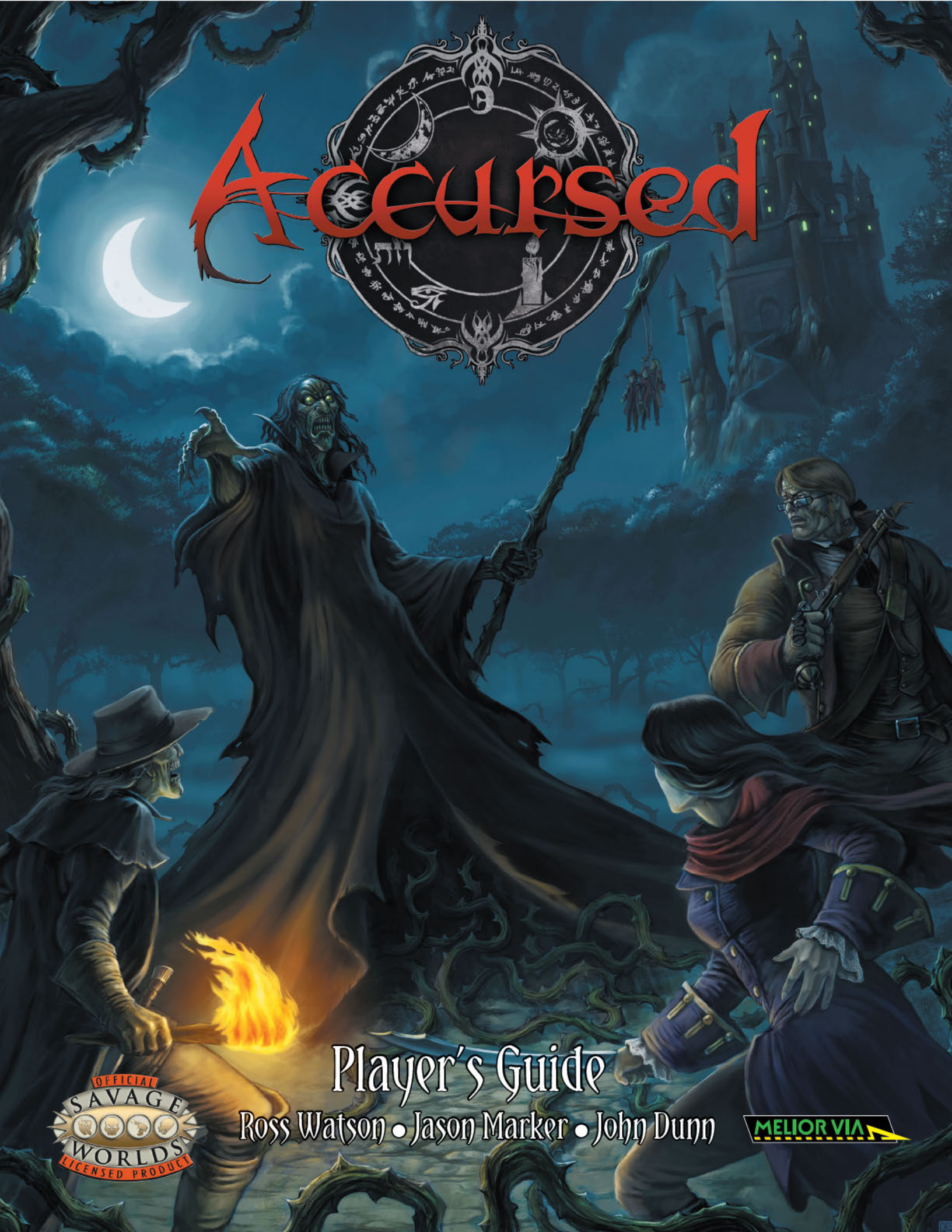


Accursed



Player's Guide

Ross Watson • Jason Marker • John Dunn



Lead Developer

Ross Watson

Lead Writer

Jason Marker

Additional Development

Cory Bonifay and Jeff Scifert

Introductory Fiction

Andy Chambers

Cover Artwork

Alberto Bontempi

Interior Artwork

**Jacob Atienza, Daniel Becker,
Alberto Bontempi, Sacha Diener,
Nikolaus Ingeneri, Kamil
Jadczak, Elif Siebenpfeiffer**

Cartography

Jeff Preston

Graphic Design

Kevin Childress

Additional Interior Artwork

Pawel Dobosz (The Forge Studios)

Rick Hershey, Empty Room Studios

Publisher

John Dunn

Special Thanks

Mike Brodu (for the Melior Via Logo Design)

**The Accursed Worldbuilding Group: Nate
Barlow, Patrick Dennis, Christina Dinse,
Benjamin Domschot, Brendan Gensemer,
Darryl Hardy, Hannah Harkey, Scott
M. Johnson, Matthew Marques, Robert
Morris, Brent Smith, Matthew Steen**



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Contact us: info@meliorvia.com or visit us at www.meliorvia.com

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Of Cauldron Born and Grave Denied

I'm no stranger to playing dead men. Or monsters. *Deadlands* began with the premise that a man or woman could battle his way back from the grave...if there was something worth fighting for on the other side.

The monsters of *Accursed* share that trait. Their bodies were broken and rent in the war against the Grand Coven and born again in fetid cauldrons to serve the powerful Witches; to stalk the night as more banes in their unholy and inevitable armies. But they resisted. Somehow these forlorn and forgotten *victims* became *champions*.

The eldritch power of the witches is beyond even the most accomplished mortal's ability to understand, yet somehow our heroes broke free from their dark mistresses and regained their free will. Thousands were sacrificed and reformed but only these few managed to hang on to their will, their consciousness, and their very soul.

They *resisted*. They continue to resist. They picked up cold iron and ventured into the black forests and haunted mountains to defend the scattered mortals left in the wake of the Bane War; to help those who still survive avoid the same dark and twisted fate that remade our heroes as *monsters*.

