER

### *The Anointed*

**History:** The Threadmother is rumored to be many things: a patron saint of mothers, protectors, and craftsfolk; a Weaver, injured in some terrible accident and changed irrevocably by the experience; an old deity of the forest faiths, long thought lost; or perhaps a wandering fae, called forth from the Wyld. What is known is that at some point, the Weavers started to make shrines to her, leaving gifts of thread and wool and yarn. Small knitted dolls dot the alleys and rooftops of Innisfirth. In abandoned districts and slums, lines of thread run from building to street to clothing line. And at the center of every thread, if you pull on it long enough, rumor has it you'll come upon the Threadmother.

**Description:** The Threadmother sits in her parlor, wherever it may be, her many arms and hands knitting, folding, and weaving at her loom, her foot tapping out a shuttle rhythm, her voice singing a quiet worksong. Threads run through and from her flesh, twining all they reach in a careful tangle. A veil obscures what is left of her face, though she senses the presence and nature of others through the threads that weave through her.

**Motivation:** The Threadmother's motives are as mysterious as her origins, though her passion and care for the Weavers cannot be understated. She wishes to see her web grow and her followers protected, and will gladly share all that she pulls upon with a thousand threads if the brigands can prove the loyalty and strength of their rebellion.

## SITUATION

The weaveries and textile mills of Innisfirth are in a constant state of upheaval, as victories achieved through sabotage and strike are challenged by lockouts, strikebreakers, and violent reprisal. The Weavers are currently forced onto the defensive, as they lay low hoping for better opportunities. Some put their faith in the Threadmother's webs and intrigues, while others quietly organize. But the textile mill lords have begun to squabble, each blaming the other for the mysteries and misfortune that plague their profit margins. Perhaps such discord can be exploited?

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## WITCHERS

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**Notable Assets:** Herbalists, doctors and apothecaries; the fear and respect of many folk

**Allies:** Weavers, Poisoners

**Enemies:** Huntsman, Reformed Faith inquisitors

**Hideouts:** *Remote cabins and huts, nestled deep in the forest, in caves, or in old groves hidden by older magic. Hastily assembled field-hospitals, a flurry of life-or-death activity. The minty smell of poultices and unguents. Occasional quiet coughs and sobs. Dirty bandages.*

### BACKGROUND

Witches were a common sight throughout the Bloody Isles before the Crimson Crown came to power. Wise women, healers, and practitioners of older faiths often benefited their communities, offering healing, wisdom, and education. When the Crimson Crown began to take hold, they knew they would have to root out the influence of the Witchers in order to claim the land and authority they would need to rule. So they began a campaign of propaganda, accusing witches of crimes ranging from the grisly to the absurd. Witch hunts were called, and many were the witch that was put to the stake.

But still, some apprentices, witches, and scholars fled to the forgotten parts of the isles, keeping the memory of their crafts and faiths alive in any way they could. Now they lurk at the edges of Cardenfell, doing their best to help heal and care for the common folk who were driven to betray them.

### SPOKES

YAËL

#### *The Witch*

**History:** Yaël was struck by a sudden premonition and fled to the forest when the witch hunters came for her. Taking what books and herbs she could, she hid in plain sight, moving from village to village. Sometimes she was a beggar, other times, a thief; but she did her best to heal and help others. Over her journeys she gathered a few apprentices, “seeds” whose knowledge of the old ways she would see blossom.

**Description:** An old, bent woman, with a frame of scales lining the edges of her face, and a set of gracefully swept ram's horns atop her head. She speaks in a hoarse, cracking whisper.

**Motivation:** Yaël wishes to see her “seeds” grow. She will gladly aid plans that support, rescue, or gather more young apprentices to the cause.

DONAN

### *The Doctor*

**History:** Donan was a student at an academy on the Continent when the Crimson Crown rose to power. He brought knowledge of herbal remedies and distillation native to the isles to the Continent, where their effectiveness was proven with rigorous study and experimentation. Returning home, he was horrified to find his teachers and friends persecuted and their knowledge burned. He stalks the shadows of power now, hiding as a court doctor to a vampire count, all the while seeking to preserve knowledge and pass intelligence to his allies.

**Description:** Bespectacled, with a long, thin beard that he frequently fiddles with. Dresses in an academic's robes.

**Motivation:** The preservation of knowledge and the safety of himself and his allies. Favors low-risk, low-exposure plans and goals that build on earlier work.

### SITUATION

The Witchers are scattered in the hidden places of Cardenfell, in forests and isolated grottos, fearful of the persecution large gatherings would bring. A few brave Witches travel the roads of Cardenfell, offering what aid they can. On the isle of Shepforth, the Witchers have carved an uneasy peace with the locals and their insular community. A small outbreak of plague was stamped out on Shepforth, but rumors persist that such sickness was spread purposely. The vampires blame the witches, as they always have, and some Witchers muse quietly on the possibility of new vampiric sicknesses intended to cull and weaken a defiant and rebellious populace. If such threats are more than hearsay, then all of Cardenfell will need the knowledge of the Witchers to stand against the tide of sickness and death.

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## FACTION EPILOGUES

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### COGGERS

The unionism, militancy, and efficacy of the Coggers and the workers they represent were foundational to the success of the revolution, and thus the celebration of labor, unionism, and worker control are enshrined both culturally and institutionally in our new society. Syndicalism takes hold, with worker cooperatives owning the factories, industries, machinery, and shops that produce and sell goods throughout Orslae. The road is not always easy, as workplace democracy demands commitment, attention, and care to maintain, but democratic control and worker ownership soon prove as popular as they are effective. Orslae stands poised to become an industrial powerhouse, capable of designing, implementing, iterating, and producing vast numbers of quality industrial goods, absent the brutal exploitation and rampant ecological degradation of the Crimson Empire. It won't be long before the workers of the world are clamouring to take the means of production into their hands, and when they do, Orslae will be ready and willing to aid them.

### DIGGERS

The organization, logistics, and experience of the Diggers kept the rebellion going through lean times and plenty, and showed the people of Cardenfell that starvation and depredation were not some default state of their world. The farmland of former landlords and nobles is first taken into public ownership before being divided back into cooperative ownership of the farmers, agriculturalists, and engineers that work it. The Diggers commitment to ecological recovery and protection pays long-term dividends, and as the world begins to reel from the exploitation of the Crimson Empire, more and more folk turn to Orslae and the vast stores of the Diggers for relief. Everywhere they go, the Diggers spread a gospel of abundance and generosity, seeding revolution and rebellion alongside orchards and fields. Now it won't be long until all land is returned to those who work it, and all people reap the bounty of the Digger's agricultural skill and ideology.



## FLETCHERS

The Fletchers are once again free to practice the arts of archery and bowmaking, and work to set up schools and workshops throughout The Bloody Isles. In a gesture of remembrance and warning, a great Ashwood tree is planted on the spot where the last vampire in Cardenfell was defeated. The legal protection of the Brinkwood is enshrined as a key value, as are the values of sustainability, reverence for nature, and friendliness and gratitude towards the fae. The Fletchers lead a covert war against the vampires, forming the vanguard of our young nation's infiltrators and scouts. Aza at last retires, confident that his students will keep his knowledge alive, and sure enough, the Fletchers use the talents they have developed to help people the world over in their fight against vampiric tyranny.

## GUILDERS

The support of the Guilders finances, organization, and militancy proved invaluable to the revolution. In doing so, they won the right to enshrine worker's rights and the supremacy of unionism in the economics of our new society. As the more radical strains of Guilders take power, democratic control of guilds and unions is ensured through legal, economic, and political institutions. Fair wages, workplace safety, and worker ownership of production are soon counted as victories for the politicians and organizers of the Guilders, and the guilds are set to become a dominant force in the politics not just of Orslae, but internationally as well. Soon, international guilds will unite artisans, workmen, and engineers in a powerful new alliance, capable of breaking the back of the Crimson Empire's industry and economy from within.

## POISONERS

The Poisoners proved instrumental in disrupting the very foundations of vampiric power in Cardenfell, and their poisons have sent ripples of fear coursing through the entire Crimson Empire. As confidence in Blood Sterling drops, the capital and control of the vampire counts and nobility has already begun to unravel. But the Poisoners are first and foremost scientists, and their expertise with Blood Sterling has birthed new and intriguing theories as to its use. While the particular alchemical mixture of blood and silver has proven caustic and exploitative, some poisoners have seen medicinal effects and miraculous progress in using their knowledge to treat disease and sickness. As the cures of the Poisoners spread alongside their poisons, their influence is welcomed by a world suffering under hardship and exploitation alike. Perhaps some lasting good will be wrought from the Poisoner's dark work; or if not, at least their brave and selfless pursuit of knowledge will echo down through history.

## PRAYERS

A new era of religious tolerance and generosity blooms in Cardenfell as the Prayers begin dismantling the state institutions of the Reformed Faith. While those who keep the Reformed Faith are watched closely in the early days, as more faiths flow into Cardenfell from distant lands, a flowering of thought, philosophy, and wisdom dominates religious discourse. Tolerance is enshrined in new institutions and legal protections, and church and state are strictly separated. Churches enjoy no special status when it comes to their clergy or the taxation of tithes they take from adherents, and faiths that do not work to serve the faithful quickly wither on Orslae's soil.

## REAVERS

As the Reavers fight for the revolution, so too do they fight to reunite and reconnect with a history and legacy robbed from them. As the victories in Cardenfell mount, more and more Reaver crews join up throughout Orslae and the Bloody Isles. Soon, scholars, storytellers, and orators are meeting in great moots to once again share their history, reconnect with lost lineages, and rekindle the embers of legacy. The politics of the Reavers in our new society are diverse, as some seek the return of ancestral lands to Reeve control, often working with Digger communes to reignite the communal traditions of sustainable and fair land use. Others serve as protectors of Orslae, keeping careful watch on the Crimson Empire for signs of infiltration or invasion. Still others light the torch of rebellion and freedom in distant lands, working with distant cousins and folk to aid in the struggle against oppression wherever they can.

## SAPPERS

As the Sappers help strike the final blows against vampiric dominance in Cardenfell, their dream of uniting the Sisters in democracy and freedom is at last realized. The culture of the Sisters blooms as the withering suppression of the vampire nobility is removed, and mining songs and traditional art flourish throughout Cardenfell and Orslae. Workplace safety standards are implemented throughout the mines of Orslae, and are carefully enforced by the miners and engineers who work in the bellies of the earth. Sustainable mining practices also gain traction, as efforts to eliminate pollution, runoff, and sickness borne from exploitative strip-mining take hold. The industries of Orslae flourish, as sustainable mining leads to higher quality ore and more long-lasting supply chains. And while the lands of the Crimson Empire run dry from waste and over-exploitation, the industries of Orslae roar to life in a new golden age of industry, luxury, and bounty.

## SCRIBBLERS

The work of the Scribblers proved invaluable in shaping the ideology of the revolution and spreading the light of education, literacy, and democracy throughout Cardenfell and Orslae. As the Scribblers take to the task of educating our new society, the right to a free and thorough education is enshrined within our institutions. Generous stipends for students, academics, and artists ensure that the pursuit of knowledge will no longer be hobbled to the pursuit of profit, and science and technology rapidly advance as free thought and educational investment bear fruit. The preservation of history, both in the victories of the revolution and in the grim realities of the war, are likewise highly prized due to the influence of the Scribblers. A scholarship of antiquity and of preservation towards cultures, languages, and societies that the vampires tried to suppress or destroy invites a flurry of activity and record-keeping. Visiting scholars and elders are often invited to the universities of Orslae, as an internationalist passion for knowledge and new ideas runs throughout our academies. Likewise, an anti-dogmatic approach towards passionate debate, democracy, and discussion become the cornerstones of our political system, as Scribbler politicians, organizers, and theorists set the pace of our society's public discourse.

## STOKERS

As the stokers lit the flames of revolution, so too did their ideological commitment spark rebellion across Orslae. As news of the Stokers deeds pushed back the myth of vampiric invincibility, cells across Orslae quickly began to make themselves known, and any lingering holdouts from the vampiric regime quickly found whatever remaining assets or tools of oppression they had left turned to ash. Now, the Stokers turn their focus outward, stoking the flames of internationalism, liberation, and worldwide revolution in every colony that still suffers under the yoke of the Crimson Crown. For their pivotal role in our own revolution, our leaders and organizers have seen fit to supply the Stokers and their international allies with any materials they require, and our allies in colonial rebellions who taught us so much soon find themselves repaid with supplies, weapons, training, ships, and willing veterans of the fight in Orslae. The flames of freedom rage across our world, and soon, it seems, the entirety of the Crimson Empire shall be scoured clean by the Stokers.

## WEAVERS

The organization, discipline, and secrecy of the Weavers were instrumental in the success and security of the revolution. As we rebuild our new society, the influence of the Weavers ensures that workplace safety standards, medical leave, free childcare, and other necessities vital to working folk are established as rights. After the war, some Weavers took their skill in code-making, secret-keeping, and infiltration abroad, forming the foundation of an intelligence network that would guard Orslae and provide needed assets to our allies and comrades elsewhere. As messages and communiques flow back and forth like the shuttle of a loom, revolutionary sentiment builds and alliances are solidified. When the time comes, the Weavers will ensure that Orslae stands ready to aid all those who still suffer under the lash of vampiric tyranny.

## WITCHERS

The medicine, dedication, and expertise of the Witchers kept the rebellion on its feet, fighting through sickness, despair, and depredation. Through their hard work they earned a place of influence and honor in our new society, and at the top of their agenda is the health and well-being of all folk who dwell in Orslae. Due to the Witchers influence, the right to free medical care, the care and dignity of the ill and disabled, and freedom from religious and cultural persecution are enshrined in our institutions. Many Witchers serve Orslae as doctors, alchemists, and educators, but still others travel abroad, bringing medicine and knowledge to our comrades who still languish under the rule of the Crimson Crown. The care they provide and the respect they show for local customs wins us support and goodwill wherever Witchers travel, and soon radical ideals and rebellion brew alongside the poultices and medicines of the Witchers. With the aid of the Witchers, a future free of want and disease seems possible for the first time in a long, long time.



# VAMPIRES AND THEIR SERVANTS

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## SERVANT CLASSES

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While those that serve vampires (as well as the vampires themselves) are diverse, they can be grouped into several unique classes, best suited to certain circumstances. This expresses itself in modifications to the effect of a servant's *tier* when they pose an obstacle to the brigands.

- ✧ A *courtier* will be at full effect posing an obstacle during a social scene, perhaps by trying to suss out the brigand's true motives, resist deception, or manipulate or sow discord among allies. However, they will falter if trying to detect stealthy brigands, and might be near-useless in a straight up fight.
- ✧ An *enforcer* will be at full effect during combat, or when seeking to terrify or brutalize a population. They will be less useful at detecting ambushes or at investigating the brigand's activities, and will typically be rather useless in scenarios that call for subtlety, etiquette, or charm.
- ✧ An *investigator* will be at full effect when searching out the brigands or keeping watch for them. They are difficult to ambush, and will attempt to hunt the brigands down at every opportunity. They are not easily misled, outpaced, or fooled. In a fight, they might be able to hold their own, though they typically prefer to call in more blunt instruments. Likewise, they will be at reduced effect in social scenarios, though they may still be potent at sussing out hidden motives.
- ✧ An *officer* will have full effect so long as they are attended by an appropriate number of subordinates. They excel at politics, investigation, and combat equally, but if stripped of their subordinates, they will quickly falter.

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## LESSER SERVANTS

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Lesser Servants are those that might appear in any campaign, and should be used by GMs to bolster the forces arrayed against the brigands. In general, these servants should be regarded as *Tier 0* or *Tier 1*, but their *tier* may be raised, perhaps if led by a loanfang or other vampiric officer.

- ✦ **Huntsmen** - Skilled hunters that help vampires out in sporting “hunts” of faeries, track runaway serfs, flush out rebels, etc. They prefer to fight at a distance, ambushing or picking off their foes. *Investigator*
- ✦ **Bailiffs** - Men with clubs who keep peasants in line, enforcers for Landlords. They prefer to fight in melee, preferably against a weak or defenseless foe. They may quickly rout if faced with a “real” fight. *Enforcer*
- ✦ **Powdermen** - Gangsters with a bit of vampire backing that use a monopoly on gunpowder to terrorize the underworld. They are versatile, fighting at a distance with rifles before closing in on prey with their pistols. That said, they are fundamentally motivated by greed, and few are the powdermen that will fight to the death. *Enforcer*
- ✦ **Ghouls** - People drained of all but a single drop of vampiric blood. Slaves, carrion-eaters, underclass. Literally dehumanized, they are perhaps the fate of those who don’t make rent. Mindless and rabid, they are easy to deal with at a distance or in small numbers. Their primary use is as cannon fodder, or to overwhelm distracted enemies. *Enforcer*
- ✦ **Dramcoats** - Soldiers in the service of a Vampire Lord, so named for the dram of blood sterling they are paid weekly. Treated mostly as disposable cannon fodder in the vendetta wars between vampires, they wield a shortsword and either a pike or a rifle depending on their role. Their coats are frequently colored in the livery of their Vampire Lord, but all seem to bleed to a rust color at the fringes over time, earning veterans the nickname of rustcoat. *Enforcer*
- ✦ **Landlords** - Vampiric and non-vampiric squires and lords who own property and charge rents to peasants. These lords will rarely fight their own battles, and prefer to hire bit-bloods, bailiffs, or powdermen to fight for them. *Courtier*
- ✦ **Bit-Blood** - A human enforcer who gets a bit of blood from their vampiric masters. They are stronger, tougher, and frequently led by vampires or found leading lesser servants. They are hardy, disciplined foes that can be difficult to face down in a one-on-one fight. The best advice is to not fight them fair: ambush them, rally other folk against them, or cut them off from their allies. *Enforcer*

✠ **Wisp** - Collaborator folk who aspire to vampirism and rising through the ranks. They spy on their fellows, sow discord, and keep the myth of “ascending” to vampirism alive. Wisps are a cowardly lot, through and through, and will nearly always run rather than stand and fight. *Investigator*



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## VAMPIRIC CLASSES

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Even within the ranks of vampiredom there is a strict hierarchy. Largely based on the accumulation of blood and silver, the “ladder” of vampiric privilege is held up as a meritocracy, hiding the bloody and vicious truth of the violence and cruelty necessary to ascend through their ranks. Each rank both hates and aspires to the rank above, putting on airs or attempting to emulate the fashions and practices of the level above them. In this way, vampire society is bound together, not through love or loyalty, but through envy and greed.

**Loanfang** is a derogatory term for an unlanded vampire beholden to another for blood sterling. They are addressed as Niece or Nephew in the polite terminology. They are occasionally employed as spies, bounty hunters, or found leading groups of more “mundane” muscle or bit-bloods. Peasants who wish to stay in their good graces will address them as Master or Mistress. Loanfangs are typically *Tier 1* or *Tier 2* threats. *Enforcer*

**Kith** are vampires with a bit of blood sterling and land. They control minor fiefdoms, and are little better than landlords. They are addressed as Sir, Madam, or Squire. Kith are typically *Tier 2* threats. *Courtier*

**Kine** are vampires of society, a true bourgeoisie above “sullyng” their hands with the lesser details of extracting blood and rent from the peasantry. To address Kine as anything other than Lord or Lady will earn a peasant a whipping. Kine are typically *Tier 3* or *Tier 4* threats. *Officer*

The **Pure Lines** are vampire high nobility, who control other vampires and large vaults of blood sterling. They are the most powerful and most removed from day-to-day affairs. Their name is a bit of propaganda, as many claim their blood is “purer” than lesser vampires. Pure Line vampires are typically either *Tier 4* or *Tier 5* threats. *Officer*

The **Outcasts** are a rumor, a scary bedtime story told to naughty Scions, of vampires who have been completely consumed by their lust for blood and power. Depending on who you ask, they are a fairy tale, a bit of clever propaganda (after all, the Crimson Crown is not as bad as *those* vampires), or a very real threat: the vampires who predated the Crimson Crown, whose stolen magic perhaps made the first blood sterling. *Enforcer*



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## BLOOD MAGIC

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The magic used by vampires is left purposely vague, with only the stipulations that it is tied to the blood they drink, and that greater concentrations of blood produce greater effects. Below are some suggested abilities that vampires may gain from blood-drinking, but these are not hard rules, and should be adapted to the playstyle and vision of your group.

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## VAMPIRIC ABILITIES

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The exact nature of the blood's gifts is left purposely vague so that you can tailor your preferred vision of the vampires. Some basic powers that nearly all vampires have might include:

**Charm** - The ability to sway folk to their cause. The brigands are inured to the effects of this by the protection of their masks, but a vampire can stir folk to their defense.

**Authority** - When the carrot fails, the stick will suffice. Vampires can use threats, commanding tones, and raw charisma to inspire the forces they lead to fight harder and longer.

**Toughness** - Killing a vampire is no easy feat. They heal quickly from mundane injury with only ashwood dealing lasting harm.

**Speed** - Vampires are trained, usually, to fight quickly and decisively, emphasizing their inhuman speed to deliver quick, critical blows in rapid succession.

**Blood-Drinking** - While a vampire will prefer a more "dignified" feeding method, in the heat of battle it is not unheard of for a vampire to drain their foes (or even their allies) in an effort to heal themselves or bolster their strength.

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## VAMPIRIC SCHEMES

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Intrigue is a necessity for a vampire, as vital to their survival as air. The roiling courts of vampire nobles are choked with mistrust, envy, and vicious brutality. Every vampire learns early on that if they are to climb the ladder of dominion and blood, they must put their own schemes and plans above all others.

In *Brinkwood*, we represent the progress of these schemes with **scheme clocks**, which tick up to completion as vampires marshal their forces or set their plans in motion. The completion of these schemes might signal shifts in power, control, and rarely, the destruction of a rival.

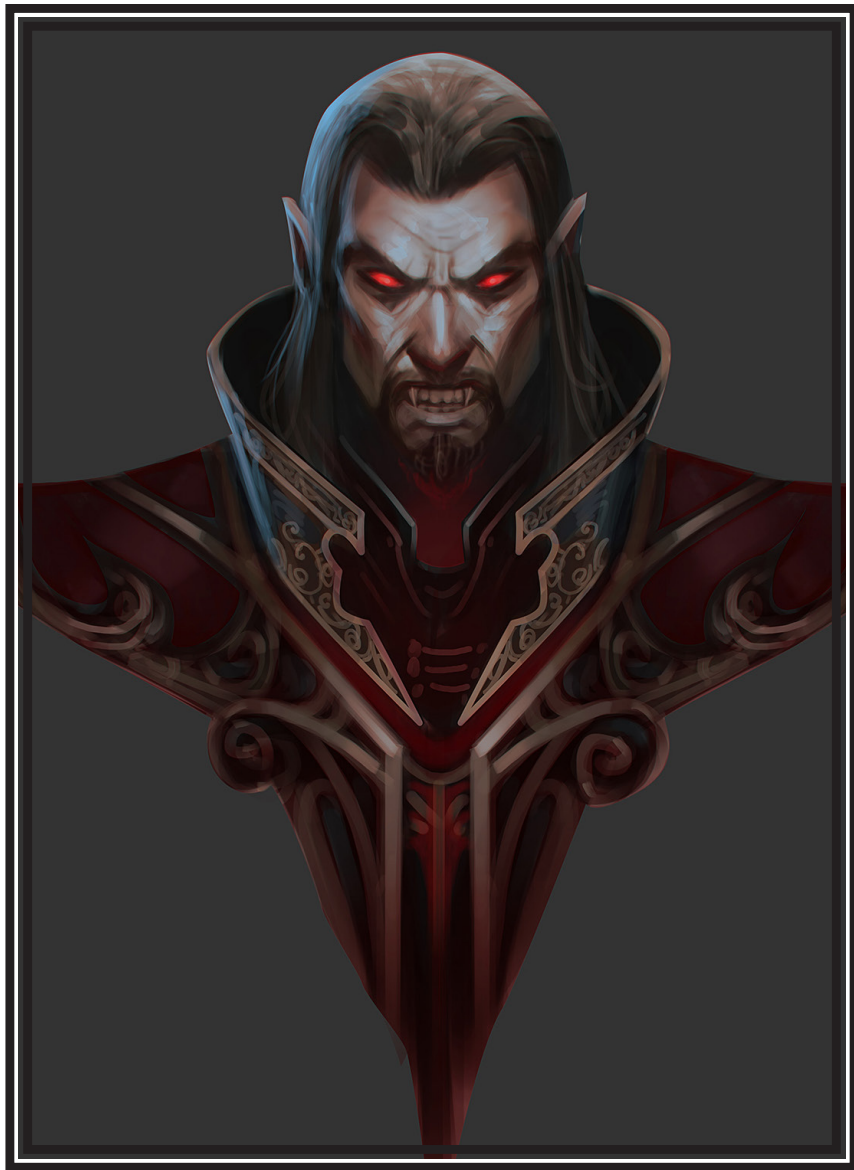
While some example schemes (along with clock segment counts) are described alongside the vampires that serve each Vampire Lord described below, you are not bound to these schemes and are encouraged to invent your own.

As the GM, after each **foray**, you may choose one or two schemes you are interested in (or invent new ones) and do a quick **fortune roll** to see how they fare. In general, you should focus on schemes for “on screen” vampire nobles that the brigands are aware of and may soon have need to contend with, as their schemes are the most immediately pertinent to the story.

As the campaign progresses, these schemes will likely impact the world of Cardenfell, and may even directly impact the brigands themselves if the vampires turn their vicious attention towards the rebels. Be sure to reflect schemes coming to fruition when a **scheme clock** fills, and inform the brigands of the **consequences** of the vampire’s dark deeds.

# VAMPIRE LORDS

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THE DUKE

*Stern, Foreboding, Ruthless*

It is rumored that the Duke was the last to fall to the Crimson Crown. As a warmaster and feudal lord of the Old Kingdom, he held the line against the encroachment of vampirism, hunting the vampires of old with ruthless efficiency. Still, even the strongest of feudal bulwarks crumble eventually.

It is said that he took the blood sterling to preserve what he could of the Old Kingdom—preserve the privileges granted to the aristocracy, the titles and authority his family held for generations. Truth be told, he hardly needed to worry about such things. His interests and those of the Crimson Crown aligned almost perfectly, and it is with some bitterness that the Duke recalls how long he fought against his new masters.

Now his power is maintained in much the same way his ancestors did for centuries: with blood, iron, and fear. The Duke embraced gunpowder and steel, seizing their potential for control and rigid authority. He wrote the propaganda of the Crimson Crown, tying the feudal families of the Old Kingdom to the Pure Lines of the Crimson Crown. He rules with an iron grip, carefully choking his peasants for every drop of blood, every sliver of silver, every grain of gunpowder, every ounce of steel.

**Motto:** *I am the heel that grinds forever.*

**Themes:** *Industrial fascism, paranoia, feudalism, replaceable cogs, mechanics, billowing smoke, coal, choking dust, gunpowder, soldiers, tactics, a slow grind*

### THE DUKE'S DEMESNE

*Air choked with soot. In towns: the banging, clanging of industry during the day; the deathly quiet of strict curfew after darkness, punctuated by the occasional scream or sob, quickly silenced. Marching boots on cobblestone. Shuffling peasants, their heads bent low, watched over by towering guard posts and panopticons. Turning gears and the wrenching grind. The taste of oil and gunpowder. Monolithic, imposing architecture draped with tattered banners and propaganda.*

Six features unique to villages within the Duke's demesne.

1. Ever the modernist, the Duke has seen that his populace is best kept docile by way of what they are fed. Cusk, twice-baked biscuit, and hearty stews which keep long and stay sloshing in the guts of the populace are offered from ration stations. They taste primarily of salt, and though only numerous in the Duke's demesne, can last a traveler a fortnight before suffering even the vaguest hint of spoilage.
2. The people of this village make use of superior implements in their daily tasks, such that no boot is worn through and no nail is bent out of its shape. They make use of superior vestments, all the same color; and their hair, too, is cropped short for the sake of utility. This uniformed society functions without individuality, and thus it functions efficiently.
3. The prominent forge within this town makes for toilsome labor and choking smog. Urchin children and the less desirable members of society are forced to burn themselves cleaning the soot from red-hot vents lest they go without their rations. They can seldom keep the food down with all their dreadful hacking coughs.
4. The high walls of this village keep the people safe, that is what they are told and that is what many of them believe. No windows face the outside world, for fear of burglars or an errant gunshot from the enemy. There is no world more important than that of the village, for a villager dreaming of another life is to court strife and the unknown. It would take great skill for a monster to scale such walls, though they easily walk through the village gate.
5. The village has seen harsh winters and harsher tithings, and as such they keep a well-maintained and guarded storehouse. All goods are well documented by the officiants of the village, and in their judgment they determine when it is fair and what is equal to dole out to the public. Few dare to make note of the vampires' revelry in lean times, fewer still seek to enter the storehouse for fear of exsanguination.



6. The Duke has seen this village a place surrounded by tamed wilderness, fields stripped of trees and stumps in an act of blatant aggression against what lurks within the Brinkwood. Hounds and hunting loanfangs patrol the distant fields, as if to confirm the fairy stories of the dark things that dwell within.

#### VILLAGE OBSTACLES

Six obstacles unique to villages within the Duke's demesne.

1. The fires of industry consume endlessly without consent or consideration. An industrial fire has gouted choking smoke throughout the village, its point of origin unknown, and it throttles at mortal lungs as though its victims were trying to swallow a handful of razors. The vampires know someone must be held to account and seek a scapegoat.
2. The local officiant, envious of the positions held by other servants of the Duke, seeks to make this village more than a mere backwater. The officiant has taken to emulating the style of the Duke's servant who holds sway over the area, but their fervor could just as easily be seen as a mockery. They follow the orders of their betters with unerring, violent efficiency, and any failure is met with as much obliterating force can be mustered.
3. A shipment of the Duke's steel is to pass through this village, and as such, they have begun reinforcing themselves for potential attacks from insurgents or the horrors of the Brinkwood. The Forsworn are drilling the people to exhaustion, expecting them to attend military drills while demanding peak efficiency in their labors. All so as to keep up good optics to the weapon cache's potential entourage of high-ranking officers.
4. The adults of the village have been granted various ranks in a hierarchy by the local officiant, allowing them a chance to improve their standing in exchange for meticulously detailed reports, efficiency at work, and performing extracurricular duties. This false meritocracy exists only for the officiant's controlling benefit, as a formal dressing down of a failed villager sees greater productivity.
5. A shipment of necessary supplies never arrived in the village, and the locals have taken to bitter rationing and starvation wages on the promise that a new shipment is soon to come. The local leadership is curious to see the maximum output they can receive while granting their people nothing. They want to know when the fighting will start.

6. A naive local has perfected a fighting technique which can allow for greater mastery at arms. This has drawn unwanted attention, both from their rivals and from the vampires who desire to reward such talent, but not at the cost of their personal hegemonic power. The local has no true desire to join the vampires, fearful of their violence, but knows they cannot easily deny such a privilege. The burden of this has led to increased factionalism.

#### TOWN DEMESNE

Six features unique to towns within the Duke's demesne.

1. Citizenry within the Duke's demesne is a privilege, and many are the petty ways in which citizens may improve their standing. In towns of his domain, badges are allotted to those who can prove their worth. Every man, woman, and child knows they should aspire for a higher rank, as if who they must brutalize to get to such heights will grant them a reprieve from their toil.
2. The high brick walls of the towns were built to ensure a cramped, controlled state. Buildings were constructed with nary an inch between them, wedged tight to ensure additional defenses. Watch towers built at the optimal locations turn the settlement into a panopticon. All is observed, all is controlled, all is safe.
3. Those within the towns of the Duke's demesne know well that enemies may come to claim their vaunted homes. He has seen fit to grant them arming jackets, gambesons, and other forms of paramilitary dress to instill a sense of combat-readiness, though he does not provide to them anything that would withstand a bullet or a blade. Those who wear the uniform know they are on the same team. They cannot say the same of others.
4. The Antiquarian's poisoned pen is clearly at hand in the pamphlets slipped in the doors of all citizens on a nigh weekly basis. They speak of blood, of its worth, of the history of Cardenfell, and the destiny being manifested by the daily toil of the Duke's mortal vassals. They stoke the fires of rage, both in the hearts of the fledgling rebels sick of the lies, and in the hearts of the brutal loyalists who wish to purge dissidents from the ranks.

5. Frescos upon walls depict great willow trees, the names of loyal servants to the Duke's domain engraved upon each strand of leaves. Placards speak the importance of bloodlines and of service to the Duke, even at the cost of one's life. There are almost more trees in the towns of the Duke's domain than in all the Brinkwood, each leaf a life lost for sake of his vile ambitions.
6. Those who are noticed for their aberrant deviations from the social norms the Duke seeks to enforce are not merely punished; they are humiliated. Gibbet cages force naked forms too close together on the edge of town where the sewage ditches flow. They are left to endure the elements, their crimes of living as anything other than a cog in the machine carved into their bare skin.

#### TOWN OBSTACLES

1. The local officiant, ever the lickspittle, has turned the local youth into catspaws and informants for the Duke. The Peerage Youth's Crusade lavishes praise and promise upon the young of this town, offering them tin badges and treats. Vagrants and travelling merchants go missing, and the parents of this town fear any outburst may be heard as sedition within their own homes.
2. The Duke's Forsworn patrol this town with mechanical efficiency. They know who needs to be where on any given street at any given time, and those who break such meticulous calculation, through human error or mere misfortune, are subjected to public brutalizations. The populace is easily cowed by such displays.
3. The walls and gates of town are wrapped in barbed razorous wire, the sort that digs deep into cloth and flesh when met with the slightest resistance. The stains upon the stonework beneath such protective measures tell tales of unimaginable torment, mortal beings rent to ribbons.
4. The Duke's Forsworn Captain was recently awarded with a weapon from his Steel Cache, forged by the Artificer. The Captain desires to see this steel made loyal to their dark ambitions, and as such seeks any opportunity to commit abuse upon the populace. Such hubris will see them stripped of this reward, should it cause strife for the Duke's machinations.