Rarely are these broken champions welcomed into the mortals' reclusive communities—they are as likely to be chased with pitchforks and torches as they are to be given welcome or shelter. Old friends will turn on them and even family may bar the door when they see the terrible form their loved one has taken.

Yet the *Accursed* battle on.

This is what draws me to the world Ross, Jason, John and their amazing artists have created. I have never been engrossed in most fantasy roleplaying worlds because the focus seemed, to me, too highly centered on greed. Raid the dungeon, save the village... and collect your reward.

What interests me is the struggle against the impossible. The war's already lost. The heroes failed. The villains triumphed and rule with terrible cruelty. Now what will you do? In *Accursed*, not only do the villains rule, but even "you" are a *monster*. How can you save the nearby village when you can barely keep from devouring the villagers?

That's a challenge worthy of a true hero. Overcoming one's darker side isn't easy, and it isn't quick. The battle is long and hard and full of heartbreak, blood, and regret. The campaign is an epic tale of staggering loss and hard-fought victory by inches. But trudge ever forward like an unstoppable revenant. Snarl at your foes like a Mongrel and gnash at them like a Vargr. Let the slings and arrows of your

critics break upon your skin like a Golem's. Resist your vices like the most ravenous Dhampir, and curse in the face of old, cold Death like the ancient Mummies.

You may still fail. Sometimes the odds are simply too great. Sometimes Mistress Fate is as cruel as Baba Yaga or Hecate. But it is the battle which truly forges us—not the cauldron. And if you survive, if you can manage to hold on to what's left of *you* despite these soul-crushing blows, there is a chance.

That is the story of the *Accursed* as well. Cauldron born and grave-denied, the Witchmarked sulk through the midnight wilds opposing true evil at every turn—and not even death can stop them.

Most of us can relate to this struggle. I've faced a few impossible situations in my day. I bet you have too.

Books, movies, and games like *Accursed* are more than just fleeting distractions. The heroes remind us that though we may be flawed and can't control every aspect of our destiny, our fate is ultimately in our hands.

Have fun with *Accursed*. Gather with friends, roll dice, and save the hapless villagers. And in your darker times, when the road is foreboding and the woods filled with terror, remember that you too can choose to be just another victim of the night, or a champion who stands against it.

—Shane Hensley, Pinnacle Entertainment Group
December 2013

Accursed began with a love of monsters, especially the classic movie monsters such as Mummies, Werewolves, Vampires, and Dr. Frankenstein's creation. In my youth, I loved the Hammer Horror films where Van Helsing fought Dracula, and one of my favorite films is the *Monster Squad*, featuring nearly the entire cast of classic monsters!

Once, I was asked to come up with an idea for a "dark fantasy" RPG setting. I initially had trouble with this challenge—fantasy is a saturated genre in today's RPG landscape. However, after mulling over the idea some more, I began to think of an interesting and unique take on dark fantasy... one that revolved around monsters. *Accursed* grew out of this idea, where the monsters could gather together into a group with a common goal and form a band of heroes.

I hope you enjoy crafting new stories with your heroic monsters in the world that John, Jason, and myself worked hard to create.

—Ross Watson, Lead Developer

Hunted

by Andy Chambers

The forest was as quiet as the grave. Stars gleamed through the branches above looking cold and distant. The crackle of twigs beneath his heels sounded as loud as pistol shots in the silence.

Kergus the Flenser strained to pierce the gloom beneath the needled boughs. He expected to see the red gleam of eyes winking back at him, but there was nothing there. He wasn't reassured. They were still out there, hunting him, and he knew it.

Beneath his jerkin the complex web of scars running across his chest ached with warning fire whenever he turned his face southward. The Vargr were still out there and they were hunting for him even now. The Witchmark on his chest told him so and he had learned to believe it. The brief flashes of insight that the Witchmark gave him were one of the few benefits of being Accursed.

The Witchmark urged him onward and he could find no reason to deny it. His vengeance would never come to pass if he was run down and torn apart by the Vargr. There was peril to the south of him and it was drawing closer, perforce he must travel north. He pulled his tattered cloak tighter around his shoulders. It was a reflexive gesture, an old habit that should have provided some ease from the biting chill yet it gave him no comfort.

The cold was a permanent companion to him now, as if the icy grip of Steppengrad's forests had seeped into his bones and coated his lungs. His breath would have emerged as a white mist if he were still capable of breathing. That, like so much else, had long since been taken from him on the day he was given the Witchmark.

The land before him was starting to rise into the wooded foothills of the Darkwall, a dark mass unmarked by the glow of fires or other signs of settlement. These hills had been sparsely populated even before the witches came, now it was empty wilderness. Once upon a time a few wary fur trappers and charcoal burners had made their living in the shadow of those ill-famed peaks. When the Grand Coven's armies breached the passes they had been the first in the lands of Morden to suffer the Witches' fury. They were far from the last.

Kergus forced his stiffening legs to struggle onwards. There was no pain, no fatigue even though he had already been walking for hours. Instead there was a deep, numbing chill that stirred a flutter of uncharacteristic panic inside him. Even if the Vargr failed to take him down the cold night air might do their job for them.

A few miles up into the hills an angular mass stood out alongside the overgrown trail Kergus was following. He approached it warily, drawing his rusting falchion and holding it before him ready to strike. The sword's steel was pitted but sharp, dried blood still flecked the blade from his last scuffle with the Vargr.

That encounter had seemed like sheer bad luck at the time, hunting packs seldom strayed so far from the territory of their mistress. The witches were all jealous of their demesnes and ill-disposed towards visitors. In effect that meant there were large stretches of empty wasteland between their realms. Kergus had not seen a living soul between Cairn Kainen and Steppengrad until the Vargr found him. After escaping from the Morigan's cauldron-born it had all seemed so easy up until then.

As Kergus moved closer he realised that his caution was unwarranted. The occupants of the rotting wagon, for such it was, could pose no threat to anyone. Old bones lay scattered among the ruin and he studied them with a practiced eye; an oxen, a man and two children. There was no sign of any Banes amongst the fallen, so the man had certainly been no soldier. Probably a simple woodcutter and his family that had been fleeing for their lives when they were overtaken.

The Witches' horde that came spilling over the Darkwall had been horrifying; bestial, twisted monstrosities born of the most insane nightmares. People called the monsters 'Banes' because their very existence was an insult against life and sanity. Only later did it emerge that the nightmare creatures had been ordinary men and women once; people of the lands North of the Darkwall. They had been swept up by the Grand Coven and pressed into service. Whether peasants or nobles, all had been joined together in the Coven's army once they were transformed by the witches' curse.

Kergus wondered what had happened to the mother. She would not have abandoned her children in the face of peril. The uncomfortable conclusion was that she had been taken just as Kergus had been taken. His dry, leathery features tightened into a grimace at the thought. Another lost soul to avenge just like those innocents in the wagon.



Kergus found the mother less than a mile beyond the wagon. The trail forded a fast-running mountain stream girt with moss and ferns. There was a flat-topped rock close to the water and a crude basket woven of twigs was sitting on top of the rock. Dried mountain flowers, shriveled berries and pine cones were piled around the basket like a little shrine. The Witchmark remained quiescent on Kergus' breast so he moved closer to inspect the contents of the basket.

Tiny bones gleamed in the starlight. Fingers and toes; some fresh and white, others yellowed with age. All fleshless, as if they had been sucked clean by rapacious lips.

'Those aren't for you,' a voice warned.

Kergus sprang back and whipped out his falchion with a grating ring of steel. His gaze darted back and forth but he could not discern the speaker. Tinkling laughter came from above and he looked up to see a face peering down at him from the branches of a nearby tree.

'So fierce!' the face mocked, 'so ready to fight! Don't worry, mighty warrior, I won't try to hurt you. Why don't you take off that hat so I can see your face properly?'

'Why don't you come down from there so I can see you properly,' Kergus retorted. The face in the tree and the voice it spoke with were both comely enough, but that meant nothing. He'd seen plenty of Banes with aspects of genuine beauty in among their chimerical facets of madness.

A branch of the tree bent as the speaker climbed out into full view and settled herself there. She was very much a woman, with generous curves and pale skin that seemed to shine with captured moonlight. She laughed again and shook out long, golden tresses to comb.

'You see?' she said, 'I'm nothing to be afraid of, I shan't hurt you.'

Kergus' heart filled with foreboding. The Witchmark on his chest was itching uncomfortably. Not an outright threat, but an unmistakeable warning.

'You said those weren't for me,' he said, indicating the basket, 'who are they for?'

'Your voice is so old and scratchy,' the woman said, 'you sound tired. Would you like to come and rest with me? I'll hold you in my arms and sing you the old songs my mother taught me when I was young.'

'Who are they for?' Kergus insisted, 'tell me.'

The woman smiled again, crookedly this time. 'Why, they're for the Baba Yaga of course. Fingers and toes for her to count in her chicken-legged hut. It walks in these hills carrying her to visit the night breed. She'll be proud of me...'

The woman stopped talking and sniffed suddenly, her nose wrinkling. 'Ugh, you smell of rot and grave dirt,' she cried, 'you're cauldron-born!'

Kergus laughed bitterly and took off his hat, sweeping it before him to bow to the woman in the tree.

'Cauldron-born?' He said, 'In Cairn Kainen we call it the cauldron of rebirth, certainly, but that's a lie. Nothing living was ever birthed from that place, least of all me.'

Revenant!' the woman hissed.

'That I am,' Kergus said with something like pride in his voice, 'and you are a Rusalka, a child of Baba Yaga. I've heard of your kind—did you want me to rest with you at the bottom of a river? That's the way you kill, isn't it?'

The Rusalka's lovely face was transformed by her look of revulsion. In that moment Kergus caught a glimpse of the woodcutter's wife as she'd been before she'd been taken and cursed. Then the glamor took hold of her again, making her both more and less than human once more.

'Baba Yaga will hear of this,' the Rusalka threatened, 'when she hears that the Morrigan has sent her children into the Darkwall there'll be a reckoning!'

'Yes,' Kergus said as he clapped his hat back over his hairless skull, 'tell her that, tell her the Morrigan sends her hatred, that she wants war!'

The Rusalka seemed confused and Kergus laughed again, luxuriating in causing some devilment between the Witches, however petty. They deserved so much worse, but it was a start. Then the Rusalka looked back to the trail Kergus had approached along and smiled wickedly.

'You'd better start running, dead-man,' she said spitefully, 'the gorge-wolves have got your scent.'

A chilling, drawn-out howl sounded far back down the trail. Off to right and left more distant howls rose in reply. The Witchmark on Kergus' chest throbbed as he turned back and forth as though he were already trapped. Across the stream and into the mountains, that was the only path still free of peril. It would not remain so for long, gorge-wolves ran fast and they would be moving to surround him even now. He glanced up but the Rusalka was gone.

'I'll avenge you,' Kergus promised in a harsh whisper, 'someday, somehow I'll avenge us all.'

Then he turned and fled on creaking legs. He ran as if the very hounds of hell were at his back.



He almost got away. *Almost.*

Rocky outcrops crowned by trees began to rise on either side of the trail as he fled from the gorge-wolves. The path snaked between the outcrops heading ever upward into the shadowed mass of the Darkwall. Kergus knew that following the trail made him stupidly easy to follow. Ideally he would have headed off across country and lost himself among the trees until the pursuit had passed but he dared not leave the trail for fear of finding himself trapped in some dead end ravine. The path must lead somewhere and if he kept to it he felt he still had a hope of out-distancing the Vargr.