5. Laborers, infuriated by the building pressure of the daily violence and the toil they suffer through, eventually snap under the weight of it all. They build their barricades and engage in violence which will beget only a vicious reprisal from the Duke's servants upon both the disenfranchised laborers and any other who might be caught in the crossfire.
6. Public floggings are all too common; they cow the populace and enforce a mentality against the repugnancy of the "Other." The victim, their crimes embellished or imagined entirely, suffers at the lash while the population is made to watch. The Duke's Forsworn walk the crowds in search for whispers of dissent while the officiant appeals to the jingoism of loyalists between slashes of the whip.

#### KEEP DEFENSES

1. The gates of the Duke's keep are nothing short of technological marvels, the envy of even the mainland. Making use of advanced pneumatic locks and pressurized gasses, the massive iron gates swing open with disturbing grace and slam shut with reckless abandon. Such technology, in the right hands, could lead to new, terrible weaponry...
2. The bails of razor wire atop the high castle walls are meant to be unfurled during times of siege. The blades upon the wire are of a model meant for lacerating flesh and hooking deeply into muscle tissue, such that an invader's errant fall might see them flayed alive.
3. The Duke's own hounds are terrible beasts, gifted to him by the Houndmistress in a failed attempt to win back his favor. Their yellow eyes and serrated fangs speak to some vile breeding program. They are kept nearly starved save for the refuse meat of intruders, unfortunate souls often used in baiting fights. The hounds enjoy the meat of the face more than any other.
4. There is nothing in the Duke's domain that is wasted if it can be helped, and as such the weaponization of pollutants and gas should come as no surprise. Bile-sprayers and gas bombs are kept for times of war, to melt out the lungs and throats of mortal and vampire alike.

5. The Duke's Steel is a treasured collection of arms and armor, many pieces depicted in portraits by the Patroned Artist in their more useful years. Those who seek to invade the Duke's keep will find themselves against vicious, beautiful weapons of death, the likes that he would never dare risk leaving the confines of one of his personal fortresses.
6. Steady is the Duke's ambition and his progress is noted well by the mainland. Agents of the Crimson Crown, silent observers well trained in combat arts not known on the Bloody Isles, keep vigil within the keep. Who their loyalty is indebted to is of no concern; they lust for combat and an escape from the doldrums of colonial political posturing.

### VAMPIRES

✧ The Antiquarian, a propagandist for the Duke who views the bloodlines and breeding of the mortals and the vampires under the Crimson Crown to be worthy of exploration. The Antiquarian believes the blood of ancestral lines can lead to a profound mandate which will define the fate of the Empire. They see baleful potential in the phrenological and bone structure of all in their purview, and they will champion those they believe have been chosen by the "will of blood."

✧ Schemes: *Extract Samples (6), Study Bloodlines (6), Cull the Lines (8)*

✧ The Patroned Artist, the ideal citizen who was granted wealth, power, and opportunity by the Duke who uplifted them from the hoi polloi. The Patroned Artist has languished in misery and bleakest hedonism, each piece they create a presentation in the art of diminishing returns. They will do anything to feel cherished again.

✧ Schemes: *Pursue Pleasure (6), Grisly Art (6), Create Masterpiece (8)*



✧ **The Knight**, so enchanted by the idea of honor within their privileged rank, continues the systemic corruption they claim to hate. To challenge the violence of the status quo would be to risk reprisal, and any realization of their many flaws and crimes leads only to catastrophization. An egotistical savoir who will bring peace to the land on some destined day they know will never come.

✧ Schemes: *Bolster the Legend (6), Enforce Status Quo (6), Hunt the Extremists (8)*

✧ **The Courtier**, an intolerable and debauched noble from the mainland whose vicious sadism is slowly being challenged by others in the Duke's court. The Courtier is a guest, someone the Duke is forced to entertain for sake of hospitality and appearances. The Courtier would drain anyone if it made for a fun anecdote in the mainland courts of the Crimson Crown, and the Duke would just as soon catspaw rebels into ending their blight upon the colony before another incident occurs.

✧ Schemes: *Practice Debauchery (6), Sadistic Schemes (6), Go Too Far (8)*

✧ **The Artificer** has always valued ingenuity more than life; this is what has made them such a precious asset. The creator of the Sacrophages, the Artificer's loyalty to the Duke has allowed for even the most profane acts to go unpunished. The Artificer would work gladly for anyone who provided them resources and opportunity, who is, for the moment, the Duke. The Artificer would put him in a Sacrophage if given the chance, but no other colonial power is tolerable to the Artificer's limited patience.

✧ Schemes: *Plan the Masterwork (6), Find a Fitting Subject (8), Complete the Sacrophage (10)*

✧ **The Houndmistress** was spared the indignity of a Sacrophage for her many failures, but the Duke saw her withered to a husk all the same. She is a broken thing, but she is cunning. She knows that enemies gather within the Brinkwood, and she has given herself false hope that should she tame the woods, she may once again be respected. She will break the wilds with fire and iron, by blood-addled hounds and desperate huntsmen who hate the fae more than any vampire.

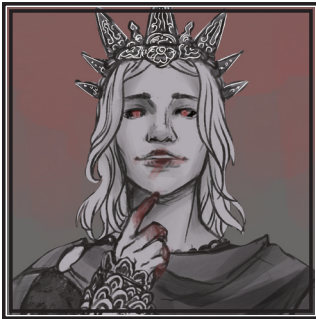
✧ Schemes: *Study the Woods (6), Break the Dryads (6), Burn Out the Rebels (8)*

## SERVANTS

### TIER 2



The **Forsworn** are the personal guard and army of the Duke. Bit-bloods all, they are equipped with the finest armor and the sharpest swords the Duke can muster. Rumors persist of cruel experimentation, hidden behind black helmets and mechanical oculars, performed by the Duke's surgeons to make his soldiers loyal, unthinking, and unfeeling. *Enforcer*



**Officials** are the functionaries of the Duke's rule. They are the tax collectors, the officials, the bishops, and the bosses that answer to the Duke. They drape themselves in fine raiment and robes, their lips stained with blood. They often serve as officers over lesser, mundane guardsmen, using blood and cunning to augment and order their charges.

### *Courtier*

**The Duke's Hands** are everywhere and nowhere. Mixtures of stone and metal, they loom from the imposing edifices of the Duke's fortresses, or spring up from the ground of his demesne. They snatch and harry the Duke's foes, a hostile architecture to instill paranoia and dread in Cardenfell's populace. It is rumored that the stone that forms the hands was raided from the sacred places of old, despoiled, quarried, and made to serve the Duke who maimed them. *Investigator*

TIER 3

The **Kidnapped Dryads** are unwilling captives of the Duke, for where others saw the Brinkwood as enemy only to be burned or driven back, the Duke plotted to raid and capture. He took the dryadic heart trees of the Brinkwood, shutting them up in some dark iron greenhouse, and forced the dryads who loved them to work on his behalf. The dryads were once beautiful, but the corruption of the Duke has seeped into them, as well as their trees. Now their bark skin is marred with barbed wire, long tendrils of which they use to flay the flesh of the Duke's enemies. They are perhaps the Duke's most dangerous hunters since they know the very heart of the Brinkwood, and travel through it, scouting, searching, and hunting with ease. *Investigator*



#### TIER 4

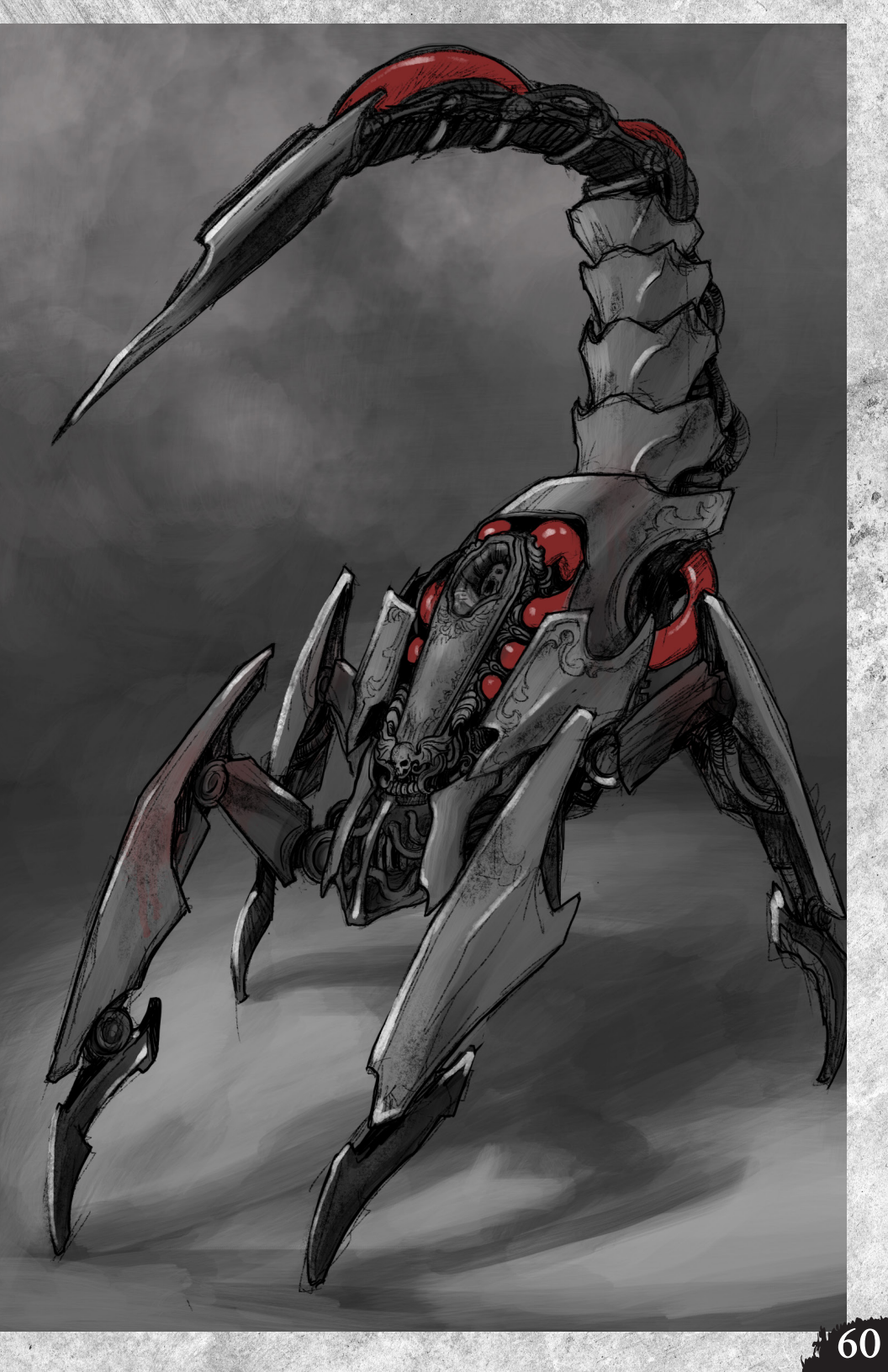
**The Sacrophages** are the war-engines of the Duke, great beasts of brasswork and metal, at the center of which is a golden sarcophagi, emblazoned with the heroic visage of the elder vampire that dwells within. In actuality, to be encased in a Sacrophage is a cruel fate, visited upon the elder vampires who were supplanted by the Crimson Crown, but whose blood and lineage still serve useful propaganda purposes. So the poor wretches are encased in their Sacrophage, withered black hearts at the core of golden machines, their vampiric blood powering its brassworks. Occasionally, a bellow might emanate from the mouth of one of these bronze beasts, though perhaps it is the screaming of the vampire trapped within.

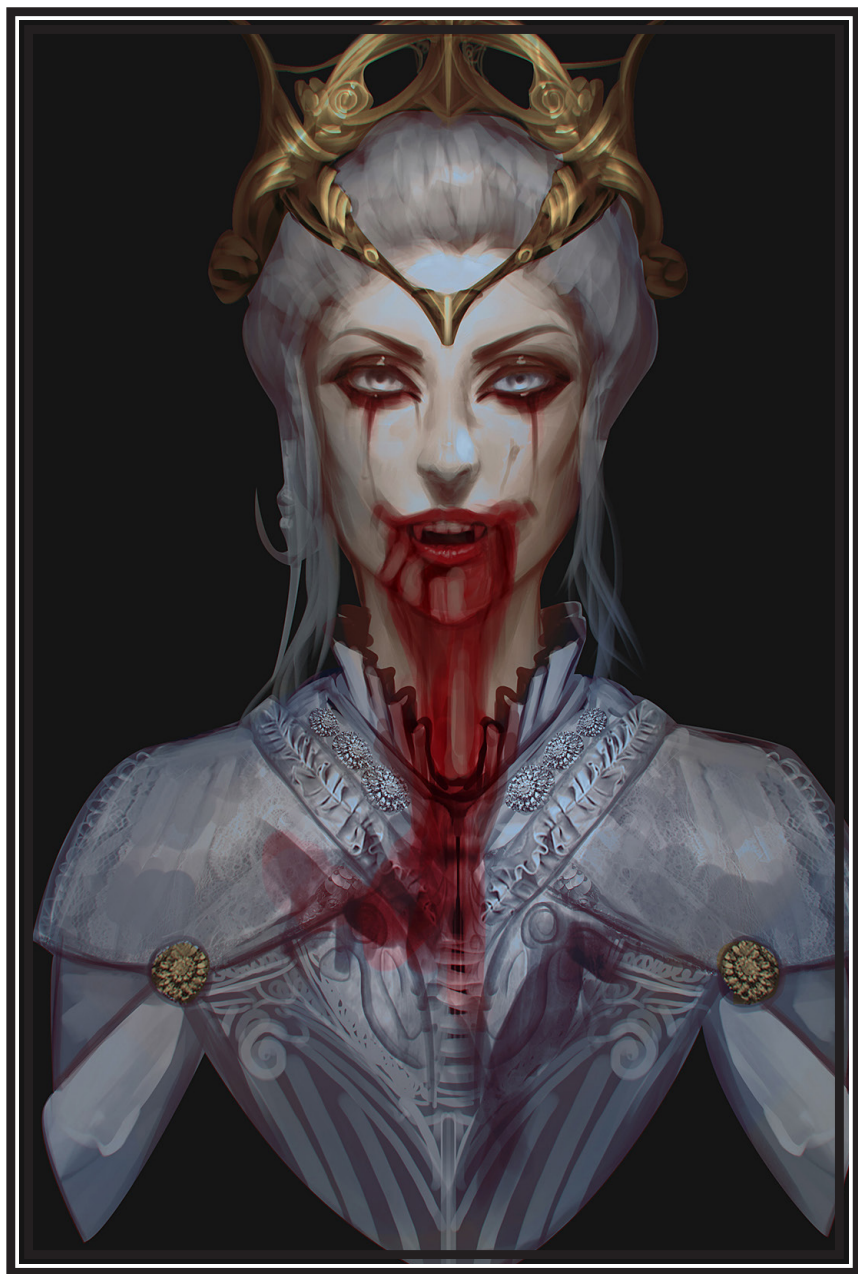
**The Lion** - A golden lion, emblazoned with the visage of Dur Antagne, the elder vampire who first brought vampirism to the Bloody Isles from the continent. *Officer*

**The Scorpion** - A mechanical, multi-jointed brass scorpion containing what is left of Val Hashek, a brilliant elder vampire, rumored to be one of the first alchemists. *Enforcer*

**The Ox** - A great bronze ox, whose lowing bellows strike fear into the hearts of the Duke's enemies. The Ox houses Bartre Vellet, the oldest, most dangerous of the Duke's foes, whose fate is rumored to be the most cruel. *Enforcer*







## THE COUNTESS

*Narcissistic, Petty, Patronizing*

The Countess will spin a tale of sorrow and heartbreak, of forlorn love and filial piety to any who will hear it. The death of her poor father, the late Count—how tragic! And she, forced to assume the mantle of power at such a tender age! The enemies she had to fend off! The hardships she had to endure! All to rebuild her ruined house and name from such a destitute state, using naught but her wits and pluck!

All lies, of course. She murdered her father, a petty baron in the Old Kingdom, and promptly set to work frittering away his gold and influence on any flight of fancy that took her interest. When there was no more gold in the vaults, she squeezed the peasantry. When her serfs fled, she swore herself to the Crimson Crown in exchange for the means to wreak terrible cruelties on those she felt had abandoned her.

Now she is older by centuries, and wiser. She lusts for perfection, and any weakness, frailty, or infirmity are quickly whisked from her sight. The Countess has established herself as a patron of art, of beauty, of culture. She rules by the pen and the brush, constructing a fanciful—if false—image of her reign. To be fair, many are the naive artist who seek patronage at her court, but they all end their careers the same: a tragic “suicide,” corpses conveniently drained of all blood, dead when their inspiration ran dry, for some perceived slight, or simple boredom.

**Motto:** *I, alone, obtain perfection.*

**Themes:** *The Gilded Age, austerity rot, inequality, beauty, misshapen, too-perfect, uncanny valley, dancing, deception, applause, sycophants, disposable things and people, dolls, The Favorite*

### THE COUNTESS' DEMESNE

*Cities and towns dotted with tattered tapestries depicting pastoral scenes; high vaulted architecture, and chipped crimson paint. Everything seems covered with layers of cheap gilt, hastily painted over decay and grime. Across village and town, the wind carries the scent of perfume over rot, and the faint strains of hauntingly somber music seem to echo, always at a distance.*



Six features unique to villages within the Countess' demesne

1. The villages of the Countess' domain are sprawling affairs, bountiful fields where peasants work their fingers to the bone for the meager pittance her vassals will grant them for their toil. Hearty vegetables, floral gardens, and crops bred and grafted for a more appealing aesthetic make this land appear like a work of portraiture, painted sadly by the cruelest of hands.
2. Hedge mazes, labyrinthine things that they are, can be frequently found lining the cobblestone roads towards the villages of this land. Sculptures of the Countess and her servants, crafted across generations from master to apprentice, are placed throughout, as if to remind those with the time for leisurely wandering that her rule is eternal.
3. The village is constructed by way of Coron-style housing, great walls of cramped tenement housing; built back-to-back and meant to line the road towards the manse of the local master. Whitewashed stonework and polished timbers would imply a greater standard of living than elsewhere in the isle, but the people of this land bear the worn faces of the abused. Everything here is broken and numb on the inside; it just requires a willingness to see the rotted wounds beneath the veneer.
4. The manse of a village landlord is a decadent affair, with lavish architecture, Baroque or Rococo in style. Crimson paint and fine brass works are currently favored by the Countess' personal tastes, but this will change in time. In vaunted halls of antiquity, the vampires here have inherited the oppression of ancient human regimes, finding the excesses to fit them like an old glove.
5. Artists are cherished—in theory—within the domain of the Countess. Those who show talent have a chance to escape a life of rural drudgery, though only at the risk of suffering the most grotesque of mutilations if they fail the Countess. Those compelled by desires for expression must often hinder themselves, lest they draw attention and ultimately fail to live up to impossible expectations thrust upon them by their masters.

6. Between villages in the lands of the Countess are many roadside inns, places that exist purely for the services of the wandering merchant and the vampire en route to more important places. Coachmen and skeleton crews of cooks and servants supplicate at the leisure of their vampiric betters.

#### VILLAGE OBSTACLES

Six obstacles unique to villages within the Countess' demesne.

1. While the master of this village hosts a debauched feast, the villagers starve. The elders who have known many lean years counsel resilience, but the young and the righteous respond that resilience is a poor alternative to their daily bread. A daring raid may soon take place, but the opposition the villagers face is larger than their reckoning. A bloodbath would only see the vampires further engorged on the toil of the common man.
2. Workers have been brought in from a nearby village to help work the earth. They are considered handsome, beautiful—the paragon of the mortal aesthetic. At night, horrible sounds emerge from their houses, bitter screams and bone-snapping cracks. They seem to take interest in any voice of dissent, pitying them with their gestures and hating them behind their eyes. If seen without their clothes, they bear terrible scars and tight stitching, revealing them the victims of a sculptor who bound them to this visage.
3. The master of this village has called for a fête to be held. The villagers have gone from working themselves ragged in the field to breaking their backs seeing the village decorated to the preposterous stipulations of their betters. They will drink, they will sing, and they will praise; and should anyone act out of accord, they will be punished in methods beyond reproach in their viciousness.
4. Talented young artists were brought before the local master, and ever since returning have acted out of sorts. They seldom blink and carry about them a scent of milk and honey. A tune leaves their lips between monosyllabic responses; conversation is a capacity they've lost. Their artistic works have only increased in potent imagery, but for every item of beauty there are many depicting scenes of utmost horror squirreled away in their quarters. They are broken both by the false truth they put to canvas, and the witnessed trauma they are forced to hide.



5. The harvest in a field is bountiful, but it is not aesthetically pleasing. The master of the village believes the peasants must have done this intentionally with the hopes of being fed the scraps, like a dog beside the table. The master wants the field burnt, the earth salted—a show of dominance to demoralize and disenfranchise. The peasants, even in their lowly lot in life, are unable to comprehend such pointless, cruel destruction. Violence is inevitable.
6. A cadre of Headhunters have parked their carriage outside the village's gatehouse. They mutter to one another about awaiting further instructions, but neither the landlord nor the peasants know who they are here for. Both parties fear they may have been found traitorous, with some deed or hushed word heard by unseen sycophants who have now sealed their doom. The Headhunters have, it seems, nowhere better to be, though their patience grows thin with the suspicious glances of the people here.

#### TOWN DEMESNE

Six features unique to towns within the Countess' Demesne.

1. They paint the row houses brightly here in the hopes that the gaudy displays might mask the urban despair and destitution of those who dwell within. The cracks in the obfuscation, the lethargy of the townsfolk, the way they look at the red paint and see both their demise and rebellion they fear to enact, hurt hard. These people are owned and manipulated so deeply that even the base appreciation of color exists to remind them of their own mortality and who holds it in their bitter claws.
2. A way in which the Countess' demesne differs from others is the propaganda she purports through a false meritocracy. Those who work through art are said to contribute to a more perfect world, and thus are granted greater privileges than those who labor to keep such a society afloat. In the urban areas—the towns—it is not uncommon to see a former villager turn true villain in the hopes of being better able to contribute to the frivolous plots of the vampires. They will make every justification for their turncoat ways, but they are collaborators who care not if the consumption they allow is ethical.

3. The follies of the Countess' towns display the extravagance of her wealth through obsolescent use of space: towers which have no entrance, old buildings left locked but in good repair, and all manner of aesthetically pleasing structures litter the outskirts of town, providing no service to the good folk who dwell beside them.
4. Central roads lead to busking plazas in these towns, where artists attempt to win the patronage of their vampiric masters by performing their crafts. Such places are rife with dangers, as one artist's experimental phase could be both the elegant display of emotion that sees another artist rendered obsolete, as well as something that touches upon a nerve and reveals an "imperfection" in need of correction.
5. Boulangeries and cafés are present for those of wealth to treat themselves to the finest cuisine the finest cuisine that neighboring slave labor can cook. Human participation in such locales grants a degree of security, relatively speaking, as they are expected only to serve and to go unnoticed. When the meat and wine run out, mortal workers are all too often made to offer up more than they are willing to give.
6. Open theaters exist in the back alleys and garden parks of these towns, lavish affairs where would-be sophists and aspirants put petty twists on ancient tales in the hopes of being able to perform for the Countess and her Janus-Faced Devil. Bloodletting and violence upon the exaggeratedly grotesque wins the most applause, so such theatrical performances appeal to the sadistic at heart more than any other.

#### TOWN OBSTACLES

Six obstacles within the Countess' demesne.

1. A pair of the Countess' sculptors have engaged one another in a horrifying competition in the busking plaza. Undesirables—people who have failed the Countess or merely revealed some flaw in their being that her impeccable taste cannot permit—are being carved into more "perfect forms" in a brutal display of gore and stitchery. The victims in queue scream for aid, but such pleas are drowned out by the howls of pain. Once one victim is sculpted to purpose, they are discarded and the violence begins anew.

2. A well-to-do merchant is offering a finely crafted objet d'art at a low price, claiming a desire to spread the glorious work of the Countess to the poor and foreign souls who will only ever behold her grace at a distance. The merchant could be a burglar, brazen to hide in plain sight; or, more likely an agent of the Countess spreading mimics into the populace so as to further extend her reach and eliminate those without capital enough to belong in her world.
3. A collective of Organists have been ejected from the manse of the nearby Majordomo and been forced to busk their terrible tunes to the public. In their mutilated agony, they have hit upon a new sound that evokes sorrow whilst robbing mortal listeners of their joie de vivre, modest as it may be. As the Organists find themselves slowly attracting larger crowds, the powers that be seek to correct their mistake before rival powers or the Countess find out.
4. Headhunters roam the street at the behest of chattering sycophants, following tips about a supposed traitor to the Countess in need of their violent correction. The wretched sycophants name names and cast accusations upon anyone wearing a certain color or looking askance at the situation. The Headhunters, unable to comprehend being led astray by such feckless creatures, will make an example of some unfortunate soul if a proper turncoat is not found.
5. A Malefactor is being carted through this town, meant for some battlefield upon a borderland with a rival power, but due to some bureaucratic foolishness, it is now forced to remain within its cage in this urban environ. The sick smell of its hypnotic honeyed form is slowly wafting through its prison, and the soldiers carting it are more than willing to welcome further meat to throw at the enemy, even if they are merely rabble who will die without thought or sense in their heads.
6. The Majordomo, on behalf of their master, has proposed a competition to the local mortals: whomsoever best represents the pursuit of perfection will be granted a phial of blood sterling and the right of ascension. Those who fail will be scourged and shamed to the public for their Icarian grasp towards a higher station. This has brought out the worst in people, with treachery and bloodshed abounding which, given the toothy grin of the vampires, was likely the true ambition of this contest.

Six defenses or obstacles unique to keeps within the Countess' demesne.

1. Aesthetic is everything to the Countess, and the windows of her castle are massive stained glass affairs depicting her in various embellished acts in her rise to glory. Baleful sorcery upon scores of mimics and the blood of martyrs used as an enriching pigment in their creation allows the images to leave their caged frames and stalk the castle as razor-edged hunters, should intruders be unfortunate enough to breach her sanctum.
2. The organists in service here have weaponized their sound, finding hidden notes of discordance which cause the mortal mind to hemorrhage and seizure. Ears bleed, gums burst under the pressure of grinding teeth, and eyes become bloodshot when under the influence of the sound.
3. Importing foreign unguents and the ambergris of great predatory whales, the Countess has seen fit that each of her chosen hosts are granted a single amphora of potent flesh-melding perfume, which they may apply to themselves so as to appear more to her liking. If the clay cask containing it is damaged in any way, the vapors will burst forth into the room, causing unprotected flesh to come undone and sloughing off in soggy mounds of drooping, forsaken meat.
4. The efforts of countless sculptors and The Fleshwarper's personal ambitions has created perfect soldiers to man the garrisons of this keep. They are disconcerting in their symmetry, completely perfect yet incorrect in that perfection. The mortal psyche beneath such beatified flesh has long since collapsed, leaving only the hallowed desire to fulfill a purpose, and a misplaced devotion to the Countess who allows all that has wronged them to feel so right.
5. The Porcelain must be kept somewhere, and this keep is where. They sit in mockery of mortal life, blank slates at empty tables, in empty theaters, reading blank books and sitting before empty hearths. Hollow laughter and faint cries emerge from their dollhouse corridors, echoes of psyche which portray a life that could have, been but is not. The murderous cretins hold a vicious energy to them in this place, and to rend a mortal asunder and wear their skin would bring them some slight reprieve from their damnable station.



6. The Countess squandered no expense in the menagerie kept within this keep: horrors from the mainland and their growing colonial territories; creatures from the darkest corners of the earth, which mankind had previously thought to leave in such shadowed places. They are seldom fed but often abused, and to release them upon an intruder would provide delightful entertainment to the sadistic minds of the Countess' court.

## VAMPIRES

- ✧ **The Fleshwarper** is no bootlick to the Countess; it is only the mutual desire for a more perfect world which joins the two in bleakest union. Making use of foreign unguents which make flesh as malleable as loam, as well as the usual cutting tools of the sculptor's trade, the Fleshwarper carves their victims into more perfect forms meant to accentuate a singular purpose. The abattoir beneath their manse is filled with the mournful moans and discordant shrieking of derelict parts, damned eternally to an unlife of imperfection.
  - ✧ Schemes: Study the Flesh (6), Warp the Flesh (8), Perfect the Craft (10)
- ✧ **The Masked Hunter** is no profligate, unlike his betters and peers. A minimalist and a utilitarian at heart, he takes in the beauty of the void where others would lavish themselves in extravagant plenty. The Masked Hunter dresses simply, no ostentation beyond an obfuscating iron mask. When the Countess cries out for aid, he answers first among his peers. What has earned such loyalty of him is an unknown curiosity, the sort the Countess delights in.
  - ✧ Schemes: *Hunt the Disloyal* (6), *Enact Purges* (8), *Hunt the Factions* (10)
- ✧ **The Conductor's** haunting music laces the evening winds of the Countess' domain like poison in a wine goblet, promising comfort but seeding only strife. In a decade's long experimental phase, the Countess values the Conductor's pursuit of perfection within such a mercurial field. Those who dare play a discordant note, or fail to live up to their place within the Conductor's orchestra, are damned to the brutal form of an **Organist** and cast out into the wilds until they have lived their art.



✧ Schemes: *Compose Beauty* (6), *Practice the Concerto* (8), *The Greatest Symphony* (10)

✧ **The Master of Ceremonies** maintains the realm's petty matters on behalf of the Countess: enacting laws, arranging the many frivolous fêted events, and ordering the purges of undesirables who might dare blight the perfection of the realm with their presence. Despite the social obligations of their position, the Master of Ceremonies enjoys only the company of the **Porcelain**, favoring them for the grace the Countess once granted them and enjoying her greatness via their proximity.

✧ Schemes: *Discover Inconsistencies* (6), *Purge Undesirables* (8), *Embezzle Blood Sterling* (10)

✧ **The Janus-Faced Devil** is a true horror of the Countess' delight. A towering, rail-thin vampire who wears a gilded theatrical mask of three faces, the Janus-Faced Devil operates the various upscale stage productions desired by the Countess. Such displays are as baroque as they are abstract, with copious razor wire and vicious, vile deeds performed to the fervor of a lustful crowd.

✧ Schemes: *First Performance: A Dazzling Regatta* (6), *Second Performance: A Queen of Crimson* (8), *The Final Encore* (10)

✧ **The Rat King** is an amalgamation of a dozen sycophants, false spies who suffered this indignity for the honor of the Countess. Bound by their spines in wretched knots and mangled, melded flesh, they can assume a partially human silhouette—a disconcerting sight to behold. The Rat King desires for the destruction of all the Countess' rivals, such that they might be returned to their original forms when their long service is completed.

✧ Schemes: *Seek Secrets* (6), *Seek Redemption* (8), *Reveal All* (10)

## SERVANTS

### TIER 2

**Sculptors** are the crude muscle of the Countess' forces. They are lumbering, hulking things that use adze, chisel, and hammer to shape and form flesh, rending it piece by piece into forms more pleasing to the Countess. *Enforcer*

**Sycophants** are pitiful, chittering creatures that appear as emaciated skulls and spinal cords, leathery wings sewn to their vertebrae. They are rumored to be the Countess' spies, and are the horrible fate of those deemed unworthy of living in her most perfect demesne. *Investigator*

**Porcelain** are strangely beautiful creatures of marble skin, cracked and worn. Rumored to be playthings the Countess has grown weary of, they hunt the Countess' enemies relentlessly, eager to earn some small measure of her grace once again. They fight with slender throwing knives of silver, or if damaged, with pieces of their own jagged limbs and flesh. *Investigator*

**Mimics** tend to drive their enemies to paranoia, appearing often as common household objects until the time to strike draws nigh. Smashed cups, lanterns, or brooms are common sights in the homes of those who defy the Countess. When they do strike, they transform into horrifying things of gnashing metal teeth and fiery smoke. Some say a mimic can be spotted by its quality and makesmanship, as the Countess would loathe to allow anything of base quality to serve her. *Enforcer*

### TIER 3

**Headhunters** are creatures of twisted metal and golden filigree who wear long coats and tricorne hats to hide the gears, smoke, and coalworks that drive them. Unthinkingly loyal, it is they that snatch up those deemed "unworthy" to live in the Countess' domain and render them into Sycophants with raw, brutal, steam-powered might. They have been known to use powder-driven rifles to wear down foes before closing in to collect their grisly trophies. *Enforcer*

Formerly musicians of the Countess who lost her favor, **Organists** are melded together with their instruments so they might “better practice at their craft.” Their agonized bellowing is amplified by the great organs sewn into their backs. They appear frequently in the Countess’ armies, and their haunting “music” seems to direct the efforts of “lesser” creations. *Officer*

So enamored is the Countess with certain talents that she will force herself to enjoy them slowly. Such is the fate of a **Malefactor**, suspended and mellified in honey, their physical and spiritual tissues congealed into a psycho-pheromonal miasma, the opium of a dream. They walk the Countess’ demesne as strange, ethereal messengers, able to put down a riot with a waft of their sticky-sweet smell. It is said that the Countess will occasionally dab the fruit of a Malefactor behind her ears, to enhance her beauty and keep the memory of her favorites with her forever. *Courtier*

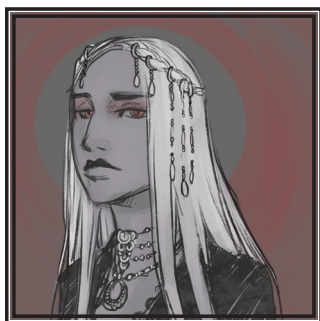
The Countess outsources the sorting and evaluation of the artists she patronizes to her **Majordomos**. The Majordomos are students of failure, seeking to drain it, sublimate it, or otherwise excise it from the flesh of those that might someday be worthy of the Countess’ attention. It is they that sew the **Organists** and mellify the **Malefactors**, but they offer crueler fates to those that disappoint. They have been known to “juice” the despair from disappointing artists, and run this liquified failure through byzantine calculating brassworks in their chests. By starting at a false premise, their mad calculations and studies have changed them, allowing them to phase through reality, teleporting through walls, melding and changing their form as they hunt for more failures to excise. *Officer*

#### TIER 4

**Favorites** are the chosen of the Countess, those “fortunate” few that have—through flattery, sycophancy, and unwavering devotion—earned some small portion of the Countess’ power. They are as twisted as they are beautiful, appearing in artful gowns, masks of gold filigree, and the latest silk fashions. Lesser vampires all, they wield the Countess’ blood and powers as their own.



The Tailor is favored for his deadly suits and dresses, each one hiding some hidden weapon or terrible trap for those who venture too close to the wearer. He is the Countess' chief executioner and hunter of her enemies. *Enforcer*



The Oracle is a mystic and fortuneteller, always carefully coding her predictions so as to not upset the Countess' temperament. *Investigator*



The Cosmetologist is an expert of their craft, able to alter both the faces of The Countess' victims as well as their fates. *Investigator*

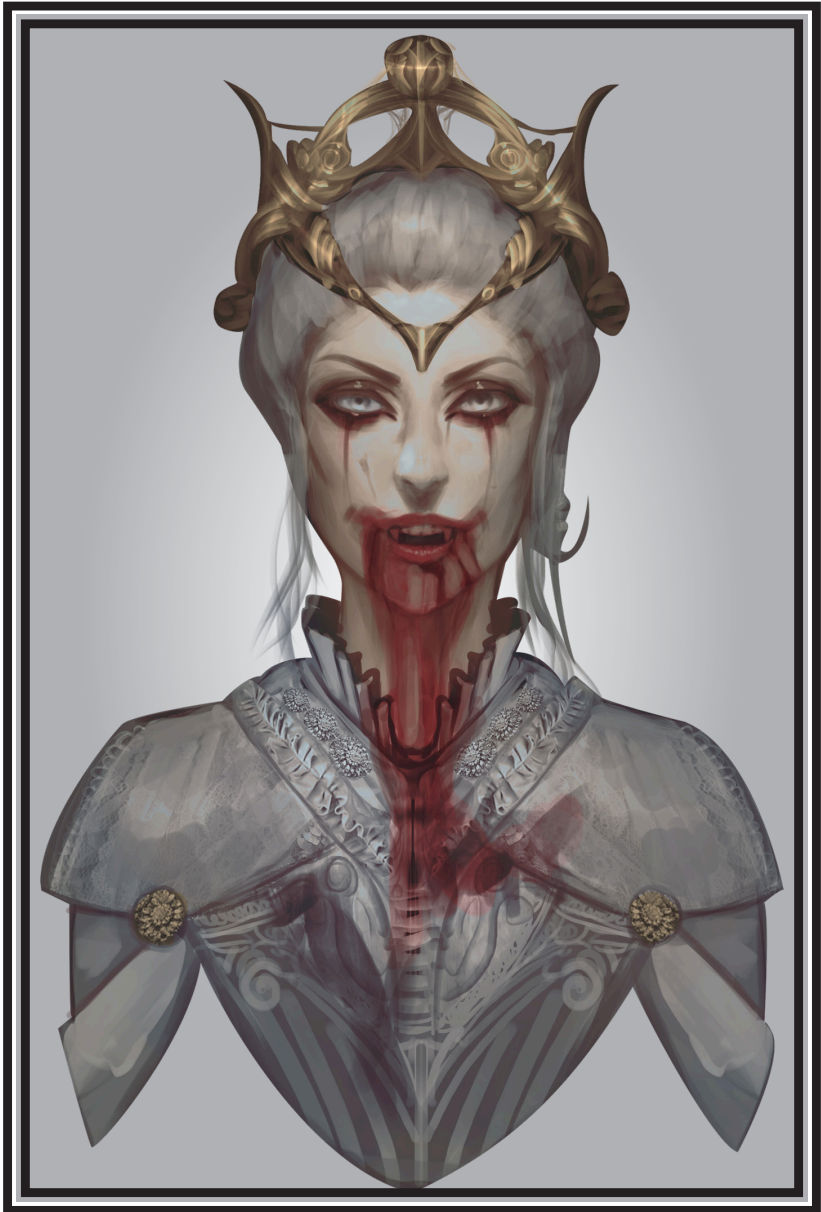


The Sommelier is always close at hand, devising and administering the ideal cocktails, poultices, and wines to keep the Countess in whatever whimsical mood she desires. *Courtier*



**The Reflection** was once an unlucky peasant girl, born with the misfortune of resembling the Countess. But rather than jealousy, her features earned her the Countess' love. The Countess was never content with crude looking-glasses of silver, and longed to gaze upon her own face. And so she molded her Reflection, slowly but surely, until none could tell which was which.

*Officer*







THE BARON

*Agonized, Bitter, All-Consuming*

Pity the Baron. None have seen its wretched form for centuries. Bilious, skeletal, horrid, oozing; words such as these trickle from the madmen who have caught glimpses as it stalks, lonely and wretched, through the ruined halls of its keep. And yet everywhere are signs of its terrible appetites: offal and sweetmeats litter banquet tables, halls of bloody remains and torn flesh, the squealing of pigs drowned out only by the wretched groans and screams of the Baron itself.

They say it was once a man, or perhaps a woman. It does not make a difference. A noble, to be certain, driven by lust: for power, for wine, for flesh, for excess and orgy, it threw in its lot with the Crimson Crown as the Old Kingdom fell. And still, its greed and gluttony were its downfall. Its thirst for power grew too great, and so the Crimson Crown cursed it for looking above its station. It would forevermore thirst, hunger, and gnaw, but no longer would anything bring it saetity, every bite like ashes in its mouth, no drop of blood quenching its thirst.

But still it rules, in quiet damnation, unable to stop hungering, stop eating, stop crunching and snapping and breaking those poor peasants damned to live in its demesne.

**Motto:** *We feast, we drink, but it is sand upon our throats.*

**Themes:** *Late capitalism, hunger, excess, eating, crunching, snapping, thirst, insatiable, hollowness, sunkenness, ravenous, bestial, howling, meat-horror*

## THE BARON'S DEMESNE

*The squeal of pigs, cries of terror, and lonely sobs. Blood—blood everywhere. Messy piles of gore and intestine, gutters choked with bile and filth. The stains of blood and ichor in the cracks of nearly everything. A foul, rotting stench, clinging to the air.*

### VILLAGE DEMESNE

Six features unique to villages within the Baron's demesne.

1. Animal cullings are all too common in the villages of the Baron's demesne. They serve as offerings to the wandering ghouls and fouler things; they are left a ways outside the village, though there is no escaping the lingering scent of fresh blood and trusts betrayed. Starvling Vines sometimes overtake these offerings, though the carcasses will be exsanguinated one way or another, as if the cursed earth ravenously thirsts for blood.

2. The structures of the village are ramshackle in construction: bits of wood hammered deep into crumbling bricks of filth and mud. Hair from mules, from generations who dwelled in such condition, are plastered into the walls in the hope of insulation and stability. The floors creak when they are wooden, but more often they are raw earth: bitter, hard, and thieving of any warmth that touches them.
3. In the villages of this forsaken land, a small allotment of pasture is left to "the neighbors" by decree of the Baron in their more lucid days. Small stone walls cordone off such areas, and the ground here seems softer, the grass here a bit greener. Crickets chirp in those fields. Entrance is forbidden by ancient law, but shadowy figures can be seen there on moonless nights. Occasionally an animal is found skinned and disemboweled upon the border rocks.
4. Mounds are a common sight in and around the villages here, earthenworks raised long before the Baron staked their claim. They are troublesome obstacles: roots and stones seem to trip at the heels of those who seek to climb them; their soil comes down loose and muddy so as to break the footing of any who make it to their tops. Nothing grows here in abundance, even the Starvling Vines can only creep about their bases, unable to gain any sustenance from their incline. Some say there are bones beneath them, but of whom—or rather what—none are brave enough to discover.
5. Every village in the Baron's domain has a butcher's block, for those who dwell here are just as much meat as any livestock which grazes in the field. It is a great smooth grindstone, often in the center of the village or by a trench at the periphery. Slaughter is performed upon the rock, like an altar to blood and offal. In pareidolia in the shades of grey that tarnish the black of the rock, some claim to see the screaming visages of those who have been culled here, forever trapped.
6. As filth gathers in the back of the village, in troughs and trenches—filth pits—so too is there an offering ground for the choice cuts located towards the entrance to the misbegotten hamlet. Often constructed of stone, a guards' box watches the roads for the horrors which serve the Baron. The miserable souls who work the offering grounds provide tithings to the heralds of the Baron in a misplaced bid of hope that such monsters need not enter the village proper.

Six obstacles unique to villages within the Baron's demesne.

1. Great and corpulent swine stumble upon the dirt roads of the village, stabbing their swollen hooves into the mud in search of tubers and truffles. The hogs obstruct foot traffic with their heft and size, and their wretched gurgling snorts accompany a drone of flies which blot out all but that which is shouted.
2. Putrescent globs of rendered fat, enough to drown a man alive, have sloshed off a detritus heap and into the village proper. It holds a bitter cold to it that clings to naked flesh. Its stench, sickly sweet in these depraved lands, leads the desperate to consider debasing themselves to nourish upon the slop.
3. A pond of blotting blood has arisen here, perhaps residue left by the roaming goremass—perhaps merely the groundwater, utterly tainted by such waste and carrion, bleeding out as the land dies ever more. Flies gather in black clouds, supping upon the foul swill at its edges. It sticks to whatever touches it, like the film of infection upon a wound impossible to heal.
4. An Emaciant has been stripped and thrown in a gibbet cage, hung high above the road in and out of the village. The ghoul screams loudly for the praise of the Baron, loudly shrieking any crimes it witnesses, real or imagined. It is a craven thing, easily bribed if it can be reached before it unleashes its cacophony.
5. Starvling Vines have overgrown the fields and slithered their way beneath the loose walkways and fences of the village. To cut it back and tame it to the fields would risk destroying it, a crime of great severity given the cost of the wine that can be produced. Blood spilled—several person's worth—could perhaps draw it back, but only by a matter of inches. Day by day it intrudes further into the village, and those who do not treat softly will be bled to feed it.
6. Gristlegobs are collecting in a filth pit on the edge of the village, and though their bestial intellect would deny them proper tactics, their innate cunning is exacerbated by their endless hunger. They've collected sharp things, errant nails, rusty saws, misplaced knives and bent hooks; they seem intent to use them for sinister purposes. None shall sleep easily until they are displaced.









Six features unique to towns within the Baron's demesne.

1. Though there are sizable settlements, many buildings in the Baron's towns are empty, left forsaken and abandoned. Doors hang limply upon their hinges and shutters clacker about with the wind, creaking and slamming with a sound akin to the breaking of a child's bones. Ghosts, the locals say, are all that is left in such places, memories of better times left to linger like a corpse upon a battlefield now forgotten.
2. In the dark of these towns there is an infection, a creeping fungal blight of blood red color which grows in the shadows like a film of festering rot. It slithers into homes and corrupts water, meat, minds. It causes an itch that does not cease until flesh is rent; it causes a hunger that cannot be slaked save for raw, warm meat. Pest houses exist to quarantine the worst, but this merely concentrates the blight.
3. The people of the Baron's demesne are the most broken of souls to be found on the isles. Their faces are unflinching death masks, their eyes shot and jaundiced by the lethargy of their meager lives, and their morale shattered beyond repair. In these towns, only those who have become so accustomed to butchery and life as prey animals can last, and even then only for so long. These people know only cruelties to suffer; morale is but an illusion they cannot comprehend to dream.
4. Much as anywhere else in the Baron's lands, the ground within the towns are notably cold and hard, even in the balmiest of summer months. Without a firm hand upon a mattock, the earth will not yield an inch. Trenches are hard to dig in the towns as a result, and as such, filth piles nearly as high as the houses that expel it.
5. The water in these towns is hard won, the spoils of war against the bitter earth which gives little to those who seek such basic comforts as hydration. Even still, it is a brackish and coppery drink, the sort that slowly kills the capacity for taste and stains the teeth a brumous, phlegmatic yellow. There are few alternatives to this swill, but despite its look, it is clean enough.

6. The Reformed Faith thought it could save this land and its people from their wayward belief in pagan curses, but the hostility of the land and the bitterness of those who dwell within it shattered the faithful. Churches were built, towering monuments to hubris of man's infliction of the divine upon the natural, but now they remain hardly occupied, waylaid by the ravages of time and the ignorance of a cold, godless, populace.

#### TOWN OBSTACLES

Six obstacles within the Baron's demesne.

1. Butchers prowl the streets of this town, clanging their knives like a hue-and-crier would ring a bell. They demand the tithe be paid, and the first townspeople to claim the tithe was already paid was flayed alive in the town center. They want more bodies, more blood; they're not going to leave without it. Any who dare leave their homes will be culled.
2. Lesser alchemists, servants of **The Warlock**, have arrived in town and seek to discern a greater truth to the curse that plagues these lands. Rather than offering panacea or cures, they seek out the bitterest earth and fungal blight with the hopes of seeing the true destruction it can bring. They've thrown more than a few healthy bodies in the pest house just to chart the spread of the red rotting fungal strain.
3. Mortals of low integrity, poisoned as they are by greed and despair, ply the resurrectionist trade here: ghouls must be fed, Masticators given their due lest they turn upon the living. These grim folk are willing to make bodies when corpses are not in ready supply; mercy is not within their set of skills and any corpse is better than their own. If they had spine enough to challenge their masters, such dark traits could serve humanity rather than stab it in the back.
4. Emaciants and ghouls, beggar princes swayed to the words of **The Holy Fool** wander through this town like voracious waisslers, chanting psalms of the Reformed Faith and begging for alms. They claim the Baron will favor those who offer up their wrists to bitter blades with a feast when the Faith once again shines through the land. Those foolish enough to give such dregs attention, or be caught alone by their mob, are inevitably ripped asunder and viciously consumed.



5. An attempted digging project for the sake of public infrastructure discovered something in the hard and bitter earth. Some say it looked like an eye, raw and red and riddled with tumorous growths. Leadership worries such a discovery may spread the curse, or merely be a sign that the curse is clawing its way up from the depths of the dark corners of the earth. The laborers, those strong enough to rend this ground, must be sacrificed in fire, their charred corpses placed in the same pit. An offering to dark powers, heresy, or mere panic; it matters not. A ritual must be performed to purify this revelation.
6. Itinerant weather is unpleasant, but in a town with such fragile infrastructure and rampant rot, it is a death sentence. A storm is on the horizon; within a day it will bring forth rime, freezing rain, and bitter winds. The streets will flood; the filth will flow from its heaps and spread across the settlement. Fires will burn low and foul within the hearths of homes until the waters rise enough to seep through every crack. When the storm clouds clear and the waters pass, countless dozens will be dead, and more will be sickened. All the easier for them to suffer predation by vampire or fouler thing in this darkened land.

#### KEEP DEFENSES

Six defenses or obstacles unique to keeps within the Baron's demesne.

1. The Baron, having long lost any semblance of humanity, has seen fit that all those who have ever waged conquest against them lay rotting outside the grounds of this keep. Their corpses never decomposed, they bloat and rot; havens for the worms, comely homes for the botflies. The foul, acrid stench of nearly liquified meat, held back by only a thin film of flesh, wafts across this domain, causing all but those native to these lands to go bleary-eyed and vomit up their bile.
2. A pikeman's technique can win many a war, but such noble acumen must be brought low when used in this land. Filth spikes, hidden in pits, attached to trip wires, and in the hands of retainers serve the same purpose at this keep. Like the pins of a sea urchin, even the tiniest prick will release necrotic viruses and all manner of filth-born parasites to ravage those who are not immediately impaled.

3. Boiling cauldrons of pitch are a brutal weapon for more antiquated times of savage siege warfare, and as such they are held in high regard by the Baron. Interior gates and venting portholes exist in the courtyards of this keep to ensure those who enter can be sprayed and drowned in the burning black ichor, skin melting to meat and bone.
4. Loyal retainers to the Baron and their minions are rewarded with the cruelest iron weapons to be found outside the mainland. Such weapons are not vaunted achievements of ingenuity or elegant pieces of art; they are blackened, brittle things, forged cold in the swamps of old, used in bloody conquest of this domain so long ago. They serve as marks of rank, but against a servant of the fae, they cut like ash against a vampire. The Baron knows this, but their minions do not, nor can they discern it through the maddened shrieks and rambles of their master.
5. Hungering masses are kept shackled within the keep, addled by agony and riddled with all manner of disease. They are ghouls save only for their mortal distinction: they are humanity pushed beyond the veil of torment and lost forever to consumption. They will rip and gnash with their yellowed, broken teeth, desiring anything that might fill their bellies and bring them solace from the pain.
6. When pitch is not readily available, the Baron sees their keep stocked with the components for a blood sluice. Using the coagulating refuse blood of culled animals and those who could not grant the Baron an end from their hunger, it is sprayed and tossed, boiling, upon intruders. Those who survive the scalding will find themselves easily tracked by any ghoul, Emaciant, or lesser vampire within a league of their location.



✧ **The Warlock** hates the Baron; of this no secret is made. The Warlock, however, desires no dominion over this land, nor would he ever desire to attend to the petty problems of those who dwell upon it. The curse is the Warlock's concern: he can taste it in the air. It ripples out from people and places here, and such items of concern are subjected to terrible experimentation. The Warlock enjoys immolating that which concerns him in a terrible apparatus and imbibing upon the fumes. He seeks to weaponize the curse and the insight to do so without succumbing to it himself.

✧ Schemes: *Study the Curse (6), Contain the Curse (8), Spread the Curse (10)*

✧ **The Bell-Ringer** was blessed once, a campanologist well-versed in the study of their trade, as much of a trade as could be made in the pulling of ropes for sake of calamitous din. The Baron once held them as a boon companion, and of all the servants the Baron holds, it is the Bell-Ringer who serves unceasingly. When a feast is called, the bells are rung; when war is sounded, the bells doth clang. Mad and wild and with reckless abandon, the bells are rung ragged by this desperate, pathetic soul.

✧ Schemes: *Signal the Feast (6), Ring in the Terror (8), Unceasing Noise (10)*

✧ **The Immolated One** was a trained scholar, an alchemist who thought the curse of this domain could be treated like any illness or frailty: it was a challenge, it could be overcome. Whatever it was they imbibed, it brought them low. Their body withered to the bone, muscle and organ sweating from the skin in tar-like ichor. When they speak, fire gouts forth, as though whatever remnants of a soul this vampire has is dying a horrible death. They hunger for warmth that will not come, and those marred by the tarry ichor find themselves blighted to ghoulish mien in a matter of days.

✧ Schemes: *Scourge the Sickness (6), Burn the Weak (8)*

✠ **The Holy Fool** was emaciated in recent memory, yet a flicker of the flame imperishable and raw ego lingered within. The Holy Fool found solace and purpose in its hunger. It praised the Baron for such clarity. Naked and disjointed, with elongated jaws and carrying always with it a banner in praise of the Baron, The Holy Fool seeks to slake its thirst by consuming what it claims to be the souls of cowards, traitors, and the weak. It eats in ritualized ways, and the truth of how it has retained its mind is lost in the gnashing of teeth and the rending of flesh.

✠ Schemes: *Study the Rituals (6), Obtain the Flesh (8), Order the Feast (10)*

✠ **The Wormhost** is among the most vile of the Baron's minions. His human chattel turned on him many years ago: they cut him to ribbons and bound him in irons and threw his wretched frame into a cesspit, thinking the maggots would finish him off. But this land is cursed and it is unkind. He arose a year later, a host for ten thousand burrowing worms. They leak from every orifice and they know the blood of those who buried him. He hunts their lines still, and his new chattel suffer for the transgressions of old.

✠ Schemes: *Rise, Reborn (6), Punish the Treacherous (8), Spread the Host (10)*

✠ **The Hieromancer** came from the mainland in ages past. She spoke the words of the Reformed Faith and the world seemed to cling to her heels in awe of it. She would be that which saved the Baron from the cursed calamity of this land, but she lost whatever grace she had when she arrived. She became the sort to cackle and devour the raw earth, slather poison upon her breast, and stab wildly at nothing. Part of her returns to stability when she gazes upon items of the Faith, and it is then she demands fresh bodies, fresh entrails to read that will grant all those cursed their dismal release. Countless dead have yet to prove her auspices fruitful.

✠ Schemes: *Study the Entrails (6), Spread the Sickness (8), Devour the Land (10)*

## SERVANTS

### TIER 2

**Emaciants** are said to be those unlucky ghouls who died of hunger within the Baron's demesne. Cursed with a fraction of the Baron's blood, they hunger as the Baron hungers, beings of gnashing teeth and gaunt, emaciated frames. Their strength over other ghouls lies in their all-consuming hunger, as they will fight until the death for even a single scrap of flesh, whereas ghouls can be cowed by displays of overwhelming force. *Enforcer*

The **Roaming Goremass** resulted from attempts to quench the Baron's hunger through raw quantity. It is said that these lumps of meat—raw scraps and flesh—cannot die and are always growing and metastasizing, cancerous in the way they spread throughout the Baron's demesne. Unsettlingly, they always seem to be emitting an impossible shriek, like that of a squealing pig. *Enforcer*

**Gristlegobs** are nasty little creatures, spat up gobs of dead tissue and indigestible bits from the gullet of the Baron and their **Masticators**. Made up of connective tissue, bone shards, bits of cloth, and other indigestible parts, these goblin-like creatures seem to be held together principally by a bad attitude. *Investigator*

### TIER 3

The **Butchers** are willing servants of the Baron, lesser vampires who devote themselves to feeding, creating, and marshalling the Baron's forces. They are the lieutenants, and more hands on than most vampires, they are marked by their bloody smocks, cruel hooks, butcher blades, and ravenous hunger. *Officer*

The **Starvling Vine** sought to solve the problem of the Baron's hunger by investing in quality over quantity. An invasive species, it quickly spread throughout the Baron's Demesne, drinking blood and nutrients from the soil. It refines the blood into a sort of vampiric wine, potent and heady in the power it offers vampires, though it still does not sate the Baron. It is only held back by its massive waste, even as it tries to choke soil and man alike, as even a single drop of bloodwine requires acres of land be ruined and gallons of blood be spilled. *Investigator*



**Masticators** are frankensteined bits of ham scraps sewn together to produce the simple, heavy shock troops of the Baron's armies. Its principal feature is a distended jaw, made up of four wheels of teeth arranged in a rough diamond shape, each made from the jawbone of a different creature. Horrifyingly, a Masticator cannot swallow what passes through its maw—it may only chew it. The Masticator must be kept alive via intravenous blood transfusions lest they burn out, be left for dead, or tear themselves apart trying to create some opening for food to nourish them. *Enforcer*



The **Ferals** are the Baron's mightiest enforcers and perhaps its only true companions. It is said that they were once a traveling troupe of acrobats, performers, and charmers. They entertained the Baron, day after day, ignoring the suffering of the peasantry around them as their pockets filled with gold and their bellies with meat. When the curse fell upon the Baron's castle, it fell in the middle of one of their performances, and so too did it fall upon their heads.

They are locked forever in a grisly pantomime, entertaining their patron with screams, blood, and havoc, mummer's animal masks permanently affixed to their faces.

The **Rabbit** is the swiftest, an assassin capable of dashing forth to slay the Baron's enemies, almost impossibly difficult to catch. *Enforcer*

The **Fox** is the cleverest, their madness tinged with method. They organize the festivals of flesh and blood, putting script to the torments of the peasantry, and directing its companions. *Courtier*

The **Boar** is general of the Baron's armies, marshalling forces on impossibly long marches, burning whole villages for even the slightest hint of sedition, and taking, taxing, and pillaging more silver, more blood, more feed for the unquenchable maw that is the Baron. *Officer*

The **Wolf** is the hunter of the pack, sniffing out rebellion before dragging peasants, screaming, off into the night. *Investigator*





# LANDS OF CARDENFELL

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## ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

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### LAND SCENE

1. A distant grove within eyeline of this road, unnaturally bare of branch and blackened of wood compared to their neighboring contemporaries. Coldness seems to emanate forth from it, as if beckoning with a ravenous hunger for warm bodies to enter.
2. Ancient standing stones, road markers from a long lost age, line the edges of the road. Carved deep in the rock, an ancient tongue, hard to decipher but stinging to the touch.
3. Rolling fields of farmland expand beyond your line of sight. Various shades of brown and amber, vague greens and comforting yellows, like a quilted tapestry of domestic toil's bounty.
4. Dense pine forests crowd the road, looming over it as if to blot out what meager sun might be had. The air is rich with their sticky scent, and the errant fall of branches in the distance carries an uneasy sense of dread.
5. The smell of distant carnage wafts over these gentle fields and rolling hills. No fire on the horizon or ringing of steel can be heard from the road. It is hard to know what violence is truly at play, or if these are merely the ghosts of something long past in need of attention.
6. The road here is shrouded in mist, thick enough to choke on if one were so inclined. It is hard to make out more than a few yards ahead of yourself in all this grey, and the sound here has begun to echo in distorted, disconcerting ways.

### Unique Detail - Duke

- ✧ The Duke, ever efficient, has seen even these backwater roads paved with interlocking brick so as to ensure whatever travel need be done is done with expedience. Nature is fought back from the road as best it can, a no man's land of grass between the road and any hill or wood. Maintenance is not uncommon. The scent of toil, sweat, freshly hewn stone, and a sense of disharmony permeate the area.

## Unique Detail - Countess

- ✧ The Countess has seen the roads of her domain paved with cobblestone in emulation of the antiquated villas and rues of the mainland. Sound carries on these roads and wheels creak with an intended hint of elegance. Gardens and trimmed trees line the roads, as do the occasional roadside bust of her visage. Honey, sickly-sweet, and the overwhelming aroma of uncomplimentary flowers choke the air here.

## Unique Detail - Baron

- ✧ The roads of the Baron's domain are dirt, lined at best with ditch-ways or fence posts wrapped in iron wires. The fields here are dead and the earth is hard as iron. The occasional squared off area of green field is surrounded by blood-slickened stones. Malice, the stench of rot, and the drone of flies hang in the air, miasmatic.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this location, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Fallen trees block the road, though only a careful eye can determine if they were felled by weather or a hateful hand. It is easy to travel around them if on foot, but in a cart or with a wagon it may take hours to hew the timbers to an easily movable size.
2. A toll booth has been placed upon this road, and though the bailiff inside seems isolated, they would be noticed if they went missing. The fee is not overly unreasonable, assuming it will contribute to the upkeep.
3. A small gang of lesser vampiric dandies, playing at being highwaymen, wear scarves over their mouths and masks over their eyes, brandishing forth powdergun and steel with reckless abandon. They want money and they want blood, and if not given both they'll take it through force of arms.
4. The road before you is flooded out. One could traverse it, risking parasites and disease, as well as water up to their knees, but it would take only slightly less time and far more effort than waiting it out or seeking passage off the beaten path.

5. In the distance, upon the side of the road you can find the charred out remains of a roadside coachman's inn. What misfortune saw it put to the torch is a mystery, and is unknown if the authority of this land will come to investigate it, and if so, when they will arrive.
6. With a turn upon the road, you find yourself looking upon a charnel field of corpses. Small fires yet burn, flies gather over the dead and wild dogs rip at whatever desperate meat they can come across. The battle was not long ago, and it is uncertain if all forces were devastated or routed, but it is all but a certainty that ghouls will be here soon to feast upon the dead. Bonepickers and vultures pilfer armaments from the dead and seem suspicious of anyone walking by, as such desecration is a high crime.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this location.

1. Displaced villagers walk the road, destitute and in need of someone to blame for this misfortunes in life. They cannot conceive of blaming their former master, so deep is their fear.
2. An abandoned orchard and a bit of farmland lingers on the edge of the road. The building here is derelict, and the fields are bloated with the rotten, fallen crops. There may yet be resources enough here to resupply.
3. A herd of deer crosses the road not far ahead. Some graze on the edges. They pause and wait; one locks eyes with your company. It would be an easy target to take, with food enough to eat heartily.
4. There was a barricade here, meant to enforce a toll. It has been recently broken, still smoldering and freshly toppled. Whoever attacked it is no longer here, and whoever worked it has long since fled, leaving behind ample supplies and pilfered goods ripe for the taking.
5. A trader's wagon has toppled on the side of the road, produce and other necessary goods for villages to keep up their production lay spilled out. Their mule is terrified of something and it will take effort to both collect all the goods and to fix a newly dislodged wheel.

6. Vampires, newly slain and desecrated upon pikes on the edge of the road, their faces scarified and mutilated. The work of a rebellion cell or a fae entity; possibly even a nearby hamlet sick of being treated like livestock. In lieu of collaborators, there may be glory to steal here.

## CARAVANS / TRAVELERS

Six random caravans or travellers.

1. A pair of bailiffs and a mortal tax collector who, despite their glibness, seem far more pleasant than their associates. They anticipate an unpleasant welcome and are armed to deal with such.
2. A wayward teenager and a scarred up old hound dog wander the road with a long knife and a bindlestick. The youth is searching for a purpose away from the master's domain; they can't go back home and are traumatized by the idea of engaging in further violence.
3. This caravan of strange and exotic food was purchased at great cost and destined for the Baron's table. An alchemist and two powdermen, as well as a half-dozen mortal chefs of some capacity, march with trepidation.
4. Refugees from a border conflict, soot-stained and injured, walk the road with a coldness to their demeanor. They claim ghouls and the enemy are not far behind. They desire retribution and care for nothing anymore, but know it will only come with their dying breaths.
5. A military company for a distant lord is marching upon the road, their officers bickering about the map and where it is they are meant to go. Travelers they encounter are potential food or plundering fodder. Dissent is growing in the ranks, and the dark ambitions of lesser officers may lead to mutiny if properly pressed.
6. Barmy and half-dead from exposure, an injured elder stumbles from the wood seemingly drunk. They speak in hoarse riddles, mumbling about faces within faces, whorls within swirls, and no hope. No hope, old masters or new masters, only suffering.



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## HIGHWAY

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### LAND SCENE

Six elements of the location describing random details you might see/hear/smell nearby.

1. From a vantage point upon this upkept road you are able to see as far as your eyes allow. It gives perspective to the importance of your cause, as much as it reinforces your infinitesimal size in this conflict. The domain of these vampires is readily apparent, like festering boils upon a canvas of flesh.
2. The natural world is tamed back from the road here, walled off beyond small fences so as to keep the road clear of animals or fallen timbers. The heavy hand of civilization seeking to control the natural world is palpable, and so far between towns, it seems as though it could easily be overrun.
3. The road here has been freshly laid out and travel goes by smoother than you have experienced prior. Clouds gather in the distance, but what detriment they bring is a matter for later. Birds sing to one another trees, and there is a sense of casual calm as you make your way.
4. Passing by farmland upon this highway you can see the rolling tapestry of agriculture spread out over hills and dales, like a blanket covering sleeping giants of the earth. Wheat grain and hearty cereal plants waft their gentle scent about the air, beckoning for gentle showers to nourish them.
5. The road here has been carved through woodland viciously, like the keratin scars upon a prisoner's hide. Trees buckle away from the road, bent out of shape by biting axes and the cruel hands of the civilized world. The air smells of fresh earth and old ozone.
6. The highway curves here around a small lake, deep enough to fish in or to pause a wagon to get a drink of freshwater. So far from the influences of civilization, it seems unnaturally clean. Frogs croak and fish swim beneath the water, oblivious to the greater conflicts of humanity.

### Unique Detail - Duke

- ✧ The highways through the Duke's land are some of the best maintained roads outside the mainland, raised above the ground but dug in to allow for fitted stones to make the bulk of the road, and bitumen to fill in any cracks. Road markers and stones are provided at every quarter mile, and at every five mile mark is a trough and a set of hitching posts so that beasts of burden may regain their strength. Multiple lanes are marked by small divider stones so as to mitigate back-up. The Duke maintains strong control here with his road wardens, but in doing so, travel is swift right until there is cause to stop.

### Unique Detail - Countess

- ✧ The Countess invests well into her highways, such that her carriage rides always take just enough time for her leisurely enjoyment. Upon embankments and hills she has installed wrought-iron fences depicting forest scenes in their filigree, and the roads themselves are paved with the smoothest of stones, interlocking to depict beautiful fresco patterns. It is frivolous work, decadent in its expenses.

### Unique Detail - Baron

- ✧ The Baron, unable and unwilling to spare resources for sake of infrastructure, merely has wooden planks raised above but nailed down into a wide dirt road. These highways offer little benefit when compared to even the backroads of the Duke or the Countess; but to those who know well the bitter earth of the Baron's cursed domain, they do provide some small comfort and a better means to expedite one's travels.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other obstacles you might find in this location no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Road wardens serve any master willing to pay them to enforce tolls and live in the obscurity of the wild. They make use of violence with casual indifference, and a toll paid is no guarantee of protection for mortal travelers. Their horses are bitter things, used to being run roughshod and whipped into a frenzy; combat from horseback allows them a chance for a quick death.
2. The occasional tollbooth used to finance the upkeep of these highways are far more of a bureaucratic nightmare than the backroads. Caravan trains can become held up by overly-suspicious bailiffs and officials who wish to impress their masters by cracking down on contraband. Those who seek to turn back from these crowded bottlenecks are often pursued, assumed to be running from the hand of the law.
3. Smugglers often seek to hide their contraband among the unaware, such that accidental discovery may land others in the firing line while still allowing for the flow of goods. Caches and wagons might find themselves heavier upon the highway after a night on the road.
4. A carriage is parked on the edge of the highway, its wheels undergoing repairs. The coachman is in arguments with armed guards and their vampiric master sits in a stewing rancor, their travel plans stalled. The vampire has an urgent missive and will seek to bribe if they are unable to intimidate any passerbyers into assisting with the carriage, commandeering their own vehicle or mounts, if such things are worthy of their station.
5. Distant clouds roll in quickly, booming out thunder and drowning the land in torrential rain. Trimmed and clean as the highway is, there is little in the way for shelter from this storm. Floodwaters may not reach the road, but it will make it deathly slick to go beyond a snail's pace.