His one advantage, if it could be called such, was that he was a dead man already. His heart did not pump, his limbs did not tire, fatigue did not drag him down. The numbness he had felt earlier was gone and his legs ran with the efficiency of a machine. The Witches' curse, the Morrigan's curse, was more than a fancy scar on his chest. The cauldron of rebirth had taken Kergus' corpse and vomited it back out among the living, another cauldron-born Bane to join the ranks of the Morrigan's army.

His memories of the event were confused, surreal, all he could recall was the burning hatred he'd felt. A glowing thread of outrage against the Morrigan and all of her kind had led him back to the lands of the living, a thirst for vengeance that could never be quenched. He'd wondered at the time why the Witch had permitted one with such hatred for her to return into the world. It was only later that he figured out that he was a actually mistake.

Kergus soon found that he was different to the other cauldron-born. He'd seen his clan mates, his brother, his sisters, shuffling through the dank corridors of Shieldhaven. None of them knew him, none of them returned his look of recognition when they crossed paths. Over time he'd had come to realize that he seemed to be unique among the living dead in that place. He had intellect, he had purpose and the rest were little more than rotting puppets beholden to the will of the Morrigan. It wasn't long after that he'd realized that he had to escape, flee from Cairn Kainen before his secret was discovered. That was when he'd doomed himself.

Behind him the howls of the gorge-wolves rose and fell on the night breeze. Snow was beginning to fall as he climbed higher. Light, dancing flakes came down from the high peaks, swirling like dancers in the frigid air. Patches of old snow lurked at the edges of the trail here and there, lasting mementos of the previous winter. The way became steeper and though he threw himself up it with undiminished energy he was reduced to little more than walking pace by the incline.

Another howl, close this time—right on the trail below him. Kergus risked a glance back and thought he could see a darker shape among the shadows, the gleam of bestial eyes. He tried to run harder and almost collided with the rough stone of a cliff that rose before him, completely blocking his way.

Kergus pawed at the rock helplessly like an animal. He'd guessed wrong, the trail went nowhere and he'd become trapped just as he feared. As he twisted about seeking another way he heard the chuffing breath of his pursuer coming up the slope and the soft sound of its paws among the pine needles. The Witchmark on

his chest blazed with heat, peril was upon him and there was nowhere left to run. He turned to face the threat and drew his falchion for what might be the last time.



There was just one of the beasts padding up the slope below him, but it was gigantic, a true monster. Its shoulder was level with his chest, its head was bigger than that of a horse. Coarse, brindled fur stood in stiff spikes around its shoulders, dank and wet-looking in the starlight. Yellow, intelligent eyes brimming with voracious hunger glared back at him. The gorge-wolf opened red, dripping jaws wider than Kergus could have stretched his arms and let loose a howl that made the very rock beneath him tremble.

Kergus the Flenser stood perfectly still, his falchion extended and unwavering. Some part of his mind registered fear, but it seemed a distant and abstract concept. An ordinary mortal might have collapsed in terror, or turned instinctively to run and so doomed themselves to be pulled down from behind. Not Kergus. His only fear was that he would not survive to be able to pursue his vengeance, that bright, hateful spark that gave meaning to his twisted existence.



The gorge-wolf lowered its head and charged, jaws snapping. Kergus hurled himself to one side and cut at the beast's thick neck as it passed him. The falchion bit deep into the matted fur, loosing a spray of arterial crimson. The gorge-wolf twisted beneath the blow and its shoulder smashed into Kergus with the impact of a battering ram. He had a split-second of eerie calm as he flew backwards before the rock behind him stopped him with bone-crushing suddenness.

Before he could recover his sense the gorge-wolf's jaws clamped shut around his torso like a vice. The beast lifted him off his feet and shook him as easily as a hare. Kergus was helpless in its grip, limbs flailing uselessly as the gorge-wolf's finger-long teeth ripped through skin, flayed muscle and crunched bone. Finally it threw him to the ground, pinning him with one paw against his chest so that it could take a proper grip and rip out his throat.

By some miracle the falchion was still in Kergus' grip. By an even greater miracle the hand and arm that held it still moved at his volition. He hacked the sharpened edge into the gorge-wolf's gut with precision, splitting the skin so that looping snakes of intestine spilled over his hand.

The yard-long jaws of the wolf snapped shut inches from his face as it tried to rear back from the crippling injury he'd inflicted. Kergus dropped the falchion and gripped the brindled fur at the gorge-wolf's throat, reaching inside its slit belly with his other hand. The beast shook frenziedly, paws scrabbling at him with horrid strength in an effort to rid itself of the source of its pain.

Kergus clung on grimly and plunged his hand ever deeper inside the wolf's hot, slippery innards. At last he found what he sought. He gripped and tore, eliciting a final, agonized howl from the creature.

The monstrous wolf collapsed onto its side and Kergus rolled away, his hand crimson to elbow and holding the gory, still-beating heart of the monster. He stood back as the gorge-wolf died snapping wildly at air.

'And that's why they called me the flenser!' he hissed at it unsteadily, the ground seeming to lurch beneath his feet. He swayed and dropped the heart before thinking to grope for his falchion. The worn hilt, tacky with gore came beneath his hand and he swept it up, marveling all the while at the sense of grinding and disconnection between his shoulders and ribs. Both arms still functioned, both legs still functioned, but between them he was a staggering, broken thing.

He slowly took the falchion in both hands and raised it up high before hacking down with all his strength. He chopped again and again with the heavy blade until the gorge-wolf's head parted from its body. Based on his own experiences he wasn't taking any chances of the thing coming after him again.

Black spots were dancing around his vision, everything was becoming grey as if a shadowy sea was rushing over him. Kergus staggered a few more paces before he sank to his knees and the blood-slicked falchion fell from his hand. The ground seemed to spin once more as he toppled over and blackness swallowed him.



Kergus awoke. He was staring up between dark branches at the first pale fingers of dawn in the sky overhead. A wolf-howl in the distance brought him sharply to his senses and he jerked upright in a scattering of pine needles and crusted dirt. Deep shadows surrounded him, the gloomy hills as yet untouched by the coming dawn. A few yards away the headless corpse of the gorge-wolf lay untouched. The hungry night-dwellers of the forest had no taste for such tainted meat—nor, it seemed, did they have any appetite for Kergus' dried-out flesh.

He levered himself upright trying to ignore the broken grindings from inside. It did not matter, he told himself as he bent to retrieve his hat and falchion, he was a dead thing already. He had been damaged before and sheer willpower had kept him going. Slowly, ever so slowly, the wounds would knit and his leathery skin would spread itself to cover them.

So he told himself when he noticed the dull shine of broken ribs protruding from his jerkin, and so he told himself when he felt the gaping crack in the back of his skull. All the time a nagging inner voice reminded him that he'd been damaged before, but never so severely.

He gazed up at the cliff that had so treacherously blocked his way. It was not high, no more than three times the height of a man. He decided that he might be able to climb it in daylight, although his injuries made him uncertain of the notion. As he stood looking at the rock wall and trying to plan a route he saw something that made him curse.

Uneven steps half-buried beneath pine needles were cut into the cliff face. The trail continued onward alright, he simply hadn't been able to see it in the darkness. Another wolf howl cut through the pre-dawn air spurring Kergus into action once more. It had sounded closer than the last, the hunters must have scattered widely searching for him during the night. Now the noose was tightening again.

The Witchmark indicated no danger ahead of him, the trail was still leading him true. Kergus staggered over to the steps and began grimly hauling himself up them, one at a time. Although every movement sent dull shocks through his body he persisted until finally, in the first grey light of true dawn, he reached the top.

Another slope lay ahead of him. The trees were patchier, the snow was more prevalent but Kergus' newly-won vista was much the same as his old one. He turned and looked back down the cliff at the pine-clad hills marching away to the lowlands below. He caught a glimpse of glittering water—probably the same stream where he'd met the Rusalka—but he could see no sign of his pursuers.

The Witchmark burned on his chest as he surveyed the scene. The Vargr had not given up, and with their preternatural senses it was only a matter of time before they found the slaughtered gorge-wolf and followed his trail up the cliff. Kergus briefly considered making a stand at the top before dismissing the idea. It would certainly make him harder to bring down for a while. Unfortunately his enemies weren't stupid enough to keep coming at him one at a time. The Vargr would soon find different ways up the cliff and surround him.

Kergus turned and began limping up the slope. The next ridgeline was just a few hundred yards away and he focused on that as his next objective. The one advantage he still held was the unearthly vigor of his deathless body. If he could just keep pushing for long enough the Vargr must stop and rest eventually while he just kept on going. Precious time had already been lost while he'd been knocked senseless, now he had to push on and stretch his lead out as far as he could.

He stopped suddenly, the crowding plans in his head suddenly evaporating as he spotted something in front of him. The trail was barely discernible now, little more than an indentation in the thin, frozen soil beneath the trees. A patch of old snow lay across the path ahead and in it Kergus could clearly see a set of foot prints.

He limped closer. The tracks were fresh and distinctly two-legged in origin. Small boot prints, Kergus judged, those of a youth perhaps. He looked around sharply half-expecting an attack but no new assailants came bounding into view. The tracks led away in the direction he'd been going until they disappeared over a stretch of exposed rock. One of his Vargr pursuers might have known more; precisely how old the prints were and what manner of being had left them. Such mysteries were unreadable to Kergus. All he knew was that someone was travelling ahead of him.

Another keening howl drifted up from the hills below. Kergus cursed and hobbled onward. He had no time for mysteries now. The Witchmark was quiescent on his torn flesh. Whatever lay ahead of him either posed no threat or it was already gone. Either way the hunters were closing in and he had to flee or else die again. He had no wish to be torn apart or returned to the cauldron of rebirth if that were to be his fate. No wish at all.



The old castle looked solid enough from a distance—even welcoming in that icy expanse of wind-carved stone. The waters of small lake lay around it and reflected the leaden sky like a black mirror. In the background the white-tipped peaks of the Darkwall rose sheer and cruel-looking. They seemed almost close enough to touch.

A limping, disheveled figure staggered through frost-rimed grass along the lake shore, painfully making its way towards a causeway that connected the castle to the shore. Carrion birds circled in its wake, calling out to one another in harsh voices as they waited for him to trip and fall for the last time. They sounded frustrated, Kergus had been doggedly persistent in his progress despite the ugly wounds that marked his body.

At closer quarters Kergus could see that the castle was more than half ruined and the lake waters were undermining what was left. He was drawn onward by the sight of a lonely light burning high in the sole surviving tower.

Tilted, spiraling stairs led up to the top of the tower and what had once been the castle's solarium. Its thick glass panes were cracked and broken in many places, but the roof was mostly intact and gave the illusion of protection from the chilling wind. Kergus stopped when he spied the source of the light. A copper brazier had been recovered from the shattered furnishings strewn across the floor and now held a cheery blaze. Beside it was a table and two chairs with a similarly salvaged look. In one of the chairs a hooded figure sat waiting for him next to a steaming samovar.

'Come, take a seat. Play a while,' the voice of the seated figure was feminine and welcoming.

'Do you think me a fool?' Kergus snarled in a voice a harsh as that of the carrion birds, 'what madness is this? Who are you? What are you?'

'Why don't you sit down and find out?' the woman replied, 'you should be able to tell that I'm no threat – isn't that what your Witchmark is telling you? Come and sit down before you fall down.'

Kergus grimaced. She was right, this mysterious woman, his Witchmark was utterly quiescent. He gave a short bark of laughter and surrendered to the madness, dragging himself to the vacant chair. He saw in passing that the table was a game board. An inlaid field of black and white squares held a variety of monochrome combatants—towers and soldiers, kings and queens, priests and heroes. He gave them little heed as he collapsed into his seat and questions tumbled forth his from cracked lips.