6. Though the road seemed bare and free, a turn around the bend reveals a line of caravans and a sizable work crew performing unexpected construction upon the road. The laborers are tired, clearly overworked, and the petty abuses slung from the mouths of travelers delayed only make the situation more unpleasant. It seems only a matter of time before the weight of these indignities drive a laborer to violence.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this location.

1. A collective of prisoners work the edge of the highway in a chain gang, splitting stones and performing maintenance while being left to the cruel whims of the elements. They bear the wounds of a life hard lived, as if in addition to this laboring toil they are meant also to serve the blood-hungering whims of their taskmaster.
2. An unscrupulous merchant, more than fed-up with playing lackey to their betters and the vampiric lords, is suffering every woe of travel. The mule is stubborn, the wheels keep coming off their axles, and the goods are already beginning to spoil. Things might “fall off the back of the wagon” in exchange for a modest price.
3. A smuggler’s company pegs you for their kindred, which is to say, folk who are up to no good but might be amenable to profit. In exchange for carrying some goods or paying a minor fee, they’re willing to help you enter the nearest settlement—their destination—without notice.
4. A vampire waits with a coachman and only a single guard, apparently early for a changing of the horses, which might allow for their trip to go on without issue. Looking down the way, it is clear no one is coming, not for a while. The vampire is unable to accept how utterly vulnerable they are.
5. The road is swallowed up here by a mob of the disenfranchised, humans who have lost their homes and loved ones in a recent skirmish. They are marching, crude implements at the ready, seeking violence: reprisal, retribution for their fallen. Their rage is directionless, but powerful. It could be easily focused.

6. An errant beast of burden, still bridled and road ready, is grazing on the edge of the road. It is skittish to any approach, fearing any loud noise and shuddering away from any speaking parties. It is uncertain what abuses it may have faced under its old owner, or where that owner is. Theft of such creatures, however, is often a capital offense, and rescuing this beast may lead to further harm down the road.

## CARAVANS / TRAVELERS

Six potential caravans or travellers you may encounter along the roads of Cardenfell.

1. Lesser courtiers from the Crimson Crown, on a tour of these middling territories, seek to expand their own holdings. They are bold, and assume any and all humans upon the road are utterly loyal. They ask questions about the senses of loyalty and pride mortals must feel serving in the empire, and any words that might disillusion them will be met with violence from their armed guards.
2. Merchants out from Innisfirth seek to capitalize on markets far from their home. They are of a casual kindness, happy to be away even if in more uncertain or dangerous territory.
3. Pilgrims of the Reformed Faith proselytize loudly from atop the back of a wagon, much to the agony of their coachman who would just as soon stuff a bullet in his ears as he would drive the horses a moment more. The faithful sing their songs and clang their bells, and the driver grinds his teeth through the leather reins.
4. A mainland scholar performing a deed to which she believes will lead her to be vaunted and gifted vampirism. She rides on a gentle old mule and presses flowers in a large leather tome. She believes there is more to the fairy-stories of Cardenfell than her fellow academics are willing to consider and will pay handsomely for insight on the subject.
5. A group of children, all dressed in the garb of the Reformed Faith and looking utterly miserable, sit lashed to one another in the back of a covered wagon. Victims of a border conflict which saw their parents gone, they are being carted off to an orphanage convent so they might still be made useful.



6. A mangled and mutilated husband and wife, dressed to the nines in disturbing leathers made from humanoid flesh. They wear necklaces of teeth, and proclaim loudly of their trade as ghoulish-hunters of note, with letters of recommendation from many a Vampire Lord. They are heinous and can hardly mutter a tone that is not either bitterly grim or a gallows's humor. They could be allies, but a mercenary's heart is a treacherous thing.

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## CARDENFELL RIVER

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### FACTIONS

#### **Primary Faction: Reavers**

Cardenfell River and its banks have long been the domain of bandits and reavers, as hidden smuggler caves dot the banks and the shores of Cardenfell are rife with piracy. The river is carved into competing territories of gangs of both Reavers and less "noble" criminals. Recently, the powdermen have begun encroaching on the smuggling dens and dockyards of the river, putting them into direct and oftentimes violent confrontation with the Reaver gangs that hold it. Given the powdermen's vampiric backing, it is unlikely for the Reavers to survive if they do not remember old alliances and set aside ancient vendettas. Safe to say that no one, be it lord or peasant, moves along the river without heavy guard or a heavy bribe.

## LAND SCENE

Six elements/details of the location describing random details you might see/hear/smell nearby.

1. The banks of the Cardenfell River are steep and rocky here, and the water below flows at a deceptively quick speed. The air is rich with the scent of old stone and lichen, and the erosion of the water upon the rock seems to cut ever more deeply each day.
2. The water here is dreary and drifting by a leisurely pace, with shallow muddy banks showing the tracks of mules, horses, and small animals stopping by the edge of the water to sup upon it. Tiny bubbles in the submerged muck reveal the hiding holes of frogs, clams, and snapping turtles.
3. Smooth rocks line the edges of the river, which glides by at a dizzying speed that causes small whirlpools and white waters. The din of the water drowns out most sound, and save for the occasional fish leaping from the river it is hard to see much life within it.
4. The rocks here are jagged and slick with the tepid wet of the river, which flows by slower than sap leaking from a tree. Flies buzz, tiny crabs scuttle about, and frogs croak in abundance. If not for the stink of the water, it would be an otherwise pleasant stretch of the river.
5. The river was in need of being controlled here, and thus it flows through a deeply carved ditchway at a plodding speed. The ground beside the ditchway is rich with loam, sediment, and all the telltale signs of having once been the natural course of the river. Plants sway here, indecisive of which way they ought to grow.
6. Fallen trees and gentle sediment run this length of the river, with animal-crafted dams causing the water to flow at a calm pace dictated by the whims of the marmots who crafted them. Birds chirp and sing at all hours of the day, and crickets play their cries for attention when the sun gets low.

### Unique Detail - Duke

- ✧ Pollution run-off from settlements within the Duke's domain is an unpleasant side effect of his progress. The river is just another body to be exploited for capital and labor, with only degradation and disease to reward it. Abandoned mills, death strandings of river life, and overfishing of what life yet remains are all too common sights upon the river in this land.

### Unique Detail - Countess

- ✧ The river flows through the Countess' land as another natural resource she wishes to carve to her own delight. Lazily gondolas where painters congregate despite overcrowding are common, as are the scathing boats where mellified corpses excreted by The Malefactors are left to drift and beguile those who catch their sickly sweet smell.

### Unique Detail - Baron

- ✧ The most common detritus put in the Cardenfell River by the Baron's hateful hands are the many corpses which choke the waterways like a clogged artery. The meat bloats and rots until it eventually breaks, causing the water within miles of the dump site to have a greasy soup-like film upon its surface.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this location, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. The river basin has flooded far beyond what could be anticipated, saturating the land and dragging it downriver with the flow. Vermin scramble up trees, and riverside dwellings are all but swept away.
2. The river flooded sometime in the not so distant past, turning the lands beside it into a muddy bog that seeks to consume boots and travelers alike. Great efforts must be taken to remain standing, lest one become settled into the mud and unable to break free.

3. Vicious river wildlife seldom bothers humanity, but desperation or a misbegotten step can cause such conflicts to emerge: alligators and snapping turtles angry at the world; bears who hunger to fill their bellies; the ripping predatory teeth of seals which hide so easily behind their kindly eyes; or even crocodiles proper in certain areas of the isle.
4. Much as a highway has its road wardens, the vampires employ well-paid river patrolmen to maintain order upon the Cardenfell River. Their vessels are slow, but secure things, often pulled along the edge of the bank by donkeys upon a trail. It can take weeks for a patrol to file their reports, but they maintain a system of coded bell calls to communicate with one another in urgent situations.
5. A broken lock or break in the river has seen its waters grow shallow, scraping the bottoms of boats and causing some fish to drown upon the air. Old bones and slick rocks, leeches and all other manner of detritus pollute the now revealed ground here. It is unclear when the water levels will be remedied, or for how long down the river this problem persists.
6. Wreckers are perhaps some of the most successful types of criminals to be found in Cardenfell, masters of the river that they are. By making use of skiffs and the terrain, they are able to perform hit-and-run raids upon both vampire and human boater alike, making off with plundered goods and stealing lives.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailes you might find in this location.

1. A fine cranberry bog exists off the edge of the riverbank here, which means there is plenty to eat so long as one is willing to risk dirtying themselves upon the water and besting any creatures who might be dwelling in the reddened waters.
2. Easily seen from the shore, there are a plentiful amount of bloated bottom-dweller fish, grown fat on rot and detritus. With a net, a bucket, or just a well-placed stab, a person could find themselves with hearty, albeit questionable, meal.

3. A traveller upon the muddy shoreline finds both their horse and cart stuck, slowly being dragged down into the earth. Saving their cart will leave them stranded with too many goods, and saving their horse will leave them free but with no means to fulfill their duties. They are desperate, screaming, and time is running out.
4. Upon a jagged rock in the middle of the river is the wreck of a vessel, its hull torn open. There is no obvious sign of life, nor much indication on how long it has been there. If one were willing to brave the waters, any supplies left aboard could be scavenged without much hassle.
5. Prisoners chained into pained positions, slashed about and slathered in filth and worms, scream for freedom and aid. They will pledge their soul to whoever will grant them a quick death or their revenge for this undignified fate.
6. A bargewoman, a bit lost of grip but wise of water, plies the river on a long flat barge she's made her home. She offers news and ferrying for a slightly heavier than needed fee. She has too many stories, hardly any of them make much sense, and she will tell them regardless of your desires to hear them.

## SHIPS

Six random ships that may be travelling on the river.

1. An ironclad ship, **The Ashes of Ambition**, chugs about through the water, slow and grumbling. A prison ship, it hauls human chattel too and from various forts on behalf of local lords, and is well known among those who trade in hostages. Powdermen and well-trained brutes make sure the ship remains secure.
2. This trader's barge seems to emerge from fog, as if by design. It moves about without any grace, bumping and scuttling into other crafts as often as it does into the riverbed. Ghouls stay aboard it, using it as a meandering means of travel from which they can hunt without attracting too much attention.
3. A smuggler's trawler ship, its name always new and freshly painted, and its paperwork always a few stops out of date. The crew know how to grease palms and traffick primarily in recreational goods that even the staunchest bailiff knows is more trouble writing up than allowing into a town.



4. Corpse ships, usually of a shallop model, are reasonably uncommon, but routine enough that anyone who spends time enough upon the river will come across them. Whatever foul necromantic purpose behind these ships is a well-kept secret known only to the Duke, Countess, and Baron. If one ventures close enough to the ghastly vessels, one can occasionally make out the uniforms of Crimson Crown officers in a burn pile.
5. **The Loan-Duck** is a well-maintained fishing wherry that has been in the same family of Shepforth fishermen for seven generations. The folk aboard are oddly friendly and seem to have a charm about them that makes vampires find them too simple and unimportant to be worthy of harvest. Their secret is a bloody one, of old compacts, and the river sees them safe so long as they maintain their rites and act as stewards.
6. A grim and well-painted pleasure barge will occasionally slink its way on the river, holding important dignitaries from the Crimson Crown, or a favored lackey of a Vampire Lord on holiday. Meetings that cannot be held for political reasons in any one territory are often held on such vessels.

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## THE VEINS

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The Veins are the rich farmland that lie to the south of Cardenfell River and the Three Sisters. They are fed by a vein-like series of off-shoots from Cardenfell River, which terminate in the floodplains and marshlands that make up the southern border of the county. Control of The Veins is split between an assembly of feudal lords who answer only to the Vampire Lord of Cardenfell. Even now, their squabbles, bickering, and mismanagement quietly grind the rural poor of Cardenfell into poverty and immiseration.

### FACTIONS

#### **Primary Faction: Prayers**

The Prayers are spread far and wide in the isolated abbeys, monasteries, and small chapels of the Veins. The influence of the Reformed Faith seeks to work its way down from the north, but thus far the Prayers have provided tenacious resistance to vampiric plans of religious co-optation and dominance.

## LAND SCENE

1. Upon the banks of the Veins sits a few small fishing hovels, with nets in the water and a leisurely air about them. Children run about laughing in hushed tones, pelting one another with mud and the occasional leech. Watchers pay close attention to the borders of this hamlet, clearly aware that any intrusion could end the peace they've gathered.
2. A young company of soldiers and men-at-arms, practicing a murder-stroke technique by awkwardly gripping the blades of their weapons. They laugh when a youngblood is thrown to the mud or has their helmet splintered. They catcall and hoot at those who pass by, eager for a proper scrap and uncaring of who they'll fight with, be it fisherman, stranger, or water-bearer.
3. An antiquated fort upon a distant hill in grave disrepair from some sacking in ancient times. This has not stopped habitation, as old defensive mounds have been converted into fields, and people work the land here as though it were any other. At night they crowd within the husk of the fort's old walls, cramped but safer from the elements.
4. Rolling hills of tall grass obscure dolmens up to their nape, including many a grave marker from wars of old. A low fog rolls over the wild here. War songs are chirped by the black birds; the field mice see that no name goes obscured by moss or by dirt. There is stillness to this place, despite an ever present wind from the east.
5. Upon a hill sits an old church, thunderstruck and soot-encrusted, from a time before the faith was reformed. Black birds and grackle collect upon its old stone as if they were members of some dour parliament, calling and singing in tones recognized to the devout. What strange portent this is, only those versed in the heresies of the ancient faith may know.
6. On the edge of an old ruddy trail sits a wooden pole with placards and arrow-signs nailed crudely upon it. The names are written poorly in some dialect not common to the northern bight of the isle, or at least not common any longer. They indicate civilization nearby, or at the very least, where civilization once stood.

### Unique Detail - Duke

- ✧ The lords here battle in secret now, in shadow wars that lack much subtlety, but do not rankle the feigned courtesy granted to them by the Duke. The Veins are drying here, and when not dessicated, they are fracked to loose vicious oils for the Duke's ceaseless bloody march of progress. The fields often lay derelict and overgrown, settlements little more than ghost towns. Civilization in the Veins moves where the Duke demands it.

### Unique Detail - Countess

- ✧ Promises of the Countess' grace have won over many a feuding lord who seek to win her favor. They build their manors ever higher, cultivate their fields so that the grains grow tall and in strange patterns, and they plant wildflowers along the Veins. But the dark copses of forest in this land grow ever more bitter as the farmers here suffer for this false beauty.

### Unique Detail - Baron

- ✧ The Veins which flow through the Baron's lands run sallow and thick, with silt accumulation enough to choke the waters and see the cursed earth drink the way dry. Grasses grow tall and grey here, falling ashy at the touch. The feuding lords wage petty war with another; this land was not always cursed, but now it grows more blighted by the hour. To a wayfarer, the terrible song of shrieks and slaughter hangs darkly in the distance.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other obstacles you might find in this location, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. The ripped up corpses of a family found in an irrigation ditch would normally warn of ghouls, but the banner spiked through the lot of them speaks of a war between the feuding lords. The banner is of an old house, long derelict, and paranoia suggests that outsiders are just as likely the butchers as anyone else.

2. Fields have grown sodden due to flooding from both the southern marshlands and poor upkeep of the Cardenfell River. The Veins have grown swollen and stagnant, birthing forth parasites of all shape and spade from the deep places of the earth. Now in bloom, blood-sucking larvae and all manner of pestilent worm slither about these lands, infesting who they can.
3. A bountiful harvest has come early to the fields among the Veins, and despite the toil, the folk who work these fields know they will have food enough to last them the winter. Armed guards walk the borders and patrol, knowing well their lord's many enemies might strike now. Strangers are noted and considered to be thieves at the best of times.
4. Rumors abound of strange horrors slithering forth from the southern marshlands, stealing away children and blighting the land. The locals of the Veins are up in arms about this, their hospitalities diminished and fearing any stranger may be some skin-changer lying in wait to strike.
5. Due to malfunctions of some lock or canal gate, the farmlands here have suffered a drought. Plants suck up what water remains, turning the earth into a crumbling, stinking mess of clay and mud. Without fish or proper fields to till, a famine is all but certain.
6. A border skirmish between local lords has seen the Veins choked with the damned and the dying, and much of the harvest lost to fire and strife. Soldiers languish in agony for what was lost and for their neighbors-turned-enemies. Peasants gather fire and pitchfork, hoping to gain retribution, as they have no hope for justice nor peace.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this location.

1. An isolated homestead upon this borderland, well-guarded and well-respected by the folk who know of it. Those who dwell within care not for any of the feuding lords, but know well that if not for the bickering, their land might be swallowed up into their petty politics. They'd just as soon be left alone, and talk of sedition is welcomed, albeit cautiously.

2. A moot market is being held where the people of the Veins can trade freely with one another. Bad blood is everywhere, and it seems every family holds some grudge against another. Goods come cheaper when they undercut another family, and theft would be simple to commit, for the blame is easily diverted.
3. The people of this part of the Veins hold grudges against the greater lords to the north, and could be easily rallied into a force for the revolution under the auspices of enforcing ancient reprisals against their enemies. It may even be possible to stoke the fires of revenge in their vampiric overlord, using them until it is too late for them to realize they've been played.
4. By appealing to ancient rites of hospitality and oaths of friendship, the folk here can quickly become amicable. Given the distance from the holds of greater vampiric lords, even the bloodsucking filth know to tread carefully with their power, as they have not the resources to raise up a host to cull their dissidents—at least not without making themselves vulnerable to a rival.
5. The Reformed Faith is attempting to make inroads here and supplant the heresy of the old church, though these pilgrims realize quickly that the folk of this land cannot easily relate to the content of their rhetoric. They must subvert their own teachings to gain any ground here, and with orthodoxy being manipulated, an insurgent could easily twist the words to their benefit.
6. The feuding lords have never trusted one another, nor the lords to the north who they know will eventually come for them. On the southern border between the Veins and the marsh, they've kept a copse of ash trees grown for the purposes of kinslaying. They do not place a guard upon such lands for fear of betrayal, watching it only when they venture from their homes. If it is abandoned at the moment, it could provide powerful weapons for the revolution to come.



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## DRANCASTER BRIDGE

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Positioned over the Cardenfell River between Drancaster and Grismont, Drancaster Bridge is a natural chokepoint for the flow of trade and people between the north and south of Cardenfell. A harsh toll is levied on any who wish to cross it, and many merchants (and smugglers) choose to ply the waters of Cardenfell River instead of crossing over the Bridge.

### LAND SCENE

Six elements of the location describing random details you might see/hear/smell nearby.

1. The Drancaster Bridge is a monument to humanity, only in recent memory darkened and transcribed to the Crimson Crown's ambitions. Ancient stonework, timbers from when the old forests were young, and iron forged first in bogs and later in foundries lay the framework of this bridge. The embellishments and embossments of the vampire's regime steal the glory of what Cardenfell was.
2. Upon the bridge and leading up to it from either side march doomsayers and pilgrims, radicals of the Reformed Faith who preach of a coming calamity to the isle. Only those who pay the indulgences and serve loyally to the Crimson Crown will be spared the fate of dust and doom.
3. The hustle and flow of trade and people makes the Drancaster Bridge a colorful blend of the cultures upon the Cardenfell Isle. Though only merchants and the richest of mortals may find easy passage and freedom to travel, it is clear to see where the pride of each vampire's domain is founded. They dress the part and make idle conversation as they seek to pass across the bridge, sounding almost alike the vampire's they serve with their disregard for those they consider lesser.
4. On either side of the bridge coachmen stables can be found, as travel by carriage is less demeaning and risky than the personal inspection of a traveller by foot. The line for service is always long and the cost a bit too high, but the coachmen are professionals. They hear plenty, though gossip often costs more than the ride for inquiring parties.

5. Roadside shrines to the Reformed Faith line the way up and from the Drancaster Bridge, basins for coin offerings and candles to be lit by those who believe their fortunes may be found on the other side. The occasional patrolman or bailiff is just as soon to leave a coin as they are to fill their pockets with the offerings.
6. Engineers, finely dressed, often lead work crews. They seek to strip more of what the bridge once was away and erect more monuments to the Crimson Crown. They are loud and unpleasant, acting like cruel taskmasters to their crew when they feel the chance of doing so might grant them further clout.

#### **Unique Detail - Duke**

- ✧ Uniformed officers with vicious dogs patrol the Drancaster Bridge and its underbelly, scourging and maiming any would-be criminal unable to grease their palms or offer up worthy sacrifice. Smugglers hang in gibbet cages, their bodies picked raw to bloody bones. The price of tolls is listed openly and changes with the tides and whims of the officer in charge.

#### **Unique Detail - Countess**

- ✧ On the edge of the river, beside the bridge, stewards and gondolers offer lavish boating experiences to distinguished guests. Rafts carrying crates of wine too and fro glance up at the bridge and make playful mockery. Urchins and vagrants ply the water for dumped goods, hoping to find their windfall.

#### **Unique Detail - Baron**

- ✧ Upon the riverbanks of the Cardenfell, servants of the Baron purchase jars of soil from the mainland and preachers of the Reformed Faith bless pilgrims with ashen marks upon their lips, wishing them well in this trial of faith. The water is an acrid yellow when it touches the shore, as if this departing point is sickened by the ground it touches.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this location, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Bailiffs accompanied by armed guards are performing an inspection on customs, making sure all tithes and tariffs are paid. Trumped up on a feeling of self-importance, they will fine and brutalize the poorer travelers upon the bridge knowing full well they cannot afford additional fees. Such unfortunate souls are dragged to a back office to offer up their blood in lieu of coin, and always more is spent than can be afforded.
2. Bans upon various goods are common, often causing merchants who wish to avoid potential harm to toss their newly proclaimed contraband over the side of the bridge. In addition to these bans, occasionally the guards will proclaim a type of good to be proof of harm against the state, going so far as to perform public executions over the possession of knitting needles or fish hooks if they think they can get away with it.
3. Those exiting either side of the bridge who have not formed the appropriate contacts to bribe will be forced to swear loyalty oaths in blood, spilling open their palms and bleeding into a basin whilst reciting a jingoistic chant. If one refuses to do so in the presence of a mortal or vampiric officer, they will have the traveler do so in front of a ghoul.
4. Heavy traffic upon the bridge sees it crammed shoulder to shoulder with nary an inch to move without bumping into another person or cart. Rumors abound that a carriage toppled over or a horse got loose and started kicking. Nobody knows, nobody can move, and not a single soul upon the bridge has patience enough for this.
5. The Reformed Faith is celebrating one of their pointless fêtes, crowding the bridge with bright costumed folk in red and yellows, terrible masks, and bog quality wine. The guards are unhappy, but fear reprisal from greater officials than they if they step in. It is a dizzying display of terrible smells, cacophonous chanting, and flagellants rending their backs raw only to be lapped upon by lesser vampires in a lewdly carnal display.

6. The bridge is on lockdown with powdermen on either side; claims of escaped criminals and the danger they bring have halted travel. Vampires in their coaches make vague threats of killing the “miscreants” themselves for this inconvenience. Given the many needless laws and punitive fines upon the Drancaster Bridge, it is unlikely the criminal is of any true threat, should they exist at all. This may simply be security theatre so as to justify further invasive policies.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this location.

1. Merchants from various domains commiserate on the state of the economy and the growing realization that their margins grow thinner while the purses of their masters grow fatter. They despair for their fortunes and come to admit the human cost that they’ve been cruel to ignore in the past. In their darkened hearts there is an anger, a desire to do better, but they know not how, and cowardice keeps them complacent.
2. A ferryman beneath the bridge wears a seal of each vampiric master, shuffling between them for which force he thinks he might need to impress. The paleness to his flesh is more akin to a fish dipped in flour than the progressions of vampirism, but he plays the act well. His services are cheaper than others smuggling humans across the river, as he expects whoever is upon his boat to have knives at the ready. He owes no loyalty to any rebellion or master; his heart is in the thrill of his foolishness.
3. Beggars and buskers plead and perform on the outskirts of the bridge, hoping for a kindly coin or a bit of bread. Their health and general malaise keeps them from being easily preyed upon by desperate vampires, but they know to flee when a call for workmen is had. They keep a keen eye on the bridge, knowing many secret comings-and-goings.

4. A mortal, newly recruited by the guard, is quickly realizing the task is not what was promised and that the violence so often engaged in is from a one-sided source. They are disillusioned but fear being made a target by speaking out. With proper leverage they could be a source to exploit.
5. Recent construction upon the bridge has revealed a vulnerable spot, which if attacked, could sever the realm and prevent the bridge from servicing any forces. None expect such a heartless and debilitating act to occur, and thus it is guarded only as much as any other spot upon the bridge. Toppling the Drancaster would change the flow of trade and troops across the isle.
6. Exploited for their labor and subjected to no small amount of dehumanizing abuse, the workmen upon the bridge are waiting for an excuse to butcher their superiors and anyone else who has put them down in the past. Armed with hammers and mattocks, all they'd need is a reason to hope in a victory.

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## THE WROUGHT BRIDGE

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Part bridge, part gatehouse, part fortress, the Wrought Bridge is an imposing construct of brick, stone, and wrought iron. Three wrought-iron portcullises hang from the bridge, ready to bar entry to any invading fleet.

### LAND SCENE

Six elements/details of the location describing random details you might see/hear/smell nearby.

1. A crew of fine metalworkers are busy at work polishing the wrought-iron portcullises, ensuring that all who pass by can glean their fates should the gates be dropped upon them. Seagulls cry in the distance and the sea breeze wafts a gentle scent upon the winds, which has an almost wistful quality to it.
2. A fishing vessel, rich to the brim with crabs, hawks loudly their wares to laborers busy sweeping up the bridge of seaweed and debris accumulated from the waves at high tide. A dog is barking somewhere in the distance, but all this noise is nearly drowned out by the crashing of waves, a bit rough for the time of day.



3. A bailiff sarcastically applauds some human laborers who are busy fishing his badge of office and sword out of the drink. Whenever they pull up a weapon that is not his, he berates them. The air has a wretched fishy stink to it today, which has attracted more than a few feral cats who lounge about the roof of the gatehouse.
4. A group of officers shouting as best they can, attempt to direct a foreign vessel that this is not the correct port of entry. Their mortal underlings have joined in with the hooting and hollering, but the ship responds only with further shouting of their own. A slight fog further complicates the matter.
5. The water is rough and choppy today, which has not seen those stationed here any reprieve from their duty. Grey, blackening skies indicate a storm liable to roll in at any minute. An albatross cries like a klaxon at odd intervals, and there is a general sense of malaise about the station.
6. Gentle rolling waves lap at the bridge and the surrounding environs, though the ocean, as far as the eye can see, is mirror-still. Wagons cross the bridge, slowly but without any dire urgency to their passage. The wind carries a mournful song to it, though none can tell from where it originates.

#### **Unique Detail - Duke**

- ✦ The Duke overworks his maintenance crews, but the bridge has never been safer, nor more secure. At each of the gates, all papers are checked in triplicate, reasons for travel put under heavy scrutiny, and all vessels checked for smuggler's hatches or contraband.

#### **Unique Detail - Countess**

- ✦ The Countess has hired the finest architects and engineers in her domain to debate the merits of aesthetics of The Wrought Bridge to representatives of the Crimson Crown who have their own questions to the gate's purposes. They remain more annoyed than suspicious by the Countess' minions.

#### **Unique Detail - Baron**

- ✦ Servants of the Baron desperately attend to the cleaning of the fences and making sure the gates remain slick and ready to drop. They affix themselves with harnesses and sturdy rope, always muttering about something in the waters beneath, which seeks to melt their flesh and consume it.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this location, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. A broken fall-gate bars travel and the crew suspects it may be an act of sabotage. Those who speak of it say it fell loudly, like a scream meant to deafen another act, and this has caused extreme security measures to be put into effect. This has further delayed repairs and the chance of traveling unnoticed are slim.
2. A wind storm has seen a large chain come unhitched from its place, falling to the bridge proper and pulverizing it. A work crew alone does not have strength enough to haul the metal from its newly embedded home.
3. A thick fog obscures shapes upon the sea, and though none present are willing to admit to the possibility of an enemy fleet, all official missives would indicate no ships should be so fast approaching. No one is sure how to act, for fear of the conflict it might create if their fears are in vain.
4. All are surprised by the amount of barnacles and rust which have brought havoc to Wrought Bridge over a single night of higher-than-average tide. The crews are scraping and cleaning as best they can, but the need for travel across the bridge has created numerous stop-gaps in patrols and oversight.
5. Disputes between the Baron, Countess, and the Duke have seen the officer at the Wrought Bridge forced into a delicate situation, as one force refuses to move from the bridge and is openly blocking the other two. Combat is all but assured to break out.
6. The gates of Wrought Bridge have been found bound open by many locks and chains, their mechanisms unable to give an inch. None are willing to speak openly of what fears this confirms, but they know that if they act too quickly to repair it, it might send the wrong message.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ails you might find in this location.

1. In hushed tones, it becomes clear that there is no small amount of friction between the mainland Crimson Crown and the factions upon the Bloody Isles. No one will name names, but to someone who is believed to have witnessed the subtle aggressions, commiseration is not uncommon. None will admit it of course.
2. The crew that works the bridge is overworked and underpaid, with much of their labors being rewarded with bland meals of fish and tepid beer to dull their senses. Friendship, news, stories, a proper meal or alcohol of any true potency would make their daily toil more tolerable.
3. A travelling blacksmith helps service the mechanics of the bridge when called, often attempting to better train an already overburdened crew so as to lessen their own labors. There have been harsh words thrown about between both parties, and improving said relationships could win loyalty here.
4. The mortals who guard and toil upon the bridge are notably corruptible, allowing for lesser contraband to pass through the gates in exchange for favors, coinage, and potential blackmail. They use a complicated system of knocks and hand signals, though it is hard to tell if it's merely performative or of actual use.
5. In the guardhouses, under strict lock and key, one can find weapons of silver and ashwood. Such items remain fiercely hidden when agents of the Crimson Crown are known to be about, and excused as being contraband recovered from flensed-to-death criminals. More than a few garrisoned here seem to gaze upon the weapons with a knowing comfort.
6. Diving into the drink beneath the bridge, one can find any number of displaced goods or illicit materials kept in the sea's salty embrace. Weapons lost in training or in conflicts long forgotten and scrubbed from the records can be found encrusted with coral and barnacles.

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## THE MARSHLANDS

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The Marshlands south of Cardenfell form a natural barrier between the lowlands of the Veins and the rest of Orslae. While over land travel is possible, it is complicated by muck, disease, and frequent humidity. No wonder, then, that most “civilized” folk prefer to travel by ship rather than risk the winding mire-roads.

### FACTIONS

**Primary Faction:** Poisoners

**Secondary Factions:** Witchers, Reavers

The somewhat lawless and isolated nature of The Marshlands make them an ideal site for those who would rather go about their lives unbothered by civilization or the long arm of the law. The Poisoners retain good relations with local communities and hermits alike, trading necessities and knowledge for rare and exotic species of plant life and fungi. The Witchers and Reavers similarly keep to themselves, lying low for fear of persecution or pursuit by authorities further north.

### LAND SCENE

Six elements of the location describing random details you might see/hear/smell nearby.

1. Birds haunt this waterlogged carr, hanging from each branch like a judgmental bouquet of wildflowers. They do not chirp or sing while mortals traverse the muddy banks; they seem to be waiting for treachery to reveal itself. The frogs sing though, loud and haughty.
2. Formed upon a dead river, the waters here are ruddy, stagnant, and go up to the neck at their deepest. The ground is black clay, saturated and infested with all manner of worms who tunnel about, seeking any bit of dry to rest their heads. The air is an acrid combination of sulfur and iron, enough to make one sick until they’ve acclimated.

3. A wide spread of vernal pools, ankle-high at the best of times, and so disturbingly still. Corpses, bloated with water to the point of being strangely smooth and slick; lily pads and duckweed congregate over their faces, obscuring their death masks from the world. Herons stalk about, eating small speckled frogs and watching mortal trespassers from thickets of reeds.
4. The Marshlands spread out into reed-choked wetlands. Deep water conceals countless predators, and the tall stalks carry and direct sound strangely here. Paths and landmarks shift, as though the marsh was of a mischevious mien. The air carries the scent of wildflowers, though very few can be found.
5. What would appear to be rolling hills conceals a peat bog submerged beneath a sea of moss. The mud beneath is slick and hungry, devouring boots and whole beings should they not remain in constant movement. Salamanders and newts sometimes crawl from the muck when disturbed, waddling grumpily until they can find a new place to rest.
6. A buttonbush fen of numerous scrub plants, vaguely traversable without too much worry of wet until a wrong step is taken. Turtles are in abundance wherever ponds have formed; painted, striped, and snapping all make their homes here and bask on errant logs. The odd elk can be found lurking in the bush, eating berries and seeking to be left alone.

#### Unique Detail - Duke

- ✧ The Duke cares not for the bounty of nature here; he never has. The waters of the marsh are rich with nutrients for plants; irrigation trenches will drain The Marshlands and see his domain grow richer. Until such a time that construction is finished, his Forsworn men patrol boats, seeking out those who think the Duke incapable of finding them in such deep wilderness.

#### Unique Detail - Countess

- ✧ The Countess tried to hide her lies in the muck here. Items that would speak the truth of her origins, distant relatives who might have a hidden claim, mere witnesses who knew the truth or those she just assumed capable of telling a good lie. She bound them in chains and saw them drowned in filth. If ever the stench of the mud of The Marshlands reaches her nose, she will believe someone knows her terrible truths.