'Who are you? Why did I come to this place?' Kergus' jaw worked as he tried to articulate the real question burning in his mind, '...how is it that you know of my Witchmark?'

'You can call me Ariane and I shall call you... Kergus. That's right isn't it? To answer your second question first—you found your way here of your own volition, I simply waited for you to arrive,' the hooded woman said, reaching out to move a piece with a gloved hand. 'As to why I know your Mark... why don't you tell me how you got it in your own words?'

Kergus glared at the woman who called herself Ariane. The face beneath the hood was a pale, perfect oval with perfect red lips. She looked like a noble or a priestess and had the accent to match. Southerner, perhaps even from wicked old Manreia. It didn't endear her to Kergus one bit, but he indulged her curiosity in a few brief, bitter sentences.

'The coven armies came to Cairn Kainen, and our High King, Gaelen, lost his mind to a Witch we knew first as Lady Macha,' Kergus said, 'and later as the Morrigan. We still fought, but we lost. Afterwards the Morrigan put us in her cauldron and brought us back to fight for her. Every corpse she made became another soldier in her army. The Witchmark was on me when I...I...awoke the first time.'

'You're being modest,' said Ariane gently, 'you emerged as something greater than the others.'

'Dead things,' Kergus muttered, still half-lost in memories, 'she sent dead things against those that still lived. They killed us, I can remember my death blow.' Skeletal faces and claws skittered through his mind's eye, hot blood splashing on cold bones. He could feel a rusty blade thrusting up beneath his ribs, crimson earth rising to meet his face.

'It's your move, Kergus,' prompted Ariane.

Kergus felt grateful for the distraction and tried to focus his mind on the checkered board. Black and white. It looked simple. He advanced one of his soldiers to challenge the wolf Ariane had moved and then wondered how he had known which piece to use. Ariane moved another piece on the game board, defeating Kergus' soldier.

'Life and death are just separate realms, different countries,' Ariane told him, 'like the squares on the board. Spirits are transient entities moving between those spaces. Stasis. Entropy. Good. Evil. Black. White. Alive. Dead. It does not matter how we refer to the squares, they are just elements of the game that we use to define the pieces' progress across the board. It's your move again.'

Kergus ruminated on that peculiar piece of philosophy as he studied his position again. He found that his defeated piece had retreated to a white square. Without thought he brought forward a tower to close the gap in his defenses as Ariane continued.

'The Morrigan knows how to keep pieces—spirits—caught between the spaces, both living and dead, or un-dead to be precise. Their immobility makes them... dangerous in unexpected ways.' Ariane advanced a piece to pressurize Kergus' miniature army at a different point on the board.

'You're saying my untimely death and cursed rebirth is an affront to the Creator?' Kergus' lips cracked in a smile for the first time. 'I'd think princes, heroes and priests might claim that distinction, but not I. I was just a bondsman, a butcher and barely worthy of my high lord's fart.'

'I'm saying that you moving of your own volition is noteworthy,' Ariane said seriously, 'noteworthy enough to bring me across half a continent looking for you.'

'How...?' Kergus began to ask before Ariane held up a hand to silence him. She peeled off her gloves and showed him her palm. Her Witchmark was different to his, a suffusion a ruddy whorls and runes like a birthmark.

'Every Mark is different,' Ariane told him, 'mine makes me see other Accursed in my dreams, others that have become independent of the Witch's influence. You are not alone.'

'You're one of the Blood Witch's Banes,' Kergus said, leaning back in his seat, 'I knew that accent was southern. You must be completely mad coming through Steppengrad. Like.'

'Like you?' Ariane mocked, 'I'm not the one who's being chased by Vargr through the Baba Yaga's lands. I came because I saw you in peril in this place and I knew you would need my help to survive. I'm no Bane and neither are you, not anymore.'

Kergus opened his mouth to retort and then shut it again when he heard something on the stairs. A footfall, a scrape of claws...the sound was too faint to be sure, but it sent an electrifying jolt through his body. He jumped up, the chair crashing backwards behind him.

'You bitch!' Kergus swore as he ripped out his falchion. Ariane didn't even have the decency to flinch before his outrage. She just sat, calmly pulling her gloves back on.

'Watch the stairs,' she said. Something about the way she said it made him turn just in time to meet the first Vargr that came bounding into view.

It looked like a man, squat and heavily muscled with a jutting chin and thick neck hidden by a bristling beard. The Vargr had a feral look about him; filthy, barefoot, half-naked despite the cold, a crude iron cleaver clutched in each hand. On seeing Kergus it howled in triumph and lunged straight for him. More snarls and howls came from the stairway as the rest of the Vargr pack vented their rage at not being in at the kill.

Kergus' Witchmark was burning like molten steel, the fire of it suffusing him from head to toe. The endless running and hiding were at an end and something in him reveled in the sense of release. The first Vargr was overconfident. Kergus' falchion swept down between the Vargr's cleavers and split the snarling head behind them to its teeth. Two more Vargr came pushing their way up the stairs hard on the heels of the first. Kergus was still trying to free his falchion as their first axe blow came whistling down at him.

Suddenly Ariane was at Kergus side with a long, thin sword in her hand that hummed as it darted to and fro. She knocked the axe aside and thrust at a bearded face, forcing the beast-man back into his compatriot.

The falchion tore loose from its bloody seat and Kergus hacked wildly at the closest Vargr to force him onto the defensive. The two Vargr instinctively split their attention, one taking on Kergus while the other concentrated on Ariane. Behind them Kergus could see more snarling faces trying to force their way up the stairs, virtually clawing and biting at one another in their anxiousness to attack.

Cooler-headed enemies would have circled to allow more of their number into the fray, but the two Vargr at the top of the stairs stood their ground and fought like drunken berserkers. Kergus swayed aside from an overhead smash and knocked back a gutting slash. He brought the falchion's edge against the Vargr's wrist on his next parry, splitting gristle and bone as easily as a pine log. The Vargr howled and cut at him with its other hand, Kergus stepped inside the blow and slashed the falchion across the Vargr's belly to spill its guts over the floor.