## Unique Detail - Baron

- ✱ Where The Marshlands touch the cursed lands of the Baron, many a blight is excruciated in their deadliness. The waters run red and foul, host to a nigh primordial font of disease and parasites. Slime mold and deadly fungi choke the bark of every tree, slowly squeezing away the life of the marsh, replacing it with something new and foul.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this location, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. The flies here swarm, an endless blackened sky that seeks warmth and blood to keep itself whole. They lay their eggs within warm flesh, and are unrelenting in their greed and thirst. The drone is almost hypnotic, inviting, as if you might find purpose in being consumed entirely.
2. There is a stillness, a silence, that has come about. As if you are prey animals that walked too close to the predator in your midst, entirely unknowing. Frogs, birds, deer, and such all look upon you with panic in their eyes, expecting blood to be spilt and life to be snuffed away.
3. Bloated ghouls, their bodies waterlogged and carved with strange whorls and sigils. They struggle with every movement, every gnashing of teeth. They swat and claw at unseen enemies. Blood might give them a moment's reprieve, and many of them are dressed in tatters enough to show they once held importance.
4. Serpents skate through the water and frogs dart about the trees, each creature colorful and patterned to hide in plain sight while revealing their noxious capacities. Humanity is uncommon here; they do not fear it—they find it curious.
5. Parasites hunger up from the depths, finding the soft flesh of the living mortal traveler to be a perfect vessel from which to propagate. Burrowing worms seek out bare places upon the body, compelled by warmth and a malign desire. If properly accommodated, they will seek a means to control, to bloat, to bloom, and to burst forth elsewhere to further bring about their kind.

6. There is a mist in the distance of this swamp and a silhouette within. It gazes back and mirrors movements with slight delay. It is clearly intelligent, but it is unclear what it is. If called to it will not respond, but if bothered by the sound, it will let out an unearthly shriek and flee with profane speed.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailes you might find in this location.

1. Hanging limply from the treeline is a horrifying sight: a derelict mask that sways in the breeze. It covers the jaw and a single eye, and is constructed from some baleful wood. It seems to watch and to wait, swaying subtly, offering itself. The interior—that which would be pressed against the flesh—is a faded red, bloodstained, deeply saturated.
2. In the depths of the marsh, ash trees congregate and swell, fed rich by the minerals in the soil and left untouched due to the obscurity of their location. It would be a risk to take them to be processed into weapons proper, but carving such implements here is not ideal either.
3. In a hollowed out oak sits a water-tight chest, well-locked. Within are lists and numbers, penned in the elegant script of an Old Faith, yet the ink and paper are of recent make. Translation is crude at best for a layman, but it speaks of chokepoints and locations to attack in the event of an invasion from the mainland. It seems penned by the hand of a vampire.
4. A buoy half-sunk in the drink, likely some smuggler's hatch for the hiding of contraband that dare not be found anywhere in civilization; inside, three vials of the blood sterling, enough to see one transformed and fit for action. A note lingers inside as well, but any script upon it has faded away from the humidity.
5. On occasion, one might feel a clink or a clank when they step in the marsh. Sunken treasures, gold of old that marshland does not give up without some terrible purpose. The coins have a weight to them, which malevolent spirits are drawn to. They bring out the worst in a person, and they do so very easily.

6. A spear of pumice stone sits atop the mud, belted in iron as if to prevent it from being touched; yet the irons are not barbed, nor do they hold the stone beneath the filth. The cutting edge is strangely sharp, and the whole of it weighs less than a feather. If unbound, a dark cunning comes to mind, as if a divine intelligence spoke in dreams: "Feed me that which feasts on thee." A cackle, and it speaks it no more.

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## THE WESTERLY MOUNTAINS

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### LAND SCENE

Six elements/details of the location describing random details you might see/hear/smell nearby.

1. A great cliff face of jagged stones, like the scales of a pinecone. Ropes have ample place to hold to, but too much weight will see them cut as though they were as flimsy as joss paper. Eagles nest in the unreachable places, and the winds howl strangely as they drift between the jagged rocks.
2. Long and winding vales overcast by a bitter gloom, with ranges of pine which cut across the rock like deep shadows. Every loose stone echoes when shifted even slightly, clattering until they carry across the wind as little more than a whisper.
3. The pass here was cruelly hewn by hateful hands who found only resistance. Areas to walk are narrow, the walls are abrasive, and snow accumulates quickly, toppling into crevices and blocking out the way. Goats congregate, great and whimsical shaggy ones who walk about the walls with disconcerting comfort.
4. This snow-capped mountain dell obscures pitfalls and deadly drops under a sea of brittle frozen white. Foxes leap about, vanishing in and out of the snow, hunting marmots or other low born things. The sheen of light reflecting off the snow makes it blinding when one tries to gain their barings. There is a rumbling in the deep.
5. The trees here grow brittle and narrow, with many a tripping root that seems malevolent, as if desiring to unbalance a hiker and send them teetering over a cliff, or into the biting mouth of a crag. It smells of old dirt and the rough, fatty smell of great mammals in hibernation. The air is still more often than not, but inclement weather rattles the dead wood like a whirlwind of whipping limbs.

6. The barrier mountains give way here to deep valleys and great towering buttes. The stone runs grey-white towards the heavens and a bloody, ruddy red towards the earth. Plant life is scarce, save for ashy flowers which fade at the touch. Wolves howl in the distance, and horse hooves rumble in echo from some far off place.

#### **Unique Detail - Duke**

- ✧ The Duke views the territories beyond the Westerly Mountains as land rightly his, cut off only by petty rocks. Mines and logging encampments are frequently constructed to strip and burn all that can be extracted from these mountains, manned by undesirables so as to make some use of them. Shipments of resources, ever dwindling, head towards his domain from here; and soon will come a time where explosives will render him passage to lands beyond to conquer.

#### **Unique Detail - Countess**

- ✧ The Countess keeps a winter retreat in the Westerlies, a baroque tower that gazes upon a valley of heavy snows, a blank canvass for her to envision her works. Her favorite subjects are occasionally granted dominion over it during the less favorable seasons; some go mad and some find clarity in the isolation. Traders and provisioners venture there often to see her stores are always supplied; many are broken by the thirst-maddened whims of her guests.

#### **Unique Detail - Baron**

- ✧ In the hopes of finding clemency here, the Baron has seen road shrines to the Reformed Faith carved deep into the stone, upon any place a pilgrim might be able to tread. Flagellants make their homes here from time to time, subsisting grimly upon ash. Hunters under the Baron's lash build road markers from the skulls of animals and the occasional human they encounter. Despite all the effort, it is a godless place.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this location, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Without warning, a rockslide comes crashing down. The rumbling calamity rends the earth asunder from on high, brutalizing the path and destroying all that which gets in its way. Trees are battered out of place, cliffs become ever more precarious, and the pulverized corpses of pilgrim or lay-beast reveal the uncaring cruelty nature can inflict.
2. The path here is treacherous and winding, too narrow for any movement beyond single file order. Stepping out of place risks biting abrasion from the rough faces of rocks, or possibly plummeting off the edge of a cliff. Running is not an option for those who wish to live to see tomorrow, and a melee here would be as insidious in its dangers as it is quick to end.
3. Ancient waymarkers carved by inhuman hands lead to shear walls of smooth stone. Finding one's way back from such points becomes a matter of riddles, as the sun sets strangely on the path back, and the stars themselves seem different. Knocking comes from within the rocks, hypnotic and strange.
4. A derelict camp and caravan is found nearby, battered and left to the wilds. Old worn clothes are strung up and thrown about, tattered as if caught by a mischievous and sneering gust of wind. No sign of blood or recent struggle is about, but embers in the firepit still glow. There is a disquiet to this place.
5. Corpses, nude and dead by exposure, are found on the edge of the wild here. They must have succumbed to some madness, some desire for the cold to make them warm. Their mouths are reddened, their teeth are gone, their eyes are black. Further away are other corpses, mangled, mutilated, half-devoured down to blackened bones. There is a rasping laughter in the distance that makes one's own stomach churn and rumble.
6. Bitter winds, fierce and flaying to exposed skin, sap away warmth like a leech bloats itself on blood. They whip up dust and snow and thin the already desperate airs of the mountain. In the corner of the eye one might catch a figure, a strange light, and a sensual laugh bidding a walk into the unknown and off a cliff into a waiting embrace.



## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this location.

1. On the edge of a misbegotten crag, there is a glint in the stone. Silver, a vein of it that runs deep into the maw of this mountain. It would take great effort to mine it, let alone to do so in secrecy to such an extent to be useful. But the mountains here are not well-walked. It could be done.
2. Over the next height looms a watchtower, well-weathered by time and the elements. A tattered banner, one not known since the Crimson Crown's regime, waves wildly in the mountain winds. There is no recent sign of habitation, and little resources immediately around it to grant it use.
3. Carved deep into the stone is a washing basin; around it, a strange filigree runs smooth and defaced by the ravages of time. In the bottom of the basin is a crude face, staring up at whoever might take a sip or wash their hands. The face seems oddly familiar, almost familial, and those who drink deep of these waters will have their dreams be of deep roads and hidden locks, guarded by runes, which if they only knew how to say, would see them opened.
4. In an icy cave mouth grow small curling flowers of deepest azure, which gleam like a twilight sky in the morning dew as it slowly freezes upon their petals. Ancient tomes of alchemy know their worth, a cure for a hungry soul when properly rendered. Ancient tomes of necromancy also cite such an herb, a means to feast upon the souls that hunger. Only scholars long dead would know its truth.
5. An anchorite of the Reformed Faith dwells here in a long abandoned chapel, hard to approach but easy to find by hearthlight in the evening. They have found many heresies within the reformation, enough to form questions and to pen a text in the dim candlelight. They fear for humanity, for this is not how the world was meant to be. They wonder, darkly, when the usurpation truly came and how much it was welcomed for preying upon our best natures.

6. An abandoned mine runs deep beneath the mountains here, stripped clean of resources but left standing with little more than a bulwark of old timbers to block it off from the world. It is a cold place; the walls knock in strange ciphers, and were it all to be blown up, it'd topple and destroy a great deal of the roads and paths towards the Stone Tongues and the west.

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## THE BRINKWOOD

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### LAND SCENE

Six elements of the location describing random details you might see/hear/smell nearby.

1. The leafy canopies of this darkened wood blot out the sky, revealing its own dark tapestry where constellations are crafted from spider's silk and bioluminescent fungi are held aloft by clawing branches. Foxes and shadows peek out from behind the great gnarled trunks of trees, giving a glimpse of their shape before fading into the dark.
2. The trees here clutch toward the sky with bare and vengeful branches. Draped among their wooden fingers are long dried strands of meat, entrails strewn about in warning from times none dare remember. The ground here is slick with fallen leaves, and all manner of beetle slink about under the rot.
3. The foliage here grows strangely; from any angle, they fit perfectly together in continuing patterns of whorls and swirls, knots and filigree designed by some hand of nature's own innate divinity. Light pierces through the canopy above, touching floral vines and bidding them bloom so as to strike onlookers with awe of what the world once was.
4. The space between trees is filled with ever darkening foliage, making the places between places all the easier to see. These are the hidden paths, secreted ways to places known only in folktale, and existing solely for bargains made in desperation. The sounds of the forest cease here, save for the mimicry of magpies saying any little thing that might see you tread deeper.

5. From the treeline, it is easy to make out ancient stonework, collapsed and overgrown: the walls of a manor perhaps; certainly a fountain; occasionally a statue long since defaced. Creeper roots and thorned vines choke away at this encroachment, as tight as they ever have. A seductive chuckle comes on the breeze, as if the Brinkwood is amused by you, as if you might give it more to throttle and break.
6. The Brinkwood here runs fat and tall, with clutching roots thicker than the grandest of pythons. Sticky sap binds insects in amber, trapping them as they glut themselves to bloating. Bones, bestial and mannish, lay crushed among the boughs, as if the trees themselves had the capacity to bash and batter those that displeased them. Cicada drone their haunting songs, their brief moments of life above ground wasted here.

#### **Unique Detail - Duke**

- ✧ The Duke knows well what lurks within the Brinkwood, and he will not allow it to stand. His servants engage in logging upon its borders, slashing and burning so as to tame the wilderness back; a daily task which should result in easy victory instead finds itself a war of attrition. His retainers seek to bend the Brinkwood to the Duke's will, but only by fire and iron will the insult of those within it be truly scourged from the annals of history.

#### **Unique Detail - Countess**

- ✧ The Countess finds herself enrapt by the beauty of the Brinkwood, the flowers that bloom and the trees that flourish. It is perfection, but it is beyond her control. Entering it she finds it denying her, tarnishing its beauty, rotting away the only thing she wants of it. At the borders she has begun construction of iron wrought fences, designed with filigree and embossment of the perfection she hungers for. She will have the Brinkwood once she finds a way to keep it perfect, static, and unflinching.

## Unique Detail - Baron

- ✱ The Baron gazes upon the Brinkwood with trepidation, fearfully gnashing their teeth and plotting how to bargain with what lies within. Offerings, ritually decapitated and left to bleed out upon the treeline are left in the hopes that what neighbors here are as easily bargained with as those behind the stone borders of the fields.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this location, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Huntsmen, servants of the vampires, wander this wildwood in the hopes of preying upon poachers or slaying fabled enemies of the realm. Most are vile and depraved, unwilling to parley lest they give up the element of surprise. Some, though, look to outsiders with ghoulish desperation, having been long displaced here, imprisoned and brought to the brink of sanity.
2. In every tree and bit of shadow there lies a hidden face, pareidolic or otherwise: eyes appear in the whorls of the bark, teeth in splintered branches; a cackle comes from the rustling of leaves; silence comes across the Brinkwood with such stillness, all one can hear is the beating of their own hearts. These faces seem to judge, and always are they found wanting.
3. Mushrooms can make a fine meal, but the Brinkwood reviles outsiders who tarry within its boundaries. Those who do not come with offerings will find any fungi that seems fit to feast upon to be a poisonous mockery of near-identical appearance to one found when nature is kind and bountiful.
4. Wolves of profound intelligence stalk the woods, singing low their songs in the night, and through some strange ventriloquism, wandering one way while their footfalls walk another path. Some are wise enough to speak, but seldom do they have kind words to say. They know the names of those which hold dominion over this land, and in the wars to come, they will feast upon the carrion, as no folk is deserving of their teeth in kindness.

5. Deep within the wood can be found ponds of preternatural darkness, reflecting skies long unseen by mortal eyes. They shimmer with a violet tinge, their reflections revealing lies, terrors, and mortal hubris with a malevolent joy. The waters will steal the reflections of those who drink from them, and with a stolen form, they will make dark bargains with fouler things for freedom from their mirrored realm.
6. The singing of the Brinkwood starts slow and churning; the roots and the trees have voices hard to discern. If one hears the song, it will only grow louder, more rambunctious and profane; the leaves sing out every sin, the earth howls of every injustice, and the chorus on the wind will dizzy and lead a listener only to tables upon which dark bargains are conjured, in fear of never again leaving this wild place.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailes you might find in this location.

1. An alcove, deeply carved by nature and elder entities, exists within this patch of wood. It is impossible to see from the outside by those who are not bid to enter it, with scent masked by sickening spore and bilesome mollassus—a hiding place, a comforting place, easy to lose track of time within, but safe from intrusion.
2. Mortal folk are left bound by barbed wire to the trees, offerings to the entities within the woods, or merely left to die by the elements in a place where help is hard to come by. Starved and cut deep, they'll swear themselves to whatever cause might grant them another day of life beyond their painful conditions.
3. A vampire is dead here, impaled on a spear of jagged birch which runs through their hip and out their mouth. Their entrails are strewn about with mocking intent, like festive banners. Whoever did this did so quickly, and be they mortal folk they could be of worth to the revolution.
4. Arrows of ancient make embedded in the sap of an old, bloated tree. Their fletching is simple, their shafts are sturdy, and their arrowheads are barbed in silver and carved of ash wood. There are only a few here, left almost as if fate—or something desiring violence—wished you to find them.



5. There is a fox in the middle of the forest clearing; it looks upon you as if it knows your purpose, your game, your reason for being. It looks up at a mask-holder like a foolish old friend, offering through body language a desire to be followed by such folk into places safer, deeper, darker, and more of a purpose for the entity the mask represents. It will offer to buy away your mask and your debt in such a place, its words biting but true. It will offer far harsher terms than any fae.
6. A circle of mushrooms is present here, a gateway, a meeting place between the fae and the mortal world where terms of hospitality and arrangements must be honored. Stepping into such a place requires gifts, invitations, and knowledge of the seasons and compacts of fae politics. If properly observed, safe passage and good fortune can be had. Even the most minor of mistakes will lead to treachery and damnation.

# VILLAGES OF CARDENFELL

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## HOGSWICK

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### Exports: Meat, Animal Skins, Milk

Thinning pastures and carefully placed fences carve up Hogswick, the source of most of Cardenfell's meat.

*Scene: The stink of cow and pig dung. Unhappy looking livestock. Mud—gods, I hope it's mud—everywhere. Dirty peasants raking muck. Wealthy merchants and landlords with perfumed handkerchiefs clutched close to their noses. Wary bailiffs sneering and watching.*

### FACTIONS

#### Primary Faction: Diggers

#### Secondary Factions: Poisoners

The nascent Diggers movement has found some support in Hogswick, as some of the farmland once deemed unusable and infertile has, through the efforts and research of the Diggers, become workable once again. This reclaimed land is held “in common” for farmers pushed out by the landlords of Hogswick, and all are free to work Digger land and reap its harvest. This radicalism has placed them directly at odds with the landlords, ranchers, and Reformed Faith adherents of Hogswick, while at the same endearing them to the tenant farmers and peasants displaced by livestock fields and rancheries.

A few secretive Poisoners also lurk in Hogswick, as the blood and ichor of the slaughterhouses forms a potent alchemical flora zone which may provide medicines, dire poisons, and terrible sickness.

### NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPCs that live in this town.

1. **The Claviger** learned as a youth that if an animal is stressed before it dies, the meat tastes poorer. He's taken great efforts to ensure the livestock don't see their butchery coming. He wears a mask, poorly painted and made of papier-mache, when he visits the animal he wishes to kill; and then he bashes its brains out with a metal club. He would love to speak on the subject, but most find him off-putting and strange, and many spread rumors he's bashed a few poor sods who've spoken ill of him.

2. **The Burghermeister** rules over Hogswick from his hunting lodge, which looms in a nearby hill. He is a cruel miser, a huntsman who has grown strong and robust by his successes and tolerance for filth. He lords his power over the landlords and wealthy merchants in the village, taking gleeful delight in forcing them into indignity. He's never cared for those who enjoy wealth frivolously, and if he did not consider his subjects as mere chattel, this attribute could've been seen as favorable.
3. **The Carver** has been experimenting with new ways to perform butchery; it is a skill she perfected elsewhere, though her talent has only been acknowledged since moving to Hogswick. She knows how to peel a living creature alive, how to boil the skin off with a proper application of steam and thin razors. It brings her delight to see how many ways something can be cleaned and the tastes that come from proper application of her skill. She'll be a vampire someday, perhaps someday soon; her talents have not gone unnoticed, and many wonder what she could do to the humanoid form with her fancy cutlery.
4. **The Harvestmaster** is a stern old goat of a man, placed out here in Hogswick after an industrial fire killed his ability to both taste and smell. He hates the petty complaints of the merchants who tell him "you're lucky;" he hates the peasants who toil in the field who help support that idea; but mostly he hates living in a village. He desires so greatly to return to Drancaster, but he knows he'll never get the chance. Thus he toils, overseeing the thinning pastures, pig farms, and dung fuel with ever growing contempt.
5. **The Salumist** deserves more, or so she says to any passing coachman she attempts to hire. She's inherited a fine sausage business, and in truth she knows how to make sausage better than anyone on the isle—but she can't stand the stink of Hogswick. She knows she has wealth enough to leave, but **The Burghermeister** and the lord over him refuse her pleas to serve anywhere else on Cardenfell. No amount of perfume can prevent her from smelling hog's blood and pig feces when she opens her front door, and this brings her, daily, to tears.

6. **The Lickspittle** is a vampire, and he's become very aware he's been sent here as punishment for not being humble enough to his previous masters. **The Burghermeister** loves to throw bottles at him and sic the hounds on him, because **The Lickspittle** will always squirm and cringe and weep. A deep rage, the sort that throttles lovers and burns down orphanages, grows within the blackest cockles of his heart. Had he been made a ghoul, this would be different, but having been "spared" that fate, he is left with a deeper hunger for what he believes he is deserved.

## FEATURES / DISTRICTS

Six unique features or districts in this town.

1. **The Pastures** have seen better days; in ancient times, they were thoroughly flowered with sunflowers and daisies, looking like a glorious sunrise in the summer sun. Such beauty lives on now only in paintings, for **The Pastures** run thin, the earth hard, and with only deep burrowing tubers growing with any degree of reliability.
2. **The Field Housing** keeps the poor laborers carted up in stall-like bunk housing with notably less room than those used in the barns that house the livestock. The walls are thin, and loud noises and cold air drift in as easily as the myriad stench of **Hogswick**.
3. **The Long Drop** is built atop a muck heap, a tall scaffold of old wood which houses the local gallows. **The Burghermeister** thought it efficient to allow the pigs to feast on criminals executed here, simply cutting the noose rope and letting them drop nigh-on thirty feet to the stone and hungry mouths awaiting the corpflesh below.
4. **Hogswick Township** is what remains of a once fine settlement: houses of brick and wood, room to walk about, and small comforts that can now only be afforded by the landlords. Stone walls don't keep out the smell, but they do keep out the sights of the pastures and the swine.
5. **Merchant Row** runs the road into **Hogswick Township**, with either side of the street lined with painted signs and narrow buildings built atop the half-collapsed ruins of their forebearers. Fine crafts, mainly candles and various forms of meat or dairy preserves can be purchased here, albeit at great cost.



6. **The Hunting Lodge** on a nearby hill overlooks all of Hogswick and its pastures. It is a towering structure of blackened, ancient timbers and rough stones hewn into place. Protected by a tall iron wrought fence, one can easily view recent taxidermy projects lingering outside **The Burghermeister's** home, often being tended to by **The Lickspittle**.

## OBSTACLES

Environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. The animals have engaged in shrill cacophony, as though beckoned by some terrible maestro. They scream and howl, as if they are all now presently aware that they are to be put to slaughter. It is a chilling tone which raises the hairs on the back of the neck, and any farmer attempting to put the beasts at ease is pushed down and away, viewed complicit in their doom to come.
2. The abuses of station and privilege are hardly obfuscated here, as if the class divide between the poor, the rich, and the vampiric is openly encouraged. An accidental step in a puddle that stains the periphery of a merchant's boot sees them violently caning the peasant, which has the merchant held accountable for daring to inconvenience the vampire's view with such a vulgar display. Minor aggressions stoke feuds and hatred, and the poor are often broken for sake of appeasing their betters, clinging to selfless acts which end in brutality in order to protect the truly innocent.
3. The local bailiffs have begun enforcing the "stink law," which comes with heavy fines to those who are deemed unpalatable to the noses of authority. Surely this is **The Lickspittle's** handiwork, and certainly he's not thought that the powerful perfumes used by the merchants might also fall under this new law. Many torts and frivolous wastes of legal resources are sure to come of this, much to the rage of **The Burghermeister**.
4. A crowd gathers on the edge of Merchant Row, a shop on fire. Bailiffs guard the door, letting it burn and those within it perish. A bailiff shouts "Tainted meat!" as if that explains things. Some in the crowd cringe at the statement. The shrill howl of ghouls in the borderlands can be heard faintly behind the crackling fire, as if being drawn here from a great distance.

5. Some of the locals have a pallor to their flesh and a milkiness to their eyes, almost like cataracts. Herbalists and religious sorts know this as “The Cold-Eyed Curse,” an affliction of the mind where an individual detaches from humanity and from reality, viewing others as mere beasts who can be harmed with consequence. Life near such endless slaughter of animals—knowing oneself can also be taken at any time—leads to many more afflicted here in Hogswick than one can find comfortable.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this village.

1. Among the poor laborers here, there are many who dream of a better, kinder world. They do not believe themselves lucky enough to live to see it, but they strive everyday that it might be something the next generation can see. For too long, they have thought this can be achieved by being effective in their labors and by acting in kindness to those who hold them in bondage. They could be swayed to violent revolution if they can work past their conditioning.
2. A steady supply of excess meat could be requisitioned for the revolution if the proper bribes and friendships are made among the farmers and the merchants. Those who produce fine, artisan meat products often have much left over to spare. It usually goes to waste, burnt or thrown to the hogs in an act of cannibalism.
3. **The Lickspittle** is disenfranchised and hateful, often overstepping his bounds to the anger of **The Burghermeister**. Better, stoking the animosity between the pair could lead to a coup, and from that coup, weakness in authority which could be seized upon. It will, sadly, have a human cost.
4. With ample meat, cheese, and candles produced in Hogswick, there are many opportunities to poison or smuggle goods. Inspection agents are unlikely to carve apart a wheel of cheese or a candle when looking for contraband, especially if it appears sealed and well-made. The fine meats of Hogswick, especially those from notable shops, are likely to be excused by gourmands for having a “unique” taste, which is all the better to hide poisons in.

5. The poor of Hogswick are in need of champions to see them fed proper and defended from the cruelty of their fellow man. Their loyalty is easily won by any stranger who can stand up for them, even if they worry of a punishment to come when that stranger inevitably leaves.
6. **The Burghermeister**, and his many vampire huntsmen and bailiffs, are well known to leave Hogswick to go boar hunting when the weather permits it. With **The Lickspittle**, possessing only a skeleton crew to enforce order, this would be an ideal time to infiltrate The Hunting Lodge, assassinate lesser agents of the vampires, or perform any number of crimes. There is even a good chance that should The Burghermeister return and have such deeds reported to him, that he will blame and torment The Lickspittle for his ineptitude rather than actually attempt justice.

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## SHEPFORTH (ISLE)

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**Exports:** Meat, Wool

A loose assembly of homes built around communal grazing pastures. A rare bright spot in Cardenfell, the villagers survive through their monopoly on the rich wool of their flocks.

*Scene: Pastoral fields full of peacefully grazing sheep. Villagers suspicious of outsiders. Leaning homes of wood and cobblestone. The soft singing of birds. The scent of grass and wool. A skeleton in a gibbet at the gate, with the words "BAILIFFS KEEP OUT" scrawled underneath.*

### FACTIONS

**Primary Faction:** Witches

**Secondary Factions:** Diggers, Reavers

The folk of Shepforth are notoriously insular and suspicious of outsiders, a trait that is as much a liability to a budding revolution as it is a boon. They are often as quick to turn away potential revolutionaries as they are to viciously guard against the agents of the Crimson Crown. Nevertheless, some factions have gained some small measure of respect from the folk of Shepforth.

Medicine is notoriously difficult to get on Shepforth, and the Witchers do the isle a great service in helping the remote community stave off sickness and disease. The folk of Shepforth keep to old ways, and respect the craft of the Witchers. The Diggers have a somewhat frostier reception, as new ideas are seldom popular on the isle, but their efforts to increase agricultural yields on the stony shores of Shepforth have won them at least some grudging respect. The Reaver smugglers that use the caves beneath Shepforth to temporarily stash contraband or smuggling ships take a more direct route, buying the silence of Shepforth's natives with carefully negotiated and counted tribute.

## NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPCs that live in this town.

1. **The Shepherd** cares for her flock, and though she is a wrinkled fig of a woman whose eyes can barely see the blue of the sky, she maintains considerable power in the community. She speaks of the Duke like she knew of him when he was young and mortal, and of the Countess as though she was always a petulant child. She hums slowly when she speaks of the Baron. She is bold, but slow to act, and like any shepherd worth their salt, she has many a vicious dog to keep her flock safe and in line.
2. **The Ramsworn** is middle-aged but robust, with a beard thick enough to hide a wine bottle in and a smile flecked with gold and silver. He wears grey robes, well-knit by lovers from better days, and around his neck is a great torc of horn bones. He is bound to the spirit of the island, and despite his middling age, he fights with the strength of a half dozen men; particularly brutal when his power is being used to propel a mere knife.
3. **The Corvid** is a narrow-nosed and bulge-eyed peeker of a woman, built like some bloated arctic bird forced into humanoid form. She dresses in fine leathers and spins a simple club on the end of a leather thong. She asks questions, always probing, needing to know the who, the why, and the when, and saying that you should "never mind why I'm asking." Her nose rubbing and odd mannerisms are clearly coded messages that other villagers can easily take note of.

4. **The Gravedigger** has a hoarse laugh, like someone strangling a ferret. He's not a pickpocket, but he has all the mannerisms of a malevolent child who recently learned you can just take things from people. He's very open about his work: he digs holes in the earth and is unofficially charged with any headbashings required of him or his many fancy shovels. He looks forward to strangers, inventing stories about them based on what treasures he pulls from their corpses.
5. **The Dyer** moved here from Flaypool after a few merchant trips saw them understanding the true worth of Shepforth wool. The locals are "eclectic," and their general freedom compared to elsewhere on the archipelago is curious. They're not worried for their safety here, but the way their suggestions are occasionally denounced as being "not traditional" rankles them. More than a few expensive orders of dyes have gone missing from their house, as if the pigments for wool should come only from Shepforth Isle.
6. **The Inspector** was a bailiff once, but the bureaucracy that it took to be assigned to investigate Shepforth Isle took far longer than it ought to, and all vampirism faded from him by the time he'd been granted permission to board a vessel. Lethargic, exhausted, and unnerved, the Inspector believes there may be existential horrors at play on Shepforth. Though some empathy for mortality has crept back into his rough tenor, he is still an agent who seeks vampirism, station, and to protect capital by removing those he finds problematic from the situation at hand.

## FEATURES / DISTRICTS

Six unique features or districts for this town.

1. **The Cage** sits just outside of town, and those who know their metallurgy or manufacturing would easily notice this model of gibbet cage is a favorite of the Queen of Crimson herself. There is usually a body in it, something that will be buried once it ceases to serve a purpose, or bakes in the sun wrong and stinks up the edge of town. A sign, "BAILIFFS KEEP OUT," is laid at the edge of the metal bars.



2. **The Meeting Hall** is of antiquated design (though newly white-washed), resembling a facsimile of the ancestral lodges found near the Sisters upon Cardenfell. Old folk sit outside it smoking pipes and casting displeasing gazes across the town. They don't care for conversation, and if you're not of Shepforth, they'll bar entry with unkind words and threats of fisticuffs.
3. **The Grazing Pastures** run much of this island, surrounding the settlement and expanding towards the rocky cliffs. Sheep and goats graze at a leisurely pasture. Loyal and vicious hounds stalk between them, like sharks in a sea of wool. The livestock have an unpleasant habit of staring, making eye contact, always watching from every angle.
4. **The Barns** on the edge of town are seemingly seldom used, the dirt paths to their heavy doors overgrown with wild grass. The villagers seem to know when someone might be snooping around them, watching from their porches or peeking out from windows. The interiors are painted in heavy whites and lined with red-washed runes of some long forgotten faith.
5. **The Meadows** on the way into town are a beautiful cornucopia of wildflowers, dizzying in their colorful displays. Children from Shepforth frolic here on balmy days, and the occasional errant sheep gnaws calmly upon a stalk of sunflower. Burnt mounds of ash and stones dot the meadow, possibly sites of some festival.
6. **The Caves** bored into the back base of the island's cliffs are a place of strange, ancient rites. The smooth white stones of the beach could be confused for skulls by the craven or superstitious. A whispering voice bids the foolish to enter, to know love, to know unity. Light does not permeate this dark place easily.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Whispering locals speak every terrible thing they could assume about brigands from a glance. Bigoted and seeking to make their inhospitality palatable but noted, they will lie to one another, crafting a narrative of misgivings that prevent any headway or momentum with the folk of the isle.

2. The bleating of the sheep has a hypnotic quality; not mesmerism like the glance of a vampire, but a reverberation that radiates through the bones of those not acclimated to it. It loosens the grip and staggers the gait, slowing and disorienting those caught within the din.
3. In silhouettes, upon buttons and toggles, on the shadow of the moon at night, one cannot help but see in pareidolia the gnarled horns of a ram. There is a foreign oppression to Shepforth, as though a long forgotten deity of dark, strange places glares down upon this rock unceasingly. It lessens the morale of the faithful, and the words of those versed in scripture are treated as venomous by the locals.
4. The folk of Shepforth do not seem to suffer like those elsewhere on the Bloody Isles: they eat well, they sleep soundly, they keep most entities of vampiric power far from their shores. What need do they have for revolution or freedom? They'd just as soon as let the world rot into oblivion so long as it left them to their lonesome joys.
5. Voices of dissent are silenced by shunning, and those who continue to speak are inevitably tossed into the cage on the way into town. The townsfolk will cram as many as they can into the gibbet cage; they care not for the prisoner's comfort. Crimes will be read out to the imprisoned, followed by humiliations: being pelted with filth, stripped of wealth through the bars, and being left to the elements.
6. Something on your person has caught the eye of the locals, who will see you departed from it by hook or by crook. They'll start asking too many questions, shifting a stranger from a nobody to the toast of the town, stripping them of privacy and implicating them in all manner of crime until the time comes when *The Corvid* makes her judgments and life is taken for want of a bauble.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this village.

1. Isolationists at heart, the people of Shepforth could be swayed to assist in the revolution if properly supplicated and praised for their “traditionalist liberties,” which might sate their egos. So long as trouble is not brought easily to their doors, they might make a useful refuge for a proper rebellion.
2. The wool harvested from Shepforth breathes easily and its comfort is borderline obscene. Outfitting a revolution in uniforms from this resource could see them cool in the summer, warm in the winter, and unified in dress and purpose.
3. Glittering treasures are accumulated by **The Gravedigger** and **The Corvid**, such to the point that they have little in the way of accounting for what they’ve pilfered over the years. If one can recover such goods, they’re probably worth some money to grieving families or to a fence.
4. The Inspector knows well the inside operations of vampirism and has a level of disillusionment with the predatory bureaucracy and culture of favors which has prevented him from his job. Reintroducing him to the many unfair cruelties of the **Crimson Crown**, to the backroom dealings that have seen him brought low, could flip him as an asset to the cause.
5. The Old Faith has roots here, albeit performative. The locals will just as soon stone a Reformed Faith preacher as they would any heretic, but to those who know the Old Faiths, they’ll offer small comforts and lip service. It is not much, but it could be enough to save religious items or those seeking to flee the Reformed Faith’s agents.
6. The jawbone of a ram is kept enshrined in the barn, ensorcelled with dread magic and scrimshawed with strange red markings. **The Ramsworn** presses it to his lips each night; it directs him, it gives him purpose. It is clearly a magical weapon of some sort, and the few who know its true origins can speak of it cutting deeper than any blade or mechanism, as if it were driven through an enemy by the hands of an enraged deity.

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## FLETCHGROVE

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### Exports: Flax, Wheat

Formerly a village that exported yew and ashwood bows and arrows. With the ban on bowyers and fletchers alike, the struggling village turned to growing flax and wheat.

*Scene: Fields of gently swaying flax and wheat. Grim-faced peasant laborers. Strange symbols carved into wooden posts, whispers in the night, hidden caches. Occasional guardsmen patrols.*

### FACTIONS

#### Primary Faction: Fletchers

The Fletchers were forced to all but abandon Fletchgrove during the initial conquest of Orslae, but peace has bred complacency in the vampire overseers of this backwater village, and along the edges of the forests near Fletchgrove, rumors of Fletcher camps persist. Feelings in the village are mixed on the Fletchers. Some blame the former bowyers and archers for old wounds, while others remember the dignity and prosperity the craft once brought to their village. Rumors persist that every family in Fletchgrove still has their ancestral longbow tucked away, hidden under floorboards or in abandoned grain silos, waiting for the right moment to drive ashwood into the hearts of their oppressors.

### NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPCs that live in this town.

1. **The Laborer's Foreman** suffers thanklessly for his people, for he must serve the vampires loyally lest they take more from this tiny village. He seeks compromises that come at too heavy a cost, always acquiescing to those in power for fear of what more they might take. He hates himself for this, because no matter how much he tries to convince himself he is a fair man who loves his people, he is always the one to deliver them ill-tidings.

2. **The Thresher** enjoys toiling in the fields so much so that it is clearly unhealthy. Sun up to the early morning twilight he lingers among the wheat, slashing about with his scythe, tilling the earth, humming strange little songs. He found a red bandana in the dirt here several months ago, and that's what has seen this change in attitude. No one has complained; he is very productive after all, but in his heart boils a twisted urge to murder many and water his wheat with blood. The idea of vampires stealing away blood has caused him to pause such plans. He needs to consider how to deal with them before he can murder in earnest.
3. **The Peeker** is a hobbled old road warden turned bailiff, essentially retired and left to her own devices on the edge of Fletchgrove. Enforcing the bowyer ban is hardly an issue, so she mostly gets herself involved in idle gossip. Once something has caught her interest, she'll stalk it and pursue it like a starved cat after a fat rat. She has many friends among coachmen and bailiffs to whom she'd gossip about any potential ne'er-do-wells so as to appear interesting.
4. **The Anthropologist** from the Crimson Crown has come to Fletchgrove to open old wounds and humiliate its people, as well as to pen a text about adventuring in a backwater colonial outpost. They want to know everything about bows and fletching, how it feels to be mere farmers now, and about the strange signs and sounds of small villages like this one. They are pompous, insufferable, and utterly unqualified to write a book.
5. **The Forester** tends to the edge of the forest beyond the fields, distant woods that ripple like a cast off mote of the Brinkwood's shaded boughs. None relish her charge, for each week when she comes into the village proper for her supplies, she is of a deathly pallor and some new scar upon her flesh. She is a soul in isolation, seldom speaking, having forgotten how to form a kind word or to accept such things from others. They sound too much like the whispers upon an evening breeze for her comfort.



6. **The Heir of Nothing** is the town fool, a drunk kept alive by the mockery of the Lords of Cardenfell, a claim he'll scream to the heavens but none will ever believe. He is but one in a long line of those who are an heir to nothing, a scion of bowyers and fletchers, a dull arrow in a legacy of archers. In truth, he is only alive for the importance of his line, noted in some folktale of slaying some dread entity in a dire time. Best to keep him alive so destiny might achieve its purpose, and better still to keep his line impotent and weak, in case that fiend he is to slay is meant to represent a vampire.

## FEATURES / DISTRICTS

Six unique features or districts in this town.

1. **The Old Fletcher's Workshop** was burnt down ages ago, and living in the foundation of the wreckage is **The Heir of Nothing**, who waddles in filth, drunk and screaming at all hours of the day. He says the place is haunted, that he's haunted, that the whole town is haunted for what they did here. It is a blight upon the town to look at, and why the vampires let it remain, let alone allow the fool to occupy it, is a mystery the locals don't care to investigate.
2. **The Sallow Fields** grow a sickly jaundiced wheat, and though maintained by all who labor in Fletchgrove, it is **The Thresher** who is granted dominion over the sickliest looking acres of earth here. The wheat tastes all the same—perhaps a bit rich in iron if one consumes too much of it—but regardless it is unpalatable to look at.
3. **The Border Marks** lay upon the edge of each farm, the road into Fletchgrove, and even towards The Encroachment of the Brink, which has subsumed some of the painted stones. The color of the paint establishes what purpose the land within is meant for, though time and weather has seen the methodology flawed. Still, it is used to settle zoning disputes and claims of ownership.

4. **The Roadhouse** is popular with visiting bailiffs and the occasional coachman who has found their way this far afield of civilization. Though seldom receiving a true brew of vintage, the locals make a decent drink of fermented wheat that goes down smooth and has a warmth to it. Horses are free to graze to their contentment, and those running the establishment are as kind as they are unintrusive, towing that thin line between cowardice and professionalism.
5. **The Quiet Farms** on the edge of the road into Fletchgrove are occupied by dreary farmers who tend to their flax and wheat, daring not to make a fuss, let alone a noise. In the evening, they can be observed listening to something upon the breeze; it can be hard to tell if it is what they hear or the chill of the meager wind which brings a rattle to their bones.
6. **The Encroachment of the Brink** is far from the village, left in the care of **The Forester** to see it kept from spreading beyond the borderlands. It is a darkened copse of bleak boughs and jagged creeper vines, hidden behind a treeline one could easily confuse for a cultivated grove. Strange things lurk within, entities the Brinkwood cast out or which escaped to form their own dark pacts with mortals. The Forester keeps a home up on a hill overlooking the Encroachment, a pitiful cabin of conquered lumber.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Bodies have been found strewn about **The Sallow Fields**, empty of blood, tattered and cut apart, yet laid in such a way that each piece is only an inch or so from where it ought to be. **The Laborer's Foreman** believes it to be the work of the vampires, and is trying to waylay the fears and discontent of the people who think it may be a killer in their own ranks, or something that slipped from the Brinkwood.
2. There is a disquieted presence to Fletchgrove, as though the village itself knows its purpose has been perverted by outside influences. It is hard to get comfortable in the village proper; conversations seem hushed so as to cause confusion, and the creaking of bent wood seems louder than it ought to, as if the land itself misses the very concept of archery.

3. **The Forester** has heard whispers of a revolution, but she knows nothing of the masks, and any truth about them will likely invoke past traumas to fruition. **The Thresher** knows nothing about a revolution, but desires to know everything about the masks. If knowledge of both subjects reaches either of them, it will surely reach **The Pecker**, who will then certainly make things known to any of her former associates in oppression.
4. A visiting bailiff has come to town to ensure the ban on bowyers and fletchers is still in effect, claiming to **The Pecker** that she had forgotten to send a report when last called in. Now that another bailiff is here, they're going to make sure everything in town is as it "should be," and enforce any violence they see fit upon the populace that even **The Pecker** wouldn't think to do.
5. Servants of the local lord have stopped at the nearby Roadhouse and sighted near **The Encroachment of the Brink**. They're following up on a lead and they're taking their time to do so. It won't be long now before they kill a few locals to feed their hunger. They know they can get away with it too.
6. Heavy rain turns the fields into muddy steppes and makes travel utterly unpleasant. Rains near **Fletchgrove** have a habit of staying on for days, coming down as a mist when the grounds would otherwise flood, and then pouring in sheets just as soon as there's a chance for travellers to escape.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this village.

1. **The Forester** is reluctant to bring it up, but she found arrows on an old stump within the **Encroachment** the other day, and this is not the first time either. The arrows are of sublime craftsmanship and otherworldly sharpness. She suspects it the work of some vile creature, but it could just as easily be something planted by spies seeking to see **Fletchgrove** suffer further oppression for this breaking of the ban.
2. **The Heir of Nothing** has been screaming in his sleep about "the dread fang" being nascent. No one believes him of course; he's always drunk and has long been subjected to enough cruelty to make him a mockery to his fellow villagers. He seems deadly serious though, if asked about it. He doesn't know what it is, but he knows he has to kill it; he always knows he doesn't know how to kill it and whatever it is, it must die by an arrow to the throat.

3. The farmers in Fletchgrove are exhausted in their work, such that anyone able to lend a hand can easily win their thankful hospitality. Friendship, once won, will make them feel comfortable speaking of how the town itself seems to dislike what it has become, a feeling they can easily sense once they step out beyond The Border Marks.
4. **The Pecker** is a nuisance at best, only truly a threat due to her correspondence and contacts elsewhere on the isle. Finding a way to eliminate her ability to contact these sources would see Fletchgrove grow increasingly isolated from the affairs of the Lords of Cardenfell, better allowing it to serve as a base of operations.
5. The Encroachment of the Brink is likely home to entities who know the masks worn by brigands and the entities who created them. Such patrons may even be able to manifest within The Encroachment, albeit with a strange cruelty to them accentuated by their distance from the woods proper. Certainly it is safer for a revolutionary to hide out here, as only **The Forester** proper enters this copse, though what she'd think of trespassers within is anyone's guess.
6. **The Laborer's Foreman** is slowly but surely losing his grip on the people of Fletchgrove, and he is so consumed with worry he might be manipulated to turn heel upon them and to better serve the vampires. He is vulnerable, and if properly assuaged, he could just as easily be flipped to win over his people and serve the revolution.

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## FLAYPOOL

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### Exports: Textiles and Linens

Great vats of dye litter the village of Flaypool, giving off a terrible acrid stink and staining the skin and clothing of its villagers.

*Scene: Terrible, acrid stink. Vivid colors everywhere, staining dirt, homes, clothing and people. Bubbling vats of dye, emerald green, shining crimson, deep azure blue. Goggles and thick, ragged clothing. Bored guardsmen and the occasional smuggler. Foul-tasting meat.*

## FACTIONS

### Primary Faction: Guilders

### Secondary Factions: Reavers, Poisoners

The great guildhall of Flaypool is a sight to behold, draped in multi-colored fabrics and stained with a dazzling array of dyes. It is a testament to the enduring strength of the Dyer's Guild, though even that strength is not infallible. Long has Flaypool stood on the fringes of vampiric control, with the distant **Master in Emerald** all but abandoning the village to the Reavers and Guilders that run its day to day affairs. Still, grisly deeds and abuses by the vampires' agents build contempt for a Guild that is unwilling to protect all its members, and the Guilders must either grow in militancy or crumble into complacency, co-optation, and destruction.

The **Azure Smugglers** are Reavers to their core, and will die long before they give an inch of ground back to the vampires or their powdermen accomplices. But small-scale theft and smuggling will not win the day, and the Azure must aim beyond selfish goals and self-preservation if they are to endure.

## NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPCs that live in this town.

1. **The Captain of the Guard** has long tried to bring proper order to Flaypool, but has recently succumbed to the fruitlessness of the task. Addicted to laudanum and bored beyond dreaming, he lingers in near catatonia at his post. If given the chance to impose order upon a criminal element in town, he'd make an easy asset to manipulate, provided he was given reason to believe there was a chance "true justice" would be done.
2. **Old Greenteeth** is not old, and in truth it is her gums that are green—not her teeth. She made an enemy of **The Master in Emerald** and was tossed in a vat of boiling green dye which,



unbeknownst to both parties at the time, was only at a tepid heat due to lucky scheduling. She survived, albeit she has had a guttural cough ever since that day. The locals think her some bog hag when she is not laden with cloaks and goggles. She wishes to murder The Master and flee Cardenfell; noble aspirations, but she has little care for her fellow mortal.

3. **The Azure Smugglers** wear tattered cloaks of blue and fine welding masks over their faces. They're always looking for a useful criminal to help them smuggle goods, doubly so if that criminal can prove themselves not easily expendable. They had a poor run-in with ghouls a few months prior near The Stone Tongues, and will grant kindness to those who enjoy butchering such wretches, or have information on who runs the garrison at the trade fortress. Their motives are mercantile, skewed heavily by desires for personal vengeance and safety.
4. **The Master in Emerald** rules over Flaypool, and he has long grown accustomed to leaving the town to its criminal nature. None dare challenge him when he comes to steal away young adults and drain them empty; his mesmerism makes all parties "willing." He wears only the most garish shades of green, claiming it to be the color of intelligence, something his underlings would understand were they "born with the correct skull shape."
5. **Bonethrower** is the unluckiest gambler in Flaypool, alive only because he has considerable skill in dismembering those who come for their winnings. A local tough, he truly just wishes to properly win a game or two, earn some respect, and maybe see that the rumors of him beating a bailiff to death with a severed arm is not challenged.
6. **The Corrupt Patrolman** is something of a misnomer, as almost all guards in Flaypool are corrupt on a notable level. This one however puts them to shame. A grotesque sleaze of a vampire, he enjoys getting involved so he can extort, bribe, and generally upset the balance of power in the village. His reasonings may have to do with boredom or a general hatred for his fellows; he'll lie about whatever it is he's doing if asked, then ticket the one asking him for getting in the way of his duties.

## FEATURES / DISTRICTS

Six unique features or districts in this town.

1. **The Vats** occupy the most space in Flaypool: great metal vessels crafted by the finest metalworkers in Drancaster and Stamleigh, left in ill-repair and crudely patched up for the past few decades in lieu of replacement. Various colors bubble up thickly in the vats, their smoke choking the air, occasionally dribbling through busted rivets.
2. **The Bannerfold** is stained by runoff pigments from the Vats, tarnished more than any other district due to the desire for dying in the national colors of the mainland. The homes look dappled by bloodshed, and the air is miasmatic—thick with red that chokes and dizzies those who breathe it.
3. **The Dripmarket**, thusly named for having been constructed under the drying lines of recently dyed fabrics. On cloudless days, it is a place of shade, with any humidity caught upon the hanging cloth and dripping down in a multi-colored rain. Merchants and smugglers ply their trade here, speaking in obtuse cant to help obscure their dealings.
4. **The Emerald Court**, a luxurious manor a way down the road from Flaypool proper, is where **The Master** makes his home. Vaunted architecture, painted in a miserable pea green and consumed by ivy coating the poorly painted stone, it looks almost in mockery of something found in the courts of the Countess. Unkempt gardens and a cultivated grove further separate it from Flaypool itself, and often a half-naked victim can be found stumbling out through the grove.
5. **The Old Jail** has long since turned into a clubhouse for the local bailiffs, who spend their time here playing games of dice and occasionally bringing in “criminals” to feed upon out of sheer boredom and unrestrained abuse of authority.
6. **The Backdraft** is by virtue of sloping ground and wind patterns, where the bitter fumes of The Vats inevitably end up, pooling in a miasmatic fog that is viewed as scintillating from above, but of ruddy muddled browns from within. Combat that ensues near the backdraft often ends when one or both parties topple into the cloud, choking in agony, never to be seen again. The occasional well-garbed bonepicker makes a decent score when scavenging within.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. A desire for law and order will occasionally see the local guardsmen acting with trumped up authority and a casual capacity for violence. Most still know better than to beat down a local during such time, as this will stoke reprisals when sloth inevitably retakes authority, but foreigners, be they merchant or mendicant, are open season for such viciousness.
2. Combat near the Vats always runs the risk of being scalded by boiling, acrid dyes, which stain whatever flesh they do not boil off in such hostile situations. Security which works that area, be they criminals or guardsmen, know this risk well and will use it to their advantage.
3. Clouds of blinding mist choke and dazzle those who do not wear goggles or thick scarves over their mouths. Opportunistic enemies will make use of this miasma to mislead, escape, avoid, or ambush outsiders. Some might even attempt to lead prey through the mists and toppling down into The Backdraft.
4. Flaypool is run ragged with all manner of criminality who exist in a cautious position of power; any knowledge of a revolution might lead to undesired heat which might upset their freedom. Outsiders are already considered prey, ripe for the mugging, but those who might bring attention from the powers that be risk being made a violent example of.
5. Escaped prey from the Emerald Court always make a commotion when they stumble back into Flaypool; people know them, and yet they are unwilling to aid them for fear of earning The Master's disapproval. A screaming, half-naked victim being ignored by friends and family always draws attention, and cuts the morale of the populace's already hardened hearts.
6. Ghouls occasionally congregate in the miasmatic cloud of The Backdraft, stained brown and all manner of other colors as they feast upon the corpses of the unlucky. When food runs scarce, they will slither their way into the Dripmarket, butchering and ripping at unfortunate workers, dragging them back into the mists with rending claws.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid allies you might find in this village.

1. The red dye which flows sluggishly down The Bannerfold has a consistency and quality like blood. It stains like blood, it smells rich of iron, but it most certainly does not taste like blood. One could, in theory, attempt to counterfeit drams of blood sterling with it; perhaps drive a vampire to think they're being poisoned, or to deny them sustenance and make them seem undone by their masters.
2. Those who work with dyes in Flaypool are irrevocably stained. Though years of such work is the most common explanation, the potency of a dye is also of note. Properly bottled, a blinding bomb of bright colors could be constructed, one that would itch the skin raw, stain it gaudily, blind the eyes, and utterly humiliate the victim.
3. Flaypool is a hive of thieves, corrupt guards, smuggler scum, and other such assorted villainy, often aimless in their violence. Everyone in Flaypool needs something: the bailiffs need their tithing and often revert to mortality given how rarely they receive it; the smugglers need the work; and the rest of those with cruel intent need victims to extort. It would not be hard to engineer violence by properly bribing, promising, and pitting the factions that be against one another. They would not be honest revolutionaries, but they would be pragmatic ones.
4. Though few among the vampiric ranks would admit it to a mortal, there is an adage about Flaypool: if you die here, you deserve it. Some have taken this to mean the vampires accept the predations of criminality upon all manner of being here, or that anyone who needs to work and feed in Flaypool must have earned the ire of their masters. It is far more likely though, that it has to do with how easy it is to disguise a body here, with the dyes removing implications of vampirism upon a corpse. This must have some advantage.
5. Escapees and families who have suffered under The Master in Emerald fear his gaslighting gaze and mesmerizing powers. They could easily be positioned to aid or join up with any outfit seeking to kill that vampire or prevent others from falling under a similar fate. Though one must be wary of such victims being deeply mesmerized sleeper agents.



6. Flaypool is not where you go when you want to dress nice, but it is where you can easily find a new look. Old clothes are made new again by a quick dye job and careful stitchery, basic skills that anyone villager knows how to do. There are seldom quicker ways to change one's appearance.

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## CLIFFSBLACK (ISLE)

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### Exports: Saltpeter

A small village, near to a series of caves, that has been completely enveloped in the mining of saltpeter.

*Scene: Bat wings fluttering overhead, the rushing sound of wind. Barrels of chalky white saltpeter; hastily assembled, ramshackle buildings; black cliffs, with a looming, winding series of ladders and platforms leading up to the caves.*

### FACTIONS

Primary Faction: Stokers

Secondary Factions: Prayers, Sappers

Cliffsblack is a powderkeg, literally and metaphorically. The miners and laborers of the island chafe under the Bitter Lord's quotas, and the Stokers are poised to light the resentments of the people into a conflagration that might very well consume the entire island. In hidden caves, Prayers gather for secret masses, preaching the death of tyranny while trying to ameliorate the worst of the people's suffering. Rumors hold that secret tunnels crisscross the island's underworks, dug by Sappers slowly, painstakingly towards the Bitter Lord's Chateau. It remains to be seen if the rebellion will help light the match, or if perhaps a controlled burn is in order.

### NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPCs that live in this town.

1. **The Longshoreman** has worked Cliffsblack alongside many a port on the archipelago, and long has he been stranded on this rock, damned to ferry saltpeter back and forth. He hates with every fiber of his being the work he does. He saw his world go down in cannonfire when he was young. He hopes someday that Cliffsblack will run dry of saltpeter and that the vampires who brought him low will die in fire and agony.



2. **The Bomber** has been hiding away bits of saltpeter and quicklime, so tormented she is by **The Bitter Lord** of the isle. She labors and spurns the vampire's advances as best she can, but she knows her time is coming. She can refuse him only once more before he ceases flirtations and becomes viler still. She'll liberate the island then, for a moment at the least. It'll only cost her life and that of anyone around her when she pulls a ripcord.
3. **The Bitter Lord** did not want this island; he was promised paradise by his betters on the mainland. He did not consider how little he was loved by them, how much of a burden his antics were. He is sickened by the scent of the sea and the rough folk he rules over. He seeks to find a bride here to spite his parents, in the vain hope it might see them relocate him before further embarrassment is brought upon their home.
4. **The Drunks** have taken advantage of their lord's desire for quotas to be met, drinking themselves into oblivion whenever they've filled enough barrels with chalky white saltpeter. They hear things, but they don't want anyone to ruin their fun. Many knew life elsewhere on Cardenfell before they ended up here, and the alcohol numbs their scars as much as it makes the isolation bearable.
5. **The Patriot** was placed here by the Crimson Crown, a mortal agent in search of sedition. A rakish young scoundrel, he falls easily into intolerable screeds of jingoistic loyalty, which generally sees him spit upon by **The Drunks** and mocked by anyone else. He is eager to prove his worth to **The Bitter Lord** and any other noble vampire, believing that should he catch traitors to the regime, he will be rewarded and made a peer.
6. **The Ancient Mariner** is a crinkled old husk, possibly of the Saltfolk, but aged to such a point that their origins are utterly obscured. They know every dark tale of what lurks down in the drink and bare the scrimshaw upon their flesh to show it to anyone curious. They hear whispers from the tides and mutter on about duppys and the ghosts of whales seeking blood to replace the oil pilfered from their bodies.

## FEATURES / DISTRICTS

Six unique features or districts in this town.

1. **The Hollows** are caves that have been mined thoroughly of saltpeter, enough that they run like deep hollows, which will likely see the isle collapse in a few decades when taken in tandem with the erosion from the sea. New laborers, often prisoners, who are brought to the isle make their homes here until they have pay enough to move into the Ramshackles or drink themselves to oblivion in **The Dirty Anchor**.
2. The ocean beneath is often referred to as **The Killing Drink** by those who dwell on Cliffsblack, for it is a brackish swill from the detritus of the mining operation. Dead fish float up from it on the daily, and tall tales speak of true horrors unknowable to all but those who dwell beneath the waves that lurk deep below it all.
3. **The Dirty Anchor** had a proper name once; the sign, however, has been caked with enough gull feces that all one can see is an anchor embossment. It is the drinking hole for the workers, a place where they can rouse their morale, fill themselves with rotgut, and pass out all over the floor before waking up to toil again the next day.
4. **The New Harvests** are how **The Bitter Lord** refers to the latest mines put into operation; they're undercutting the isle and might see a shelf of it collapse into the sea, but they are also ripe with saltpeter. The mines themselves will soon tunnel beneath **The Bitter Lord's Chateau**, a failure in planning by the rank amateur that he dares not speak aloud.
5. **The Ramshackles** are bolted into the side of the island, stacked atop one another and accessible mainly by ladders of rusty iron. Those who live long enough on Cliffsblack eventually have a home here, albeit a cramped and dingy one that mildews slickly and rots due to the frequent battering of the sea.
6. **The Bitter Lord's Chateau** sits atop the isle, a reclaimed lighthouse now expanded upon for sake of ostentation. The tower, which once served a purpose, is now a private study where the foolish fop plots out how to be asked to leave Cardenfell and return to the luxuries of the mainland.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Haphazard construction has seen more than a few of the Ramshackle hovels crash down upon the docks and ratways, killing whoever is inside and causing further navigational woes to those working the island.
2. Sharp rocks jut out from The Killing Drink, slick with wet and gashing any flesh that touch them with almost cruel intention. The waves seem to knock people and things upon the rocks, ensuring anyone who falls into the sea is further injured and battered about.
3. Storms roll across Cliffsblack worse than elsewhere, as if the sea seeks to topple the isle and drag all who dwell upon it down beneath the waves. The walkways become wind tunnels, a sickly dampness ready to send any unfortunate soul still out and toiling to their doom.
4. The Bitter Lord has seldom had to force his hand upon Cliffsblack, but a visit from agents of the Lords of Cardenfell saw him fearful of being usurped in a territory grab. Thus came the cruelest display of power the young vampire could conceive. Gibbet cages hung low enough to see a body all but drown with the tides, lowered link by link upon a chain until the mortal flesh began bloating and being consumed by ocean life. So long as the occasional undesirable dies such a death, The Bitter Lord will be seen capable of his charge.
5. Songs upon the water ensorcell the sober and the unwitting, daring them to perform acts of tribute and supplication to entities unseen beneath the waves. Few can be certain what it is they say, and in truth, The Bitter Lord and his servants are curious if the song itself is what drives the folk here to drink so deeply. It is an intoxicating spell of hopelessness that can be numbed when fluid is imbibed, be it salt water or rotgut.
6. Bitter ambitions plague many upon Cliffsblack; regrets color their decisions and often force them to act in ways that would endanger them elsewhere on Cardenfell. Everyone has a gripe and a grudge on some level, and newcomers will be judged quickly on their alliances and how they can be leveraged.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this village.

1. **The Patriot** is easily deluded and mislead, and if the weakness of **The Bitter Lord** were made obvious, he'd seek to have him replaced or assassinated for bringing shame upon the Crimson Crown. He'd just need reason to think the brigands to be fellow patriots, and to feel as though his actions could be justified in cipher-written reports he ships out with tithings of saltpeter.
2. The rotgut consumed here in such large quantities has made the blood of the workers unpalatable to **The Bitter Lord**, such that there might be reason to think this specific brew might be effective against all vampires rather than just ones with gentle predilections. Perhaps the song upon the sea plays a role, or maybe the brackish water of **The Killing Drink** is used to make a supply last longer.
3. Smugglers operate out of **Cliffsblack** with relative ease; so long as their barrels display markings for saltpeter, they are seldom checked by **The Bitter Lord's** authorities. Securing an alliance with smugglers here could help establish a base of operations, and the **Hollows** surely have a few crevices in which supplies could be squirreled away.
4. **The Bomber** recognizes those who could assist her as an asset, but she is radicalized and broken in morale to the point that innocent bystanders are of no concern. She could make a staunch ally if she had any hope, though were she to find a mask, there is no telling what dark bargains she would make to kill those who would prey upon her.
5. Accidents happen here on **Cliffsblack**, such that none can be surprised when life is lost, vampiric or otherwise. News does not travel quickly from here, and even then it is heavily biased and often from sources none on the greater **Cardenfell** island truly care for. **Cliffsblack** would be an ideal spot to stage an assassination.
6. Whatever it is that lurks beneath the waves seems to hold a special hatred for what is being done to the island as well as those who live upon it. Mask-bearers well versed in conversing with the fae, as well as **Saltfolk**, might be able to discern the entity's identity and purpose and make an ally of it against the vampires.

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## THE SISTERS

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The Sisters are the collective appellation given to the mines of Cardenfell, carved from the hills, mountains, and quarries that dot the county.

### OLDLEIGH

**Exports:** Silver, Copper

The largest of the Sisters, Oldleigh is a mining company town stretching over networks of mined-out hill and dale. Exports of silver and copper flow into the coffers of the Vampire Lords.

*Scene: Old, worn down company buildings and leaning bunkhouses. Vast stretches of tents. The constant sound of picks, the shrill call of the work whistle. Watchful guards in towers. Counting houses carefully tracking the flow of silver and copper.*

### FLINFORD

**Exports:** Coal

A coal-mining village. Exports coal used to make steel and heat the homes of many throughout the Bloody Isles.

*Scene: Dirty, soot-caked chimneys. Faces covered in soot; masks of fabric and rags permanently over mouths. The sound of arguing, children crying. Occasional raucous laughter from a tavern.*

### IRONHOLME

**Exports:** Iron

Home to an old, ancient mine of iron, newly deepened and widened, it stretches into the very ground itself.

*Scene: Cramped, enclosed spaces. Hodge-podge construction, things built on top of one another. The tinny sound of pick striking earth and metal. Watchful bailiffs, on the lookout for any wayward iron.*



## FACTIONS

**Primary Faction:** Sappers

**Secondary Factions:** Prayers, Witchers

The Sisters are home to the Sappers, who take into their ranks the disenfranchised and wrathful miners and laborers who are ready to turn pick and axe towards their oppressors. The Sappers are hunted by dramcoats and the Foreman's goons alike, but still they congregate in secret meeting halls, dug into the very stone of the Sisters. Likewise, the Sisters are isolated enough from the northern vampires that the Prayers and Witchers can hide almost in plain sight. Gods older than any vampire icon hold sway in the deep darkness of the Sister's pits, and prayer and worship for solidarity, a lucky strike, or to stave off disaster are made in hidden shrine alcoves. The hacking cough and miner's lung plague workers, and the Witchers offer what remedies they can, but as quotas rise and medicine runs low, they cannot stave off disaster and death for long.

## NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPCs that live in this town.

1. **The Chief Foreman** oversees all mining operations in the Sisters; a loanfang at the best of times, he's been left to revert back to his humanity on multiple occasions so as to ensure his loyalty and desperation. He is strained by his withdrawals and the stress of managing three settlements and their many mines. He desires a fix, to be respected, and for the burden of years to fade back into numbness.
2. **"Deep Delver"** is a thief, and if anyone knew who he truly was, he'd have been strung up by now. He wears a mask of muddled cloth over his head, but his smile is rakish and proud. He robs the mines, makes off with shiny things, hides them and places them in blameful spots. Some think him a demon or possibly a grimalkin out of faerie tales.
3. **The Porter** and her three nephews haul goods between the Sisters, sharpening knives, repairing tools, and ensuring the settlements are properly attended to, with regards to knowing what orders and supplies are needed. They've begun talking to the servants for lords of the Veins, cutting deals that benefit the Sisters but undercuts the Lords of Cardenfell as a whole.

4. An upstart vampire, freshly titled and given dominion in the Sisters, seeks to expand their holdings and impress the Lords of Cardenfell so she might posture herself a worthy vassal who might take the neighboring Veins. Her ambitions, bold as they are, go unnoticed, and she seeks to perform an act of utter hubris rather than continue on as she does.
5. **The Old Prospector** has the respect of most in the Sisters, for he can taste on his tongue when a vein is running dry. Metal has a smell to him even when it's sixty feet below the dirt. He's worried about border wars and skirmishes, riddles the nose with the scent of "wrong iron." He'd have been turned by now if not for concern that he'd lose the scent from the transfiguration, a fact he's been made aware of and is bitter for knowing.
6. **The Cook** goes between the Sisters, working wherever the most mouths need to be fed. Originally from The Marshlands, they know how to make a lot out of a little, and make it filling and tasty to boot. They make a decent living, but they exist in terror of ghouls for something witnessed in The Marshlands that they only murmur about when drunk and weepy.

### FEATURES / DISTRICTS

Six unique features or districts in these towns.

1. The mess halls of the Sisters are ramshackle affairs, constructed nearest to the quarry or mine on a seasonal basis. They provide little warmth during times of rain or cold, being built only to ensure that workers have little respite or time away from their labors. The scent of stewing meat and earthy tubers is common, often thick enough to tarnish the errant timbers of the building.
2. The slurry, the run-off, is to be found in every town in the Sisters, flooding ditches and causing the stink of old abandoned earth to permeate the area. Falling into the slurry is a death sentence equivalent to being left alone in quicksand. Undesirables unfit to toil in the mines are often disposed of here, ingloriously swallowed up.

3. The upper workway of a quarry or mine are occupied by tents and guard posts surrounding the precious resources to be found within. Workers will travel between towns and live apart from society here, becoming more isolated and insular, driven by their masters to labor and only know of home for a few days a year.
4. The ancestral lodges of the folk in the Sisters sit atop hills as they have since long before the Crimson Crown conquered this land. Any who can claim birthright in the Sisters can dwell within such a lodge and be treated to communal food, meager as they may be. Tapestries depicting hunts of old still hang in each hall, deemed petty art for petty people rather than the tales of ancient folk that they are.
5. The villages of the Sisters are often smaller than the worksites they serve. The families of those who work the earth, be it in the mines or in the quarries, exist in these small settlements. They till the land as best they can, caring for hogs and steer to feed the workers. The landlords take from them what blood they need, unwilling to waste a worker if they can help it.
6. A Master's Hall exists within each village, a fortified manse for the landlord in charge, where the resources are stored until such a time comes for tithing and transportation elsewhere on the island. Soldiers are garrisoned here, though they are often complacent and more often mortal for ease of control.

### OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Tremors and sinkholes run rampant through the territory, punishment for stealing too much from the depths of the earth. Vessels are shattered when the earth shakes, mines collapse, stones fall and crush laborers, and the lash of the landlord will come cracking if productivity is not resumed immediately once such calamity ceases.
2. Tommyknockers bedraggle operations deep into the earth, cracking support timbers and causing cave-ins. Those who know of them can prepare, flee before the collapses come, but such folk are of older generations, and the newer laborers are ordered to delve deeper past once established boundaries. Even after a collapse, an unspent vein will be mined again in time.