Kergus didn't even have time to look over at Ariane before the next Vargr burst free from the stairway. He was about to attack with an overhead swing to drive the Bane back into its fellows when he realized the stairway was now empty.

'Look out, Ariane!' Kergus shouted desperately, 'they've—'

Two squat, hairy shapes came hurtling down through the broken roof in a blizzard of glass. Ariane leapt back from their scything axes and darted behind the flimsy protection of the game-table. The inlaid board of black and white along with its miniature host of combatants were smashed to flinders an instant later.

Kergus whirled and kicked over the brazier in the Vargr's faces to blind them with a billow of glowing cinders. He was driven back before he could make an attack against the yelping Banes by the other Vargr already in the room. Four of the Banes were in the Solarium now. Even with Ariane's help the battle could only end one way.

As if to underline the hopelessness of their situation bright flames began to crackle and spread from the fallen brazier. The old, weathered wood of the floor and the shattered furnishings ignited as readily as a tinderbox. The Vargr ignored the leaping flames as they stalked hungrily forward to surround their prey. Kergus and Ariane were forced to back themselves against one windowed wall overlooking the lake. They were trapped.

'Did your dreams show you how to get out of this?' Kergus snarled.

'No...' Ariane admitted shakily, 'I saw you alone in this place, being dragged down by the Vargr...'

'What a splendidly different result,' Kergus said, his voice bitter.

The flames roared up suddenly, the wave of heat cracking every intact window in the solarium. The Vargr hesitated with doubt on their bestial faces as they recognized that they, too, were trapped by the inferno.

'Damn you!' Kergus cried as he grabbed Ariane around the waist.

'Damn you all to hell!' he screamed as he leapt for the cracked window behind them.

Their combined weight was more than enough to smash through the glass, though its jagged shards gouged Kergus like a dozen knives. The world outside flipped crazily between the blackness of the lake and the greyness of the sky once, twice, three times. Above them the tower burned like a blazing brand, the howls of the Vargr lost among the roar of flames and the thunder of falling stone. Then the dark waters of the lake reached up to engulf him.

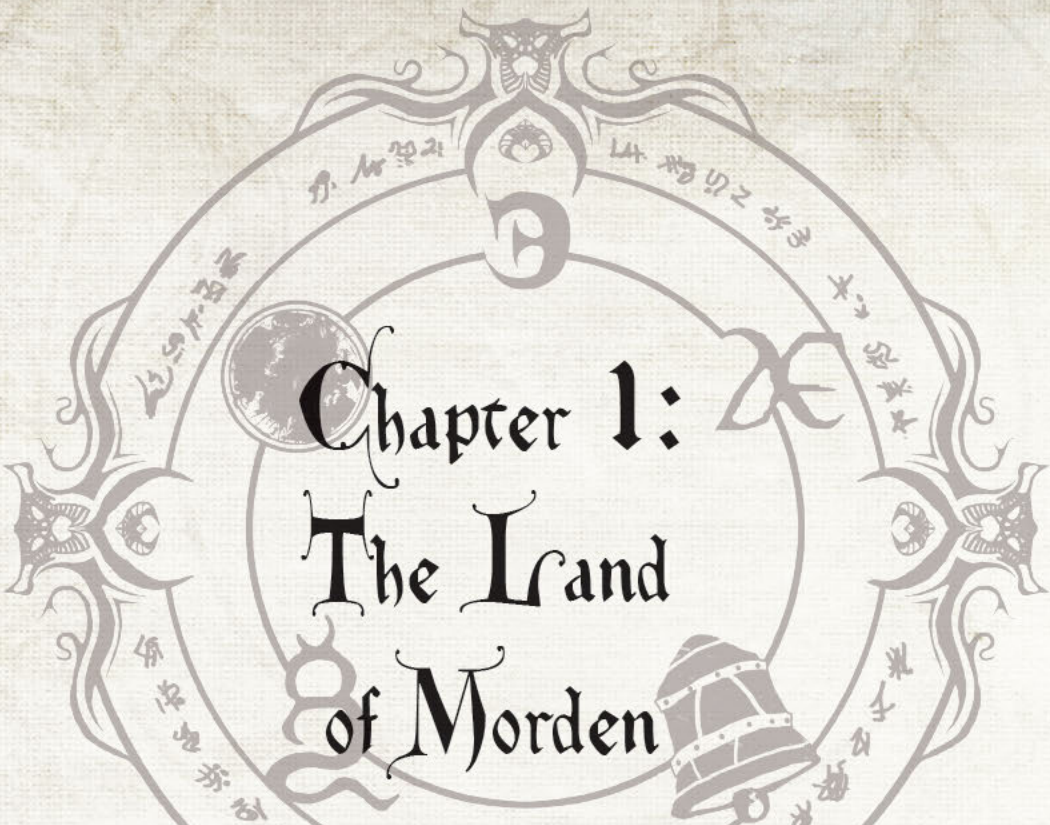


Kergus awoke at the lake edge to find Ariane plucking glass shards from his withered flesh.

'It's just as well you can't drown,' she said with evident relief, 'it took a long time to get you to shore.'

Kergus grabbed at her wrist, and coughed weakly 'you keep trying to save me, why? What do you want from me?'

'I told you you're not alone,' Ariane told him, 'there's other Accursed, like you and like me, that work together to bring an end to the Witches curse on Morden. We call ourselves the Order of the Penitent and you, Kergus, would be welcome in our ranks.'



Chapter 1: The Land of Morden

The land of Morden is composed of many varied types of terrain, from the windswept dunes of Hyphrates in the south to the massive, old-growth forests of Valkenholm, from the rocky moors of Cairn Kainen's highlands to the frozen shores of Steppengrad. The enormous canyon of Stone's End, the monolithic Weeping Colossus, and the ancient necropolis of Luxarra are all examples of the breathtaking vistas found across the nations of Morden.