3. As elsewhere in Cardenfell, the earth here is said to be haunted. The bones of giants, or other things from ancient times, linger within the soils, deeper down than mortal folk were meant to delve. Spirits rise from time to time: black hounds upon the hills; strange lights; inhuman shades that cry out in tongues no longer spoken or honored.
4. If a mine is fully spent, it must be collapsed, not merely shuttered. Beyond the spirits of the earth, tommyknockers, and tremor-makers, are darker things that dwell. Old legends tell of a mythic underworld, of pacts made with devils far crueler than any vampire of the Crimson Crown. Old maid's tales, but horned kings can be found in the elder lodge tapestries, feasting on far worse than mere mortal blood. Lesser spells about the Sisters may speak of pacts renewed and, were a vampire to make such a deal, what horrors would ensue is dark and dire to dream upon.
5. The slurry pit will flood when the rains come, spilling out into the village, seeping into the mines, and blighting whatever it touches. Crops, feeble as they are where they grow here, will be ruined, and productions will either cease, or the laborers will toil with little to rattle about in their bellies.
6. Posturing from lordlings in the Veins will see border conflicts brought to the Sisters. Tithings will be desired to appease the feudal lords of the southern reaches, or they will begin carting off chattel and putting heads upon pikes. The protestations of the vampiric landlords will be cowardly at best and met with vicious mockery. Death will take its toll until egoes are appeased.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this village.

1. An abandoned mine on the edge of the territory; it's control would be disputed if it had not run dry decades ago. Records claim it collapsed, shuttered up, but it is open. If one could make a compact of sorts with whatever darkness dwells within, it might harbor them safely as a base of operations.

2. Raiders from the south strike out here on occasion, mercenary sorts trumped up on misplaced heroic ideals. Some believe they'll be allowed to take the blood sterling if they impress their lords and masters well enough. They could assist in sieging a master's hall, or serve as a distraction, or even a party worth double-crossing once they've delivered heavy losses and plundered supplies.
3. The folk of the Sisters were a once proud people, united in culture and in tradition, now long since broken and kept around as curiosity rather than heritage. All those who know the legacy of their ancestors' halls would see them honored if they had the morale and capacity for hope. Uniting them in cause against their enemies would see them a powerful force for the revolution.
4. Silver shavings are hard to come by, but any miner who has worked under the lash of the masters has endeared the thought of scourging their face with the stuff. A few tiny shavings, here or there, kept under the tongue, pocketed away in wounds. Argyria is an inevitability with poor equipment and little care. Earn a blue-tinged miner's loyalty; they'll give you shards enough to mutilate their master.
5. The landlords receive their blood sterling less often than they'd like, and the Lords of Cardenfell are cruel enough to send only that which they believe will keep their servants desperate and loyal. Such caravans look the same as any other; hijacking one or despoiling the phials could challenge loyalties in the region.
6. Metals of false purity can sometimes be mined from the earth, and any who have toiled alongside a master prospector can tell the difference and discard of such waste in the slurry pits. Those elsewhere in Cardenfell lack such sophisticated knowledge of minerals, and though it will likely not fool an alchemist, it would easily fool lesser vampires seeking to mint their own blood sterling.



## VILLAGE FEATURES

Villages are more than just the resources they produce. If you're looking for locations the players may visit within a village, consult this list of features.

**Millner** - Bread, made from wheat, barley, or other staple crops is the foundation of most diets in Cardenfell. While most peasants bake their own bread, the threshed grains must first be ground into flour. Windmills are common enough in well-to-do villages, and most towns have a watermill set up along the river. Poorer villages or those without access to wind-power rely on turning-mills, usually powered by livestock such as a mule or donkey.

**Blacksmith** - While the advent of machine manufacture has reduced the call for the village blacksmith's services, there is still some demand in the poorer, more isolated villages. While the vampire counts extol their subjects to replace damaged or broken implements, many still prefer the hardier, repairable tools of blacksmiths than the cheaper ones made in factories.

**Church** - The village Church forms a cornerstone of the communities they occupy, and unfortunately, many also form a cornerstone of the vampire's influence over the village. The Reformed Faith is the official religion of the land, and its ministers extol the virtues of hoarding wealth and preach that entrance into eternal life can be bought only with sweat, silver, and blood.

**Meeting Hall** - In villages where the Reformed Faith holds less sway, a Meeting Hall is a common sight. They are buildings set aside for villagefolk to meet, discuss their common interests, and make decisions as to the direction of their community. Meeting halls are marked as dangerous and seditious by many a Vampire Lord, and many is the hall that is put to the torch on suspicion of "seditious influence."

**Well** - Of less suspicion is the well of a village. When villagers come together to draw water, they often laugh, gossip, and plot with one another. Most vampires consider such behavior a nuisance below their concern.

**Guard Post** - While not every village is worthy of “protection” by the vampire’s soldiers, most are at least worthy of observation. Guard posts are usually towers, built to intimidate and provide a vantage point for the vampire’s lackeys to keep an eye on their fellows.

**Gallows** - A hallmark of nearly every village in Cardenfell, a gallows is a brutal reminder of the cost of rebellion or sedition. Crime, particularly against property, is dealt with harshly, and many a starving thief or beggar has met their end on the steps of a gallows. Their bodies are often left to rot until vultures or other scavenging beasts tear them apart, a chilling display of power meant to intimidate the populace.

# TOWNS OF CARDENFELL

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## INNISFIRTH

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Innisfirth sits at the mouth of the Cardenfell River, and is the main port in and out of Cardenfell. It is a hub of trade and commerce. The great powder and textile mills grind the wool and saltpeter of the outer islands into textiles and black powder respectively, and the docks are frequently abuzz with trade and gossip from the Continent.

### FACTIONS

**Primary Faction:** Weavers

**Secondary Factions:** Stokers, Reavers

The Weavers form the core of resistance in Innisfirth, feeding secret messages and sabotage between the textile mills that dot the banks of Cardenfell River. The Stokers also have a presence in the factories and powder mills of Cardenfell, and the dockyards are well-known as a den of Reavers, but their focus is mostly pulled elsewhere, and the three factions have difficulty organizing their efforts collectively due to old grudges and conflicting goals.

### POWDER MILLS

**Imports:** Saltpeter, Coal

**Exports:** Black Powder

The powder mills are crucial to the manufacture of black powder, which arms the vampires' lackeys and digs their mines deeper than ever before. It is made in water mill-driven factories, where great runner-mills of limestone grind charcoal and sulfur together, before boiling it with dissolved saltpeter in great kettles. The charcoal is produced on-site in separate kilns, kept away from the main building to avoid risk of the fire from the kilns catching and exploding the milled gunpowder.

*Scene: Grinding cacophony of shining limestone runner-mills. Workers dressed carefully in static-resistant aprons and gloves, crude masks of vinegar-soaked linen and goggles. Faintly steaming charcoal kilns, bubbling brass kettles of saltpeter. Great barrels of black powder, kept under careful watch separate from the main facility, a great brass waterwheel providing turning power to the runner-mills.*

## TEXTILE MILLS

Imports: Sheep wool, flax

Exports: Textiles, linen

Textile mills were some of the first factories to be built along rivers that could drive their great waterwheels, which in turn drove their great swinging looms. Textile mills are dangerous places to work, and the workers who staff them risk being mangled by turning gears, getting limbs or stray bits of clothing caught in the swinging looms, or receiving a blow from a loose or wayward shuttle as it swings back and forth across a loom. Some mills produce linen from flax, while others produce textiles from sheep's wool. Some produce a mix of the two. Most of these textiles and linens end up shipped to Flaypool, a nearby village where they are dyed in great vats before being shipped off to clothiers across the Bloody Isles.

*Scene: Rhythmic tapping and clattering as shuttles swing back and forth. Rows and rows of looms, each attended by a worker dressed carefully to avoid loose bits of thread or clothing. Sharp eyes and quick hands, great focus on the task at hand. An oppressive heat and stink from human bodies bunched closely together.*

## STREET SCENE

Six elements describing random details you might see on the "streets" of this town.

1. Workers go about wheeling barrels and carting around large wheelbarrows of coal. They are tired folk, soot-stained and often bearing the scars of their industries. Many are missing a finger, some a bit of foot. All cough and hack and groan at the miserable heat of their outfit and toil.
2. Traders and specialists perform inventory on a special order of textiles, something for someone struggling to be of importance, as surely a truly important lord could find better clothes than those made here. They bicker and grumble about quality and cost.



3. **Crimson Crown** alchemists are visiting, inspecting the saltpeter and the black powder. They are dreary and combative with the local landlords and taskmasters who go out of their way to preach the quality of their product. There are rumblings of a new formulae, and this is not what they expected.
4. A local kiln is undergoing repairs, slower than desired by the landlords, but the damage on the item shows a need for patience. The laborers seeing it back to burning shape bare brutal manglements, the consequences of maintenance having been rushed in the past.
5. The folk here, many injured—missing an eye, missing a hand, limping from a shattered ankle, or leaning upon a crutch—do their best to perform their labors whilst being observed by hungry landlords who desire the means to justify taking more from those they've abused in their industries.
6. The highest ranking landlord gives a tour to lesser types from out of town, explaining the processes in vague and incorrect terms, in the hopes of reaping more capital. When the populace and their many pains are noted, the landlord comments crassly of their expendability.

## NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPCs that live in this town.

1. **The Deaf Overseer** has worked the kilns and the powder mills longer than most of their employees have been alive. They lost their hearing in one of the many explosions they witnessed over a long and laboring life. Though broad and burly, they move with surprising deftness and dexterity, speaking with hand gestures and reading lips. They shout only when appearances are needed to be kept up, assured that if their master knew of their deafness, it'd be taken as an insult and lead to their disposal.
2. **The Chemical Genius** is merely a mortal salter destined for vampirism and further training, as they are possessing of a mental acumen second to none with regards to black powder. They can tell the quality of a load by touch, and have come up with many ideas concerning delayed explosions and false loads that could be manufactured should one have need for such things.

3. **The Melted One** was caught in an accident involving a boiling lime compound which saw them rendered into a melted thing, features displaced and limbs made malformed. They are of good spirits, but the biting comments from travellers and the vampires strike a nasty chord. Violence grows deep in their heart and they blame their master for the pain of living, though they'd never voice that aloud.
4. **The Loomweaver** is skilled despite her six missing fingers, working the clattering machines of the textile mills. Her mother taught her the trade at home and things were kinder there; less about efficiency, more about quality. She yearns to make things of beauty again, but also knows she's only one finger loss away from being dinner for the landlords.
5. **The Flaypool Runner** is young and lucky for it, having always been swift of foot and charming enough to work as a messenger rather than a laborer proper. They make the run between Innisfirth and Flaypool, keeping a tight ledger and ensuring everything arrives on time. They're often encountered on the road betwixt such places, occasionally lazing about.
6. **The Repairman** doesn't want to hear about your troubles or your dream, The Repairman wants only to fix whatever machinery is broken. Disillusioned after his family was culled, The Repairman has found clemency by focusing on cogs and metal bits, things that fit into place and have a reason to do so. He carries a hammer, the head of which comes off to reveal a stake. He's hunting for the one who gave the order. He'll keep fixing things until he is given cause to break.

## FEATURES / DISTRICTS

Unique features or districts in this town.

1. **The Old Gunneryworks** are built behind tall, thick reinforced walls of stacked sandbags and clay so as to ensure no errant shot might make its way towards the neighboring powder mill and cause an ensuing calamity. Powderguns, bombasts, and the occasional new bit of weaponry is manufactured here for the military applications of the vampiric lords. Production has slowed over the past few years due to the Duke's private investments causing him to withdraw support for armaments that might benefit his rivals. The manufacturing buildings and powder stores exist now mostly abandoned, save for a skeleton crew unappreciated by the Countess for their lack of artistry, and unhandled by the Baron who has seemingly forgotten of the investments made here.

2. **The Blasting Pit** is all that remains of the first powder mill in Innisfirth, having burnt down due to explosive concentrates in the soil that turned a single kiln explosion into a calamity which nearly burnt down the whole of Innisfirth. The grounds here are meager, littered with shrapnel, and populated primarily by itinerant workers in tents who have not yet earned enough to afford even the most destitute of housing. There is no safety living in this district, and proper citizens look down upon the less fortunate here.
3. **The Mangling Mill** is the most automated of all the textile mills in Innisfirth, and for this it is readily reviled by those who work the looms and great stitching machines. There is not a day where a limb is not severed, a digit removed, or a body broken by the cruel machinations of industry. Lost appendages are confiscated by the ghoulish landlord who runs the mill, as he is said to both feast upon and fetishize the severed fleshy bits in his back office.
4. **The Hostel Row** exists on the edge of town, catering to new arrivals to Cardenfell with coin enough to afford a wooden slab in a run down tenement house, where the rent is too high and privacy is a luxury few can afford. The landlord and their bailiffs often pilfer mementos and rummage through belongings, robbing blind any tenant who has overstayed their scant welcome, seeing them forced out to the streets or into the subjugation of their petty, vile demands.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Industrial fires are common, as despite the best safety efforts the vampires might enforce, their workers are overtired, underpaid, and provided with the cheapest equipment needed to ensure profitability at the risk of destruction. Fire consumes all, and with black powder in abundance, a fire destroys what it does not easily kill.

2. Broken machinery, be it hauled across town on flimsy wagons, or in its proper place, scourges and maims with reckless abandon. Touching the wrong gear, getting liquid upon it, or simply bumping up against it can cause mechanisms to churn and rip, blast and burst with no regard for life. Limbs are easily split and bones easily broken by such machines, and given their expense, anger is often directed at the injured more than at the infernal contraption.
3. Cramped spaces are in abundance within Innisfirth; the roads are narrow and labor always sees them crowded, and dangerously so. Homes for mortal folk are built side by side, crushing like a vice those who live within while expecting of them exorbitant rent. Personal space is a luxury and as a result of this; the teeming masses of the city are eternally locked in a bad mood.
4. Chemical spills happen more than they should, but with the crowdings in Innisfirth and the hustle and bustle of industry, they are an inevitability, and those caught up in them must pray for death, for the alternative is to continue in an agonized state. Lime sloughs off flesh with heat that deadens nerves to a chill, and certain lubricants for the textile machines can burn skin in a rash that blisters and pops for weeks on end.
5. Pickpockets and urchins run the streets, ducking and weaving within the crowds, filching whatever it is they can from passerbyers in the hopes of getting enough to fill their bellies, albeit not enough to prevent them from living as they do. It is a vicious cycle of starvation wages, often funded by lesser landlords who seek to upend their richer rivals and make use of children to do so.
6. Gang wars have happened in Innisfirth, culminating in conflict when the lords of Cardenfell are occupied with their own petty wars. The textile mill owners compete with the powder mill owners, while tenement house owners and The Old Gunnerywork founders make double-crosses and sell out their mortal chattel in exchange for a chance to draw knives against those a step above them.



## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this town

1. To a tactical mind, Innisfirth is as much a political powderkeg as it is a literal one. Set violence against one area of the town, blow up one building, and lesser vampires will seek out the chance to fill the power vacuum, which will in turn set their enemies against them. A well-placed bombing could hobble the Lords of Cardenfell's industrial ambitions and set the city upon itself for weeks on end—a pragmatic move that would cost many folk their lives, but could also offer a chance to weaken multiple lords and their holdings.
2. Distracting noises never cease in the city; the machinery, explosions, kiln firings, and the muttering of the crowds ensures that nobody can get a good grasp on where a sound might be originating from. Crowds ignore that which does not immediately panic them, and they are used to the sounds of powdershot as much they are of any other calamitous booming.
3. It does not take much to drive a crowd to anger here. Most of the folk are at their wits end already and once the fuse is lit, it cannot be easily snuffed. Desperation, despair, and rage can drive a crowd to loot, murder, or burn; such is the way Innisfirth has conditioned its people. Strife from the factions at play has seen darker deeds done at a moment's notice, and a revolution could make use of this unrest.
4. Child beggars and urchins are good at finding a mark, and if properly paid, could work well as a network of lesser spies and informants. Trust is hard to earn, and giving them what they deserve might see them preyed upon by their own. One might need to take part in the dire circumstances of their situation to make their employment reliable.
5. Smugglers from the Veins and other lesser territories to the south are always desiring black powder to help fund private wars and profiteering. Many are backed by various vampires who wish to usurp those in control of the powder mill; and if one is willing to darken their morals, the smugglers might offer up supplies in exchange for useful distractions that better allow them to do their deed.



6. Before Innisfirth's textile industry fell to wretched machinery, it was notable across the mainland proper. The loom workers and seamstresses made use of silver needles which flowed through fabric like mercury, creating works of splendor that would bring a tear to your eye. These needles still exist, hidden and passed through family lines. They can win morale among the textile workers, or they could be used in weaponry if gathered in abundance.

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## GRISMONT

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Sitting at the intersection of several profitable tracts of farm and ranch land, Grismont is the agricultural hub of Cardenfell. The stink of its leatherworks is legendary, as is the taste of its ale.

### FACTIONS

Primary Faction: Poisoners

Secondary Factions: Diggers, Prayers

Grismont is a hub of brewing, alchemy, and agriculture, and as such finds itself a natural home for the Poisoners. Many Poisoners seek to bolster their numbers by recruiting able brewers and agriculturalists, while others covet the industrial scale manufacturing, which could be turned towards poisoning the blood sterling supply, if such methods would be feasible at scale. But what the Poisoners have in ambition, they lack in practical resources, and without outside assistance, their desires for Grismont are unlikely to bear fruit.

Grismont is also a central location to the Reformed Faith, and as such attracts the ire of those brave Prayers who would confront their oppressors directly. For now they move in secret, gathering support and documenting the crimes and abuses of the Reformed Faith as best they can.

Finally, while the Diggers do not have much call for their restorative skills in the fertile grounds near Grismont, their ideas have gained increasing traction amongst the agriculturists and scientists that call Grismont home, though few would dare openly voice such support.

## LEATHERWORKS

Imports: Animal skins

Exports: Leather

By law, leatherworks are kept to the outskirts of town, so powerful is the stink and acrid pollution they bellow from their fetid pits. Here, animal skins are stretched and dried before being tanned in great wooden barrels stuffed full of various pungent odorants and chemicals. They belch run-off in great, rivuleting streams, poisoning and sickening the ground beneath them.

*Scene: An overpowering stink. Great lanes of drying racks. Vast pools of chemical stink, and large cask barrels and tubs filled to the brim with all manner of foulness.*

## ALE BREWERIES

Imports: Grain

Exports: Ale

Tall, stilt-like structures arranged into multiple floors, to allow gravity and brass pipeworks to easily transfer each phase of brew to the next. Grain is mixed with water in vast tubs before being lautered and filtered down to produce wort, which is funneled into great brass kettles for boiling. Bitters and other ingredients are added during the boiling process before being filtered down to the next level. Finally, on the bottom floor, the proto-beer is filtered into great oak barrels and mixed with active yeast to begin fermentation. After about two weeks, the warm-fermented ale is poured into smaller casks ready for export.

*Scene: The sweet scent of brewing grain and sugars; great tubs and brassworks snaking down through multiple floors, ladders, stairs, and scurrying workers between floors. Warm brewing and fermenting floors, and the creak and rustle of settling barrels.*

## STREET SCENE

Six elements describing random details you might see on the “streets” of this town.

1. Vampires offboard from a stagecoach and are immediately beset by the terrible wafting stench of the nearby leatherworks. When they retch, cringe, and begin to complain to their coachman, the powerful bitter stink of fermentation from the famed ale breweries causes them further discomfort. They cast hateful glances at anyone noticing their display, compose themselves, and move on to their business.
2. A young powderman engages in conversation with a town bailiff, discussing the specific bouquet of flavor to be found locally. The powderman fires a fancy pistol at empty bottles while commenting on an appreciation for the sickly blood of leatherworkers. The bailiff prefers the drunks, adds a little something to it. Any onlooker is chastised as dropping eaves and screamed at to go back to work, weapons brandished.
3. There is a cacophony of shouts followed by a terrible liquid rolling; the fetid pits of the leatherworkers have flooded and begun spilling into town. Those who can flee the streets before the stink gets upon them. Some in their homes toss out their chamber pots through windows; such filth will be negligible in stench for at least a few hours.
4. Newly minted peers stumble forth from a fine alehouse, carrying one of their comrades who is in a mad panic. The carried peer shouts obscenities, claims assassins in the alehouse dosed them with poison, and that all those within must pay. The ones carrying comment on their friend drinking themselves blind and how they just need to find something to eat to cure the ailment. They are all, clearly, inebriated.
5. Caravans departing for elsewhere on the isle, overburdened with palettes of fine leather or barrels of alcohol belted tightly together. Coachmen and teamsters discuss the state of the roads and the various bickering of the lords. Barristers make sure travelling papers are in order, making last minute demands on pay when an oversight is found.

6. Some huntsmen cart a great and strange beast through town, bidding cautious questions and bold boasting. They loudly demand the finest of leather workers come to flay and make mighty works of the creature, such that it might impress the lords under which they all serve.

## NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPC that live in this town.

1. **The Brewer** who works The Stills has long been a master at her craft. The acrid scent of her surroundings have long since faded from her taste, allowing her to truly appreciate that which she works on. She has been worried about the vintage of her equipment, knowing it to be tested and to provide the finest alcohols—but also noting that with every production, the chance of the stills bursting grow all the more probqable.
2. **The Siblings** have labored for the Lords of Cardenfell, making use of their petty inherited fortunes to try to win over the approval of their betters and be made into vampires for their efforts. Though originally of Drancaster, they have been slowly expanding their ventures in Grismont, seeking to make bolder names for themselves. Their power-grasping has not gone unnoticed; both peasants and lesser vampires look upon them with contempt.
3. **The Gristleman** is but a boogeyman, not a true creature, as that would be wretched beyond comprehension. They say it has a single horn and teeth that splay out like knives. It lurks in the fetid pools and fat pits, in dark congress with the gristlegobs. So long as it is given respect and sacrifice, it will bleakly aid those it considers to be its servants. If such a creature existed.
4. **The Poacher** knows the people of Grismont would starve or be put to the lash if they dared to consume more than what is allotted to them; and she has no desire to numb her rage on the swill liquors the folk are bid to consume. She hungers for meat: for stag, elk, bear and pheasant. She is a skilled huntress, her bows hidden up a tree she has to climb under the veil of darkness. She eats well and sees others eat well too, but she is distraught as she wishes she could do more.

5. **The Teamsters** at the coachmen companies haul goods too and fro, their backs aching, their limbs taut as tree trunks. They deal cards and drink rotgut or the occasional bit of good alcohol that has been “misplaced.” They know the roads, they know their threats, and they know to carve strange runes to indicate secret signs of hospitality only other teamsters can discern.
6. **The Coachmaster**, a landlord in charge of the various coachmen companies in Grismont, views his work like that of a beating heart. He controls the flow of supplies, goods, and services, for he owns the coachmen who drive such things across the isle. An egoist and self-important tactician, he thinks himself better than his lord and is in need of a humbling before he brings their wrath upon Grismont.

## FEATURES / DISTRICTS

Unique features or districts in this town.

1. **The Fat Pits** outside of town, beneath a hill ridge beside the leatherworker’s encampment, are without a doubt some of the most vile cesspits outside the Baron’s innermost territories. They flood and spill far out of their bounds, sluicing about the lower roads in Grismont more often than anyone would like. Children sing songs of **The Gristleman** who dwells beneath the rot, but those who work near it don’t abide such petty chants, considering them a mockery not needed in an already dangerous profession.
2. **The Tap Houses** of Grismont are some of the finest on the isle, and touring noblemen from the mainland are as likely to stop in as any soldier on leave from their master. They serve powerful brews and seek to provide comfort to those who can pay their coin. Most who live in Grismont, among mortal folk, are unable to afford entry into these places.
3. **The Stills** will burst, sooner rather than later. They are ancient, they churn out fine beers, but they are coming undone. Some believe accidents that occur within the Stills are the work of saboteurs from the lands of rival lords, seeking to destroy the local economy and devastate Grismont.



4. The Coachmaster's Company Hall holds the various maps and ledgers regarding the roads and highways of the isle, their upkeep, and their patrol schedules. Coachmen and carriage drivers from across the isle return here once a year to pay tithing to the Coachmaster, submit reports, and swear oaths of loyalty which grow more concerning with each passing of the seasons.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. One of the outer stills has burst, flooding volatile alcohols into the streets. Boiling hot, overwhelming to smell upon the air, and a sign of potential troubles to come, such an explosion attracts the wrong sort of attention on many levels. Bailiffs are out in full, seeking out saboteurs and looking for anyone to blame.
2. The nauseating stench of the nearby leatherworks is in peak condition today, either due to ghastly heat or an unfortunate turning of the breeze. The stink chokes those who travel the streets of Grismont, thick as a miasma and blinding to the eyes as much as it is an irritant to the nose. Navigation is cumbersome and unpleasant.
3. Gristlegobs have emerged from The Fat Pit and other refuse heaps, though unlike elsewhere on the isle, they act in a strange unity here. Their tactics are vicious, and if not for their gnawing misplaced teeth and vile weapons, could be mistaken for surgical in their effectiveness. They seek to flee back to The Fat Pit with anything they cleave, cut, or steal, taking fresh meat and any shiny bits they cast a milky eye upon.
4. Fat-slaving ghouls have slunk out from the wilderness and begun bloating themselves on the refuse of The Fat Pit. They seem more bestial than most of their kin, possessed of a desire to bloat themselves to the point of seizing and ripping their flesh apart. They will gladly consume blood and raw meat if they catch its scent.
5. Drunken nobility stumbling out of the tap houses are a frequent problem for the locals, as such dandies, be they vampire or merely wealthy, often seek to prove their dominance by shows of violence, vicious name-calling, and other threats that come only with privilege. Any action taken against them will at the very least result in admonishment and a brutal lashing.

6. Due to poor accounting by **The Coachmaster**, traffic clogs the roads in and out of Grismont. As **The Coachmaster** believes he is beyond making such errors, this is clearly the work of agents who suspect his motives. His brute agents—bailiffs and road wardens mostly—are seeking anyone who entered town recently who is surely the enemy he needs to beat to death for order to be restored.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailes you might find in this town.

1. **The Poacher** has killed a colossal feral hog so immense in size, she knows too well that none will believe she killed it with a knife or woodworker's axe. She has taken to cleaning the beast in the nearby wilderness; those willing to lend a hand in the butchery will be rewarded with meat enough to glut their aching bellies for a week.
2. The many terrible stenchs of Grismont could serve well as chemical weaponry if properly harnessed. A vampire can be easily overwhelmed by sensory overload if bathed in the volatile alcohols and rippling offal of the pits here. How one could bottle and conceal the smell until desired is another question entirely.
3. The Fat Pit is often waterlogged, but if one were to skim the surface, they'd have access to globs of flammable grease—the sort that burn hot, fast, and deep into the flesh. The pit itself could serve as a large fire source if one could see it dried out.
4. Despair and horror can sap at the morale of any venture, let alone one as arduous and hard fought as a revolution. Alcohol has long been a cause and solution of many of life's problems, and a steady supply of good quality beer could secure the revolution's morale..

5. **The Coachmaster's** petty ambitions will eventually see him put to the rack and exsanguinated, but until such a time as that comes, he serves as a convenient way to engage in long distance wars. Changing his ledgers, sneaking contraband on coaches, changing patrol logs; all such things could allow for easy movement of revolutionaries—or as a means to engage in proxy warfare by framing up conflicts between the Lords of Cardenfell.
6. The children here sing horrid nursery rhymes about **The Gristleman**, who dwells in the meat-soaked ground and offers up boons for flesh. If such a creature exists, and rites to summon it can be discerned from folktale, it could be a dark ally against the vampires. The fae make dealings, and this creature could be one of them.

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## DRANCASTER

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Drancaster is perhaps the first true city of Cardenfell, with its sprawling marketplaces, vaulted banks, and essential brassworks making it a hub of activity and commerce. It is certainly the most wealthy city of the Bloody Isles, and therefore there exists the most distance between the poorest and richest inhabitants. It can be a city of stunning beauty, but at the cost of choked slums, rampant inequality and oppression, and ever-present capitalism.

### FACTIONS

**Primary Faction:** Scribblers

**Secondary Factions:** Guilders, Coggers

The universities and academies of Drancaster have made it the natural home of the Scribblers, as do the many publishing houses and newspaper mills that run throughout the city. The printing press has revolutionized Drancaster, leading to a flourishing of thought and inquiry that the vampires approach with an equal mixture of mild trepidation and co-optive tactics. Meanwhile, the Guilders and Coggers vie with one another for the loyalty of artisans and workers alike, while powdermen thugs and dramcoat patrols attempt to keep a lid on the roiling confluence of politics, labor, trade, and academics that sometimes roil Drancaster.

## BRASSWORKS

Imports: Copper, Coal

Exports: Brass

If the Bloody Isles is shielded by steel and powder, it runs on brass. Resilient, cheap, and perfect for the manufacture of everything from doorknobs to gears, it is brass that makes the wheels of bloody industry turn. Brass is manufactured in great, bellowing brassworks, where copper and zinc are melted together in great crucibles. The molten brass is poured and cooled in molds to form “cakes,” which are then rolled out using great moving metal “rollers” driven by waterwheels. The rolled brass is then cut, twisted, shaped, and packed into all manner of bits and bobs necessary to keep the Bloody Isles humming along.

*Scene: Fiery crucibles carefully wheeled along steel cross-beams, poured into molds with chains and hooks. Great rollers pressing and rolling white-hot brass into thin plates. Bellowing smokestacks from the great coal ovens that heat and fire the crucibles.*

## STREET SCENE

Six elements describing random details you might see on the “streets” of this town.

1. Alchemists grade the quality of brass odds and ends, commenting on purity levels and the lack thereof to overseers who nod like sycophantic lickspittle. Once berated, the overseers then go on to yell at whoever they can for quality issues. The meticulous tedium sees that tempers flare up quickly.
2. Workers in all manner of injury wait in queue to a medicant’s tent where they seek some balm to soothe them of their pains. They commiserate in hushed grumbles as the occasional bailiff or taskmaster perform inspections to ensure such injuries are in need of attention.
3. Workers on break sit outside and drink mugs of a thick muddy beer, occasionally mixing in bits of vegetable or dipping in dried bread. They speak to one another about the latest batch of metal, wondering aloud who is going to face the lash for impurities in it that aren’t their fault. Bells are rung too soon, forcing them to swallow down all they can at a manic pace.

4. From a corner soapbox, a proselytizer of the Reformed Faith preaches the value of the work done here. They ring a handbell manufactured en mass here in Drancaster, but treat it as though it is an object handcrafted by an artisan. It is clear they don't know the true workings of this town, and the folk here do their best to let the preaching fade into the rest of the sounds of industry.
5. Struggling mules risk breaking their backs pulling carts of ingots from one foundary to the next. When wheels inevitably break, workers do their best to prevent further gaps in production. All parties cough and hack from the smoke and oppressive heat on the streets.
6. The great waterwheels of Drancaster churn slowly, creaking low like an ancient tree slowly being unrooted from the earth. Urchins strain through the murky waters, collecting the odd bits and bobs to pawn off. Great grumpy looking toads slowly boil to death in the runoff waters.

## NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPCs that live in this town.

1. **The Crowned** is a known criminal element, tolerated by the least of the vampires in Drancaster for the blackmail he can so easily get his grimy hands on. Someone tried to kill him once by dipping his head in molten bronze, but he managed to shank the assailant after suffering horrible burns to his scalp and brow. The Crowned could be a vampire if he plied his influence right, but he doesn't care for it; he blames the Reformed Church for making it sound like he'd have his mind warped by taking up the blood sterling.
2. **The Lord of the Lash** is scion to one of the chief landlords of Drancaster, denied true power by his family who linger in hedonistic deploys. With little way to gain power in their shadow, he seeks instead to perfect himself and his craft. The Lord of the Lash hates perceived laziness as much as he hates vice; it reminds him too much of family, and as such, he vents his frustration by way of a brass-scourged cat o' nine tails on any worker he finds not carrying what he believes to be their weight.



3. **The Muleskinner** hates her work, for it is thankless and often puts her in a position where she has to turn on other workers lest she be punished for their failings. She drives the mules; it isn't her fault if the metal is impure or someone broke a wagon. Nobody cares that it isn't her fault, and when she mitigates blame to those at fault, she's seen as a traitor. She's lonely; nobody to share a drink with, or kind words. She spends time with the mules, treats them right; somebody has to. They try their best for her.
4. **The Brass Devil** is a vampiric knight of unknowable age, encased within antiquated armor and masked behind a helmet shaped like a hateful crescent moon. He maintains an archival tower in the Court of the Brazen, searching for some ancient alchemical remedy half-remembered and lost to ciphers and the ages. He rarely leaves his tower, save for meetings with other important lordlings which require him to find neutral ground for conversation.
5. **The Smoker** has a laugh; it's a deep rumbling thing like an alcoholic hacking up broken glass. He's not a vampire, though he was once; he served the Baron and can only laugh when asked about it. Smoke pours out from his eyes and between his teeth unless he's drinking his rotgut. He knows all the hidden ways in Drancaster. Some say he can talk to rats. He thinks he could take this town; he'd just have to crucify a few vampires of station on pikes of brass. He helps a lot with smuggling from the Drancaster Bridge, but no one can easily tell who he's playing for.
6. **The Wheelwrights** are sisters who just have a way with wood and water, a specific combination of materials that they can just seemingly sing into cooperation. The larger waterwheels of Drancaster are still mostly wood, though newer ones are brass for sake of simplicity. The Wheelwrights don't care for that. Metal doesn't belong in water like that; it should sink. No one knows why they hold such an erudite philosophy, but rumor among workers is that they're descended from some strange sea-folk, or possibly some sort of river witches stuck working in this capitalist hellscape.

Unique features or districts in this town.

1. **The Furnaces** are ever burning, ever churning out the latest bit of brass to fulfill its purpose on the island. The symbolism is not lost on those who work here, for they are put through crucibles of fire and injury, bent and broken to see their master's pettiest works made manifest, scalded and slashed for sake of a nail or button. It is a dreary area of sinister embers and boundless smoke, inhabited by the weary and distraught.
2. **The Wheelwards** run along the river and the great industrial waterwheels which assist in the manufacturing process. Houses are crammed next to one another on narrow streets, as main fareways exist only for the sake of industry. The groaning of the wheels and the rushing of the water, combined with the stench of runoff, make it a poor place to live for those who have yet to acclimate.
3. **The Court of the Brazen** greets those entering from the Drancaster Bridge, a veritable marketplace where any vampire worth their blood sterling can find what it is they desire. The courtyards and plazas are laid with intricate brass work designs which, in the heat of the day, is enough to burn through the shoddy soles of mortal folks' footwear. Fountains and historic buildings from times before the Crimson Crown are still here, albeit built over to erase any idea of independence no matter how far in the past.
4. **The Court of the Manifest** is a district of banks, vaults, storehouses, and artisan craftspeople who work to ensure purity and purpose to whatever items are leaving Drancaster while bearing the mark of the city upon their crates. Such goods represent the upper echelons of the city and the Lords of Cardenfell to the wider world. Those who work here are shot of eye and bent of back, their anguish coming from scrutiny and punishment for imperfections.

## OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Huntsmen from across the demesnes of various lords come to Drancaster seeking new firearms. Iron guns are efficient, but a firearm customized with artisan brass components sings with the cruelty of a personal touch. They could be ordering in bulk or merely looking to try out their weapons on the riff raff. No one will hold them to account for a few dead folk.
2. The waterwheels upon the river have slowed to a stop, choked with pollutants and debris. Industry does not stop so easily, and unless the components can be cooled by water or manually moved to their next step, fire, injury, and loss of productivity will see further pain inflicted upon the people here.
3. Displaced nobles from the mainland have wandered from the Court districts, dressed to the nines in elaborate clothing, festooned with riches. They are proud and they know they will find their way back; this is just a shortcut after all. If something were to happen to them here, it would be noticed; it would draw further painful attention. They need to be moved before someone gives into desperation.
4. A brawl between laborers has spilled out onto the streets, the mob devouring itself in the hopes of finding clemency from their overseers and taskmasters. There was a flaw in their labors, and rather than waiting for someone to be punished, they will enact such violence for themselves while their masters watch, laughing, as they'd rather hurt one soul than suffer a collective punishment. The collateral damage is notable, innocents are dragged in, and the brawl will only be stopped when it begins to cut into productivity. This will count as their reprieve for the day.

5. Those who cannot afford their meager lot, subsisting on the scraps granted to them in wages by their overlords, will find themselves preyed upon by moneylenders who make their money off the toil of debtors. Those who cannot repay the heavy loans are bound into indentured service, working for even less than they once had, and easily drained of all blood by vampires who seek to absolve debts by the purchase of chattel. Every family in Drancaster knows more than a few unfortunate souls who will be culled at a moment's notice.
6. Old world grudges come to the island, as it is considered a place where such conflicts can be waged without dragging too many resources or reputations into account. Drancaster, much like any urban environment, is where such violence can come to fruition: agents waging proxy war and commit acts of terrorism against their rivals while the common folk cower and the local vampires seek to serve both sides.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailles you might find in this village

1. Misplaced shipments and orders can lead to resources sitting idle in the Court of Manifest for years on end, with no true accounting for them save for what is written of in ledgers. Knowing what to steal that will go unnoticed can see supplies of brass easily secured for the revolution, though none can know when the misplaced items will be rediscovered and desired, or who will suffer for their theft.
2. Moulds and schemata for nearly every component used in artifice on Cardenfell can be found in Drancaster if one has the luck and time enough to search for it. Infiltrating archives or the back vaults of banks and factories could allow a clever insurgent to know the flaws of any brass product on the island. For an even craftier rebel, it could allow them to create new flaws to exploit.

3. Gang politics and dastardly loans can see a soul broken after a game of cards in a back alley; but those who can cheat and win their way to victory might find themselves holding assets, favors, and living beings in bondage. Hold enough debts against a crew of thugs, gamblers, and workers, and you can sway them to all sorts of violent action on the promise of forgiveness—should they survive.
4. Though few would care to admit it for sake of how humbling it is, brass is what truly keeps Cardenfell in a place of importance. It is rich in the resource, and it manufactures parts which allow the Crimson Crown to focus their attention on other pursuits. Destroying a factory and pinning the act on an upstart lord could direct the Lords of Cardenfell against their own, forcing them to act in weakness and with haste lest the mainland be forced to remedy this delay.
5. Dark hearts and parentless youths fill the streets of Drancaster, young minds easy to fill with propaganda and violence against their oppressors. Everyone knows a kid who lost their parents, their siblings, their loves to debt and back alley payments in Drancaster. Everyone knows a kid who is already broken by knowing their future is to be spent toiling and forging brass. If you can accept putting a youth in the line of fire, they're more than plentiful to recruit for revolution.
6. **The Smoker, The Crowned**, and any number of lesser criminal entities are always looking for new talent to help them in their heists and schemes. They'll never give you enough information; they don't trust easily, but they promise a fair cut and enjoy the company of those with hands violent enough to see their dark works done.



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## STAMLEIGH

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Stamleigh is the industrial gate of Cardenfell, pumping iron, steel, and silver through the pass in the Stone Tongues into Cardenfell proper. It is a town of towering factories and constant clanging din, as Reformed Faith zealots patrol alongside a hungry and tired workforce.

### FACTIONS

Primary Faction: Coggers

Secondary Factions: Stokers, Guilders

The Coggers recruit most of their number from Stamleigh, though they must contend with the constant oppression and threat of both the vampiric nobility and the Reformed Faith's idolators in order to do so. While the Coggers attempt to build militancy and provide what they can for the workers of Stamleigh, the factories and symbols of vampiric rule that litter the city make tempting targets for the Stokers. The Guilders maintain a small presence, as most artisanal and crafts work has long since been subsumed into the great industrial factories of Stamleigh, and only a few old-time and diehard Guilders remain within the town's walls.

### IRONWORKS

Imports: Coal, Iron

Exports: Steel

Ironworks are great factories of ash and iron, whose products and secrets are guarded jealously by the Vampire Lords. Outside, peat and soil mounds are used to compress raw coal into more powerful coke fuel, capable of reaching the enormous temperatures needed to produce steel. Inside, the great heat of blast furnaces melts raw iron into pig iron, which in turn is placed into vast puddling furnaces where, fired with coke, it is converted into raw steel. The steel is finally cast into bars and plates suitable for the manufacture of weapons and armor.

*Scene: Ever-present, overpowering heat. Workers clad in heavy leather mitts and aprons, sweating as they haul and maneuver great crucibles of molten iron and steel. Brickwork, circular puddling furnaces. Chains, beams, and hooks. Great clattering noise, the ringing of metal on metal, and the roar of the blast furnace. Careful guardsmen patrolling the catwalks above.*

## STREET SCENE

Six elements describing random details you might see on the “streets” of this town.

1. Workers pile on to a fleeing man, tackling him to the ground before hauling him up as he struggles. A vampiric overseer, rippling with muscle and with a face as kind as a rock, wraps a chain three-times around a fat fist. A word is uttered: “Thief.” And as if that is all that needs be said, the vampire brutalizes the man into raw and mangled meat, breaking jaw and skull, leaving him twitching and twisting on the ground, choking on his own bit-through tongue. Everyone returns to work, as if this is not uncommon.
2. The furnaces burn red hot, hauntingly so, as if they take pleasure in devouring man’s ambition. Through insulated uniforms, the workers toil, their faces as red as the fires and drenched in sweat, which stings the eyes and dessicate the lips. Their boots clatter as they march through the streets; occasionally one falls and does not get up.
3. Guardsmen in fine uniform, and with polished rifles upon their shoulders, march through the streets of Stamleigh as though they were on parade. As a weapon of oppression against the common folk, these still-mortal operatives have learned fast to either bow to the viciousness of their masters or be subjected to it. Those who do not salute them at a glance are liable to have their teeth knocked in with the butt of a gun.
4. Folk in heavy leather jumpsuits carry a length of gigantic chain, each link nearly as broad as they are tall. They march in unison, their eyes focused only on their destination. Other civilians and carriages do their best to stand aside of their labors.
5. Young folk cart around fresh, albeit imperfect, coke fuel, barking its value to wayward workers who might be enticed to further feed their fires so productivity might improve. Fights break out when two such ventures occupy the same street, the youths becoming as vicious as any cutthroat, screaming vitriol and accusations to one another.

6. Clerics and aspirants of the Reformed Faith march down the street, ringing heavy hand-bells of iron, their limbs shackled to one another, calling out prophecies of doom if mankind does not submit to the whims of the world. Dragged behind them are the weakest and most zealous of their order, flagellants brutalizing themselves with barbed chain whips.

## NPCs

Six brief descriptions of NPCs that live in this town.

1. **The Chain Gang** are a collective of folk from across Cardenfell, criminals who could not be so easily killed, turned, or made vanished without turning them into martyrs. They are encased in heavy leather blasting suits, chained to one another, and stripped of all identity save for numbered designation. They toil on the construction of war machines and components made to further crush mortals under the bootheel of the Crimson Crown.
2. **The Cleric in Chains** is the heresiarch of an exceptionally zealous interpretation of the Reformed Faith. The holy preacher of the cult which claims one cannot buy their way into paradise; they can only suffer in glory with a vain hope for clemency. Bound in chains and locks, their flesh mangled by self-inflicted lashes, The Cleric in Chains has found favoritism with the vampires, for this interpretation of text demands any weakness be brutalized and made known.
3. **The Shovel Boys** have avoided proper punishment by making sure to only steal additional fuel from lesser landlords who were already falling out of favor. They bark on the street corners, offering up fuel for the home, fuel for the fire and the forge, all at a price one can afford—albeit their product is often of terrible quality. They're responsible for a few burnt buildings, both from inferior product and alleged arson meant to take out competition or fake their deaths.
4. **The Forgesmith** is a kine who would rise further in the ranks if not for his obsession with fire and perfection of the craft. The Countess allegedly courted him for power, only to be attacked when she put aesthetic over functionality—or at least this is the gossip she has used to keep him in his place. The Forgesmith desires to make every piece fit in its place, and to destroy that which does not follow this coda.

5. **The Overseer** does not leave her carriage, a baroque affair of rivets and sharp edges. She speaks through a tiny slit window and only in a curt, dry voice. Those who have been invited within the confines of her carriage, mortal or vampire alike, leave it with a sickly pallor and a distance in their gaze. She is, to anyone's knowledge, ostensibly in charge of many operations in the city, and she always seems to know who it is she speaks to.
6. **The Industrial Spy** knows that by creating small flaws in Stamleigh, he may be able to reveal insurrectionists and other rebels his masters would like to have exposed. It is unclear if he serves the Duke, the Countess, the Baron, or the Crimson Crown personally; all that can be certain is that he has a talent for sabotaging schemata, breaking ciphers, and making sure the industrial accidents that follow in his wake devastate all the Lords of Cardenfell in a unique way.

### FEATURES / DISTRICTS

Unique features or districts in this town.

1. **The Company Town** is a cramped set of streets, industrial sites, and claustrophobia-inducing living quarters, all crumpled upon one another to the point that if it could be unfurled like a bit of cloth, it might be the size of seven cities. If you are of little consequence or even less power, The Company Town is your home. Toil and labor barely pays to keep you in a broom closet of a living situation, the heat never ceases, and the stench of too many people in close quarters mixes with the scent of industrial slop.
2. **The Ironworks Tower** around The Company Town is a cage of brick and billowing chimneys that blot out the sun with their ever-choking smoke. Catwalks and narrow alleys see that trespass between the two places is abrasive and observed by armed powdermen from above.

### OBSTACLES

Six environmental or other types of obstacles you might find in this town, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Heavy security from catwalks and high towers ensure that any bit of strife or violence that doesn't entertain the sentries is quickly put down. Watchmen and tower sentries make use of shuttering lanterns to signal one another, holding them aloft on tall poles so as to be visible even from the depths of a mob.



2. The Reformed Faith's presence in Stamleigh is enforced by zealots and flagellants who delight in the suffering of those they consider weak. They will emerge from dark corner shrines and proselytization soap boxes to beat and lash at any who dare show even the smallest bit of vulnerability. They will expect praise; they are hardening the weak and breaking those unfit for the world.
3. Maneuverability in Stamleigh, even beyond The Company Town, is cramped and unpalatable. The rich—the vampiric masters—can afford carriages that grind to paste those who would dare impede their movement in such spaces, but the poor are left to squeeze and sidle.
4. Spies ply their craft in this city, seeking to route supplies and stifle production of weapons that might be used against their masters in border conflicts. Mortal folk are pawns, catspaws to be battered about and played with, and planted with false evidence to distract potential enemies so true crimes can be committed. Those suspected of espionage are carted off for torture and termination, often naming innocent names in a bid to survive, which never proves fruitful.
5. Fire is controlled; if left to the hands of the masses, it would burn a vampire as well as anyone else. In Stamleigh, it is used to prove a point to those who have crossed a line too far or have simply outlived their usefulness by age or injury. Brass maidens are wheeled out into public spaces, cramped as they are, and the battered frames of victims are forced inside. Fires are lit, and only screams and smoke exit the grimacing visage carved into the execution device. Only ash remains when the deed is done: more filth to be trod upon as a reminder to the common folk of what space they occupy in this world.
6. Politics at their worst stoke the dark ambitions of Stamleigh's worst, promising them a brighter future in exchange for their integrity. Zealots, preachers, overseers, and gangers offer up protection and wealth; all they want are the names of anyone causing trouble so they can be taken care of. Anyone foolish or desperate enough to fall in line, will quickly find they're little more than a bootlick who will receive a pittance of a finder's fee for their loyalty; and when the time comes, they'll be ground beneath the heel of their masters all the same.



## OPPORTUNITIES

Six opportunities, be it to spread the revolution, secure supplies, or aid ailes you might find in this town.

1. If the revolution could seize the means of production, they'd be able to outfit their soldiers with armor and weapons strong enough to rouse morale and save lives against the vampiric menace. Outright taking a factory would be a fool's errand, but manipulating shipments to go to the wrong locations could work just the same, albeit at a sluggish pace.
2. Steel and iron, when used in such mass production, will always suffer some small amount of spillage or spoilage. Making allies of factory workers willing to skim a bit of resources out of their production would be more useful than merely collecting the slag quality detritus, but either would serve the revolution well if done in abundance.
3. There are always collaborators and traitors to humanity making their position loud and well known upon the streets of Stamleigh. Butchering those who proudly bow to them who would see humanity enslaved could send a message of hope as easily as a message of terror.
4. The leather jumpers worn by the factory workers are dehumanizing, but provide insulation against the damages of an open flame. Though burdensome to wear, when reinforced with iron, they're damn near shootproof, to say nothing of how a vampire's fangs would be rebuffed.
5. The populace in Stamleigh is oppressed physically as much as they are in any other way. A little hope for a better tomorrow can go a long way, provided it can penetrate the deep cynicism and despair. Winning over the heart of a Stamleigh citizen would seem them easily converted to the cause and radicalized to most actions.
6. The terrible truth is that, much like anywhere else where industry is present, accidents happen. Arranging an accident is a matter of money and risk, and the shadier elements of Stamleigh would just as soon put a few cruel overseers to the torch as they would anyone else. Knowing who arranges such troubles can help avoid falling into "accidents," or allow one to make payments towards causing one.

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## TOWN FEATURES

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While each town in Cardenfell is distinct in it's particulars, they each share some commonalities in the districts and quarters that rise up inside them. Consult this list of districts when you need to construct some part of a town or city not otherwise described in the almanac.

### DISTRICTS

**Merchant Quarter** - The merchant quarter of a town in Cardenfell houses that town's middle class: the merchants, guildsmen, or petite bourgeoisie that control the flow of goods and what few trades are still practised by skilled laborers. Houses are stately, reasonable affairs, and are patrolled frequently by private guards. Given the relative independent power of the guilds, the Vampire Lord's influence is relatively low, though spies in service to them are common.

**Slums** - The working poor of each town in Cardenfell are crammed together into dangerous slums, presided over by exacting landlords. They are oftentimes hotbeds of crime and misery, but sometimes the light of communal solidarity pokes through. They are ripe for revolutionary activity, given their hatred for the landlords and their seldomly patrolled streets.

**Castletown** - While most vampires prefer to live in manors or country estates, when they do venture into town they live within the lavishly appointed manors of Castletown. Gated off from the rest of the town, these well-patrolled, well-guarded districts are the heart of vampiric influence within a town.

**Markets** - The market district usually lays on a main thoroughfare towards the center of town. Here, travelling merchants set up stalls to sell goods. Alongside the market square, more permanent shops and businesses can be found, most selling cheaper, industry-manufactured goods and necessities. Commerce is the lifeblood of each town, and the market is usually well-guarded against thievery and sedition alike.

**Industrial Quarter** - Located depending on the needs of the industry in question, industrial quarters are new arrivals to the towns of Cardenfell. Here, factories belch acrid smoke into the sky while legions of peasant laborers are ushered hurriedly into sprawling workhouses. Within the factories themselves, security is often tight, but on the streets outside crime, disease, and brigandry run rampant.

**Harbor** - As most towns in Cardenfell are built along Cardenfell River, a harbor is a ubiquitous site across Cardenfell. These locations facilitate trade, smuggling, and travel up and down the river, and are frequently as profitable as they are crime-ridden. Sailors rub shoulders with wealthy merchants, and smugglers dodge the watchful eyes of tariff-takers and dramcoats.

**Stronghold** - Every town in Cardenfell has at least one stronghold in it, usually built on the bones of a former castle keep that has been built up with recent technological advancements and sprawling, cathedral-like stonework. These structures house the most important Vampire Lords of the town proper, and are often the center of the state institutions of rent, control, and oppression that operate throughout the city. Their role is primarily one of suppression, but they also serve as a final redoubt in cases of prolonged sieges or assaults from external forces.

# KEEPS OF CARDENFELL

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## WROUGHT FORTRESS

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### *The Prize, the Final Redoubt*

Since time immemorial, a fortress has stood at the mouth of Cardenfell River. Built and rebuilt, time and time again, of earth, then stone and magic, and finally of steel and powder. The Wrought Fortress is simply the latest incarnation of an impressive symbol, a symbol of its rulers dominance over Cardenfell and, by extension, all of Orslae and the Bloody Isles. It is an imposing structure, with its modern ramparts built on top of old foundations, wrought gates of cold iron and sharp brass, cathedral-like buttresses, and of course, the Wrought Bridge itself, a monstrosity of iron and stone that spans Cardenfell River.

At its heart, in its final redoubt, the Fortress houses the infamous Bloodmint, an alchemical factory capable of transmuting human blood and sterling silver into blood sterling. The Bloodmint is at the heart of the vampiric regime, financially, logistically, and symbolically. If Cardenfell is to be free, the Wrought Fortress and the Bloodmint must, at last, be taken from the grip of the island's parasitic overlords.

### BLOODMINT

Imports: Blood, Silver

Exports: Blood Sterling

Carefully guarded are the alchemical secrets that produce blood sterling. The mints of the Vampire Lords are great, imposing structures of towering stone and gothic beauty. They are patrolled by the best guards of the ever-watchful vampire's coterie, wary of even a single wayward drop of blood. The workers are carefully monitored, their pockets and clothing inspected for stolen drams. Inside, great vats of blood pass through filters and tubes of glass and brass, carefully heated and tempered before being mixed with molten silver, poured from wrought-iron crucibles into the mixing cairns where blood and silver meet and change. From there the blood sterling is milled and burnished into various denominations of currency, each stamped with the likeness of their Vampire Lord.



*Scene: Vast, twinkling beakers and glass tubules. Bottles of raw blood, taken as tax, poured out carefully and precisely. Alchemists in studious robes inspecting, measuring, and adjusting the flames that heat and the beakers that cool the blood before it is mixed with molten silver. Great silver-works and crucibles, where raw silver is melted, purified, and finally brought to the center of the structure where the two substances join to become one. Accountants and ledgers, carefully tracking the drams, drops, and ingots of blood sterling that flow into the stores of the Vampire Lords. Guards clad in the best armor, loanfang sniffing the air and patrolling and inspecting, ever watchful.*

## DEFENSES

Unique defenses used to keep this stronghold protected.

1. **The Minted Peers**, aspirant champions made loanfang under auspicious conditions, patrol the halls of the Bloodmint. They are kept desperate for further doses of blood sterling, receiving only the barest of tithings, and even then only enough for true power when intruders are detected within the fortress. Only by hunting criminals and would-be burglars can they find passage to a higher station, and lickspittle that they are, they are eternally desperate for a chance to prove their worth.
2. It is unknown whether it is the strange braided truncheons they carry or an art of combat they know, but what is certain is that **The Exsanguination Factotums** possess a terrible skill in bloodletting. They bash and bludgeon like a whirlwind reaped, such that bruising and internal bleeding collects in terrible welts. A single pin prick upon these pools of internal bleeding can drain a grown man in mere seconds.
3. Not all blood is worthy; in truth, much is wasted. In misbegotten vats, such imperfection coagulates into a slurry of acids, fats, and slime. It desires to be made perfect with a hateful intelligence. When poured upon a mortal, it drains them like hot tar upon bare flesh. It asserts control over the body in its dying throes, jealously attacking anything more pure than itself.

4. The importance of the Bloodmint sees it garrisoned always by officers of the Crimson Crown's Corp of Knights Satisfiers, *sommeliers* of blood sterling who embody the malignant apex of the vampiric condition. A taste of any blood spilt grants them insight into the quality and vintage they've supped upon. Like hounds, they will never forget the scent of those tasted, smelling it in hints upon the wind.

## OBSTACLES

Six obstacles you might find at the Bloodmint, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. The walls of Wrought Fortress are a latticework of stone and iron, reinforced and hewn to fall upon one another in air tight formation. They are sheer surfaces, smooth when going with the grain and cruelly coarse when falling against it. Siege weaponry would be hard pressed to breach the walls with even the finest of *powdershot* from a bombard.
2. Military units patrol both the Wrought Fortress and the Bloodmint on randomly sequenced intervals, changed every other day so as to ensure that even the guards are unable to fall into pattern or complacency. Code phrases and ciphers befuddle the newest recruits, while experienced patrol soldiers are quick to brutalize any who don't speak the right clearance codes.
3. Sewage moats beneath the Wrought Fortress are choked by a sluice of refuse, detritus, sea water, and the occasional drippings of blood from the Bloodmint. Ghouls and all manner of vermin congregate here, occasionally striking boldly into the open out of depraved hunger. Reprisals are swift, and entry points are watched by trigger happy powdermen.
4. The doors of the Bloodmint itself are nigh impenetrable, with unwanted entry needing to come from either the sewer trenches of the fortress or from the forge vents of the mint itself. The passages for the vents are maliciously inviting in size, but the fires temper them with flesh-melting heat, and even if one were to enter through them and survive, they'd be out on an open work floor.

5. Four times a day, smoke is released from every orifice upon the Bloodmint, corroding the metal as it slithers its way through iron grates. If the wind is not present, it falls into the grounds of the fortress, obscuring and choking those not properly equipped. All those garrisoned within the fortress are not stationed outside when conditions like this are to occur.
6. Of concern to both mortal and vampire alike is the extreme presence of silver within the Bloodmint trafficked to and from the Wrought Fortress. Over exposure, either by physical contact of bare flesh or inhaling the miasmic mist of silver sheddings or filaments, causes a quickening argyria to take root. Mortals marked by silver are foul to the taste, and vampires dress in heavy robes to avoid whatever such contamination might do to their vile anatomy.

#### GARRISON - DUKE

The Crowner considers his position at the garrison here to be his just reward for an existence spent enforcing taxation and bureaucracy on behalf of the Duke. Formerly an officiant, the Crowner has gone out of his way to forge powerful ties with officers at the Bloodmint, serving to increase his master's reach with the mainland. Progressive and savvy in the art of demoralization and warfare, he keeps two companies of Forsworn at the ready, backed up by a score of powdermen armed with finely-crafted guns and grapeshot. His ledgerwork and petty politics has seen him the service of a Sacrophage and a dozen of the Duke's Hand to keep watch upon the parapets. Nothing here goes unnoticed and unreported.

#### GARRISON - COUNTESS

The Sommelier commands only the best of the Countess' forces here, with sculptors and kith working around the clock to ensure the powdermen employed as elite marksmen are perfect of body and aesthetic. The Sommelier himself is of curiosity to the elite forces within the Bloodmint, as they view him a disdainful masochist who would best be left in the rank of bit-blood. He enjoys too deeply the vintage of blood, consuming only the finest and allowing himself to suffer the withdrawals in power rather than consume anything less than a perfect phial. The Countess, it seems, must admire his loyalty to her philosophy.

The Gullet, a tyrannical bootlick whose devotion to the Baron borders well into the realm of fetishism, holds a large force of wisps and bit-bloods as disposable as they are undisciplined. In truth, the Gullet's dominion here as an officer is meant merely to obfuscate her own private research into spiritism and ectoplasmic feasting. Allied with more than a few alchemists within the Bloodmint, she ensures they are provided with ample fodder for their officers to fire upon in the hopes that these fallen souls might someday make a cure for the curse her master suffers under. Her name comes from her disturbing appearance: her neck is distended and her jaw hangs limply as though she were some great and terrible lamprey wearing a tattered suit of meat.

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## THE STONE TONGUES

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Atop the mountains that border Cardenfell, at the main pass through to the rest of Orslae, stand the towers known as the Stone Tongues. These fortifications might have had another name once, but it is long since lost to time. The Stone Tongues is counted as both prize and punishment, relegated to the marchlands of Cardenfell, but at the same time a lucrative posting for those commanders willing to skim a bit off the tariffs and taxes levied at the border to the Cardenfell demesne. To control the Tongues is to control access to the rest of Orslae, and a rebellion that could link up with sympathetic forces across the isle would be a potent force indeed.

### DEFENSES

Unique defenses used to keep this stronghold protected.

1. The rocky crags of these western barrier mountains protect the fortress, and they are infested with all manner of perfidious serpent. Some rattle their tails in mockery before a strike; others have serrated fangs which rend flesh into necrotic ribbons. Their venoms universally turn the blood of victims sluggish, grey, and thick, and upon reaching the throat, bloats up the tongue and suffocates the unfortunate soul.

2. Burning oil is easily pitched and slung from the fortress towers, rending those who walk the mountain path into agonized piles of immolated flesh. Sepulchral remnants of previous invaders or fleeing prisoners can be found affixed to the jagged rocks off the beaten path, their bones broken and fused with the cruel stones, a terrible warning of the oil's potency.

## OBSTACLES

Six obstacles you might find in this keep, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. Mercenaries from the western reach of the island, vampire and human alike, find refuge in the outer bailey of the Stone Tongues. Bitter and malevolent, these cold souls care only for lining their pockets and seem to enjoy doing so by way of violence. Even when at rest their latent bloodlust makes the mortal sellswords almost indistinguishable from the vampires.
2. It is unclear which ancient master of the Stone Tongues created **The Hagsmen**, but they were certainly among the worst of vampirekind's paragons. These wretches are an advanced form of ghoul, kept kenneled in the oubliettes beneath the fortress. All but their mouths are covered by bronze masks, nailed deep into their flesh. A jagged kiss of metal around their mouth prevents them from taking proper bites, allowing them only to carve a hole in flesh and drink away at the blood. Though named for this emulation of a hagfish, the Hagsmen have more in common with a serpent, as with their vision and hearing dulled, they learned to track by sense of taste.
3. Serpents are milked by well-gloved servitors, their poison and its destructive qualities to blood making it a tool the vampires seek to control. A blade slathered with the venom can inflict grievous wounds, and bullets bathed in it can inflict sepsis upon entry. Such poison is well-guarded and better wielded in times of strife.
4. Approaching the fortress of the Stone Tongues means reaching the top of a mountain, and it is here where the air is thin and the mists are thick. If one does not stick to the path, it is all too easy to catch an ankle on a jagged rock, shatter bones, topple into a crag, or otherwise find yourself impaled.



5. The crags of the mountain hold the ever-rotting corpses of those who have fallen into them, their flesh bloated from moisture but preserved by either serpent's venom coagulating the liquified organs, or by the sheer malice of the mountain itself. Maggots and beetles exist in preponderances here, yet never seem to decompose these mangled corpses.
6. Of note is how well-patrolled the trade roads to and from the Stone Tongues are. In an effort to control all trade to the west, soldiers are always coming and going from the fortress, actively seeking out smuggler routes and sharing notices when two companies pass upon the road. Pilgrims and wanderers cannot be trusted, for even mortal wayfarers may be in service to the master of the fortress.

#### GARRISON - DUKE

The Jailer has been loyal to the Duke since she was a child, spared the lash by the Duke's orders and left enamored with the prospects of power and legal authority. She treats the Stone Tongues as a private prison to hold enemies and hostages of her master. Of late she has begun extracting the knowledge of creating Hagsmen to better supplement her contingent of powdermen and bailiffs who man the fortress. Unfortunate travelers who cannot pay their tolls have become her favored subjects to experiment with, considering their "refusal to pay" a direct slight against the Duke and the rule of law.

#### GARRISON - COUNTESS

The Venturer is the Countess' favorite capitalist, a bourgeoisie debutante with a taste for the finer things in life and the means to attain them. Employing huntsmen and many a bailiff to enforce tolls and taxes upon those passing through the mountains, she has a penchant for imprisoning merchants and traders to better ensure scarcity and the cost of certain necessary goods throughout the rest of the isle.

The Gorgon was named for a monster of antiquity, as he enjoys a most specific form of torment. A former headhunter, the Gorgon was disowned by the Countess for his crude displays only to find company with the Baron, who would make use of his viciousness and knowledge of appraisal. Supported by a league of mercenaries with poisoned blades, the Gorgon supplements his garrison with sycophants born of victims of the mountain's many venomous serpents.

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## PELL'S HOLLOW (ISLE)

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Fell's Hollow was once a proud keep, standing as a bulwark of Orslae's defenses against continental aggression. But with Orslae's fall to the Crimson Crown, it has become a cruel joke, a withering husk of its former strength often used to punish wayward noblemen with isolation and exile. Such cruelty and neglect breeds anger, and anger breeds treachery.

### DEFENSES

Unique defenses used to keep this stronghold protected.

1. Fell's Hollow is built atop a bitter calcified skerry, connected to the mainland through a long and treacherous shoal of brackish waters and splintered trees drowned to the nape of their trunks. This bitter marsh conceals ravenous sharks as one approaches the fortress, and innumerable crocodiles as one approaches the shore. Crabs and other bottom feeders lurk deep beneath the water, stripping what is left behind by other predators, ensuring no trace of the uninvited are ever seen again.
2. The Deadman's Candles light the tallest tower of Fell's Hollow, strange flickering lanterns of a baleful green. The master of the garrison attends to them; their purpose is not known in earnest, but their placement seems to indicate what sort of reinforcements may be sent from the rest of Cardenfell. What is certain is that ships at sea, were they to follow them, would find themselves run aground.

## OBSTACLES

Six obstacles you might find in this keep, no matter whose demesne it's in.

1. It is not known why the guards who man Fell's Hollow are as paranoid as they seem to be, their words guarded, their eyes darting, their posture belying a serious fear of something not yet deciphered. They shoot first and swarm like rats upon anything they deem out of place.
2. The advent of powder weaponry saw with it the creation of new traps—in this case, an explosive known as the bitter urchin. Weighed to the sea floor, these semi-hollow spheres of metal are filled to the brim with explosive potential and lined with wretched hooks and spikes so as to pierce vessels before exploding.
3. The skerry has a single pathway carved into the rocks that leads to Fell's Hollow, and once a force is garrisoned within, trip-wires are laid down to ensure no entry by land, nor escape from the rock. Beside the pain of razor wire cutting into flesh, the wrong sort of pressure upon these traps can lead to rockfalls and death by stone's brutalization.
4. **The Will-o'-the-Wisps** are what the soldiers have named the strange lights which appear upon the horizon and in the marshy shoal in the evening. They perplex and deceive, leading wanderers into traps, the maws of predators, or deep waters from which one can never surface.
5. Upon the bare rock of the skerry exist a dozen statues, though more can be found drowned beneath the drink of the sea. They depict mortal visages, half-consumed by whales, sharks, and all manner of ocean life. Their eyes are open, their smiles bitter white. They are **The Duppy Idols**; their pedigree is unknown, but they whisper to those weak of will, and at night they make you dream of chains slowly dragging you beneath the waves. None who yet live remember whose ghosts they are, and so long as misery is had upon Fell's Hollow, they grow in strength.
6. **The Low-Drakes** are the bestial masters of Fell's Hollow, large crocodilian creatures with many rows of teeth like a shark, and a malevolent intellect built only for spite and predation. They linger in the waters, attack lesser vessels, and belch forth a chum-like bile so as to better direct their lesser cousins. They view man as prey and vampire as competition over the sweet flesh of terrified humanity.

## GARRISON - DUKE

The one they call **The Albatross** knew the Duke when both were mortal and the world was kinder. Ancient, withered, and exhausted by the toll of time, the Albatross maintains Fell's Hollow and The Deadman's Candles out of belief that the Duke will one day lead Cardenfell to independence against the cruelties of the mainland. As such, he is supported by the most loyal of the Forsworn and many a powderman who have come to see their troubles as the fault of the Crimson Crown rather than the hegemonic politics of vampirism alone. In the Albatross's nationalist ideology that the island belongs to the islanders, he will excuse any atrocity he sees, caring only for a bigger picture that may never come to pass.

## GARRISON - COUNTESS

**The Privateer** serves the Countess and holds Fell's Hollow as a port for her naval patrols. She commands a small fleet of corsair ships and often overextends her reach, sailing the coast of Cardenfell and extorting ships long before they make land. When in Fell's Hollow, she is backed primarily by officiants and huntsmen, who keep track of her plundered goods within the keep and prevent the wildlife from overtaking the rock.

## GARRISON - BARON

**The Drowner** serves the Baron for no other will have him, wretch that he is. Formerly a peer, so hungry for more power, he betrayed the Crimson Crown and was dragged upon and under the bow of a mainland ship. His ragged form, tattered and bloated by drownings that would not end his suffering, proved him resilient. The Baron provides him with emaciants and a single masticator to man the fortress, and bids him see that none take it who do not suffer the gnashing of teeth. The Drowner, craven and starved as he is, is prisoner here as much as master, for **The Low-Drakes** have tasted him before and seek his demise ever yet.