As for the world beyond Morden—a sphere named Saturnyn—it is a place much like Earth. There is a single large moon, known as Leonis. Its cycles are broken up into days, weeks, months, and years of comparable length, and there are four discernable seasons.

Sometime in the distant past, tribes of men came to Morden through a mysterious “lightning bridge,” carrying them from some other place. The origin of these tribes is not known, although legends claim it is far beyond Saturnyn. Scholars debate just how many years have passed since that time, but most agree that it was well over a dozen centuries ago, far past even the oldest known written histories in Hyphrates.

The tribes spread across Morden and settled into a number of fledgling nations, building and farming and growing in culture and technology for nearly half a millennia. Sporadic minor wars and skirmishes had broken out between the tribes, but these conflicts were dwarfed when the imperialist realm of Steppengrad chose to invade the neighboring nation of Remus. Founded by the Romany tribe, Remus was a land of

philosophers and sculptors, politicians and athletes. They were completely unprepared for the Steppengrad assault, and the resulting war ended in the complete annihilation of their realm. To this day, the remnants of the Romany tribe are merely small bands of roving wanderers, their former homeland reduced to a salt-choked region that was later named the Ash Wastes.

In the wake of that devastating event, the Enochian faith swept across Morden like a cleansing wind. The Enochians professed a church dedicated to the Creator, a deity of knowledge and order. Soon, Enochian missionaries had spread to all corners of the land, and to this day, the Enochian faith is the strongest and most well-represented religion in Morden.

Denizens of Morden began explorations into the Discordian Sea and its unusual islands. Settlers spread out towards the towering Darkwall mountains, founding the young and vibrant nations of the Outlands to the north and northwest. Few journeyed into the Darkwall, curious to see what lay upon the other side, but even fewer returned. The Darkwall peaks were considered extremely dangerous and filled with foul monsters eager to feast upon human flesh.

Until the Bane War, Witches were considered simply legends. Magic itself was largely unknown, and practitioners of witchcraft were almost exclusively foreigners from lands beyond the sea. Thus, Morden was taken by surprise when the Witches and their army of banes climbed over the Darkwall and laid siege to the land in the most devastating war it had ever known.



Respite

Discordian Sea

The Tarayev Wastes

STEPPENGRAD

Aziev

The Ash Plains

Stone's End

Noche Torre

MANREIA

Palmyria

HEBI

Parnath

Port Sorrow

MORDEI

The Outlands

Kulidar

ENHOLM

The Sunken Lands

Blackroot Water

The High Cairn Kainen

Loch Lamond



Kulidar

Massif
Helsenn

Pelion •

The Sunken Lands

Blackroot Wood

Loch Lumond

Shieldhaven

Akert •

HYPHRATES

Luxarra

**Memmon
Aswar**

Ur-Xandria

The Weeping Colossus

The Hexagon



The Bane War

Nothing has transformed Morden more than the wars in its recent history. Over the centuries, the land transformed from a fertile, but undeveloped subcontinent to a blustering mix of cultures and civilizations. Then, the Grand Coven invaded and battled the Armies of Light. The war devastated the region, toppled the governments, and resulted in untold deaths.

The Witch Armies

They came through the Outlands, boiling over the Darkwall Peaks in their multitude. Huge throngs of undead things and living creatures twisted beyond recognition by dark magics. Rank upon rank of hired soldiers from across the great sea bolstered their numbers. In the vanguard were the Accursed—shambling Mongrels, plodding Golems, loping, gibbering Vargr, lithesome Damphyre, along with their fellows. At their head strode the great usurpers, the Witches of the Grand Coven. Cunning Baba Yaga, mighty Sanguinara, the twisted Chimera, and their sisters led their varied armies over the Darkwall Peaks and into the unsuspecting lands of Morden quick as lightning, taking the unprepared mortals completely unawares and easily sweeping aside the initial, hastily assembled resistance. The Witch armies spread out and the heroes of the Alliance gathered their armies to oppose them. The entrenched forces settled in for a

savage war of attrition that would grind on for decades and only really end with the Great Betrayal, when the Grand Coven was broken and the Witch armies scattered to the winds.

The armies that shattered Morden during the long war were a strange and powerful mix of magical and mortal combatants cobbled together from a broad variety of sources. First there were the Accursed, mortal men and women forced or coerced into eternal servitude and made to fight as shock troops and heavy infantry in the van. Behind these mighty and terrible warriors came the banes, once normal beasts twisted into horrible mockeries of their mortal forms by Witch magic. Finally, there were mortal mercenaries—men of negotiable valor from the exotic lands of the Sakurada Shogunate and Nordheim far across the roiling sea. These mercenaries provided cavalry, light infantry, siege infantry, and other more support oriented military tasks that the Witches saw as beneath them or their chosen warriors. Paid in blood-stained gold and promised land, plunder, and power in the lands of Morden, these corrupt men gladly fought shield to shield with the Accursed for a handful of silver.

For decades after the initial invasion, the Witch armies and the forces of the Alliance fought a series of brutal wars with countless smaller skirmishes. Slowly but surely, the Witches overpowered the defenders of Morden and solidified their control over their conquered lands. Despite their power however,

On Witchmarks

In the land of Morden, the most visible mark of shame is the Witchmark. Every Accursed bears a unique mark upon their person called a Witchmark that reflects not only the nature of a particular individual's curse, but also hints at the nature of the bearer of the Witchmark himself. From the ancient golden funerary plates fused to a Mummy's flesh to the puckered scars of the Revenants to the striking woad that stains the skin of the Vargr, every Accursed bears their mark in a prominent place for all to see. While their basic appearance is common to all Accursed, the uniqueness of a Witchmark lies in its details. At the cardinal points of the Witchmark are ornate designs that identify and reflect the nature of the Witch who made it. In the space between the first and second rings, alchemical script spells out the details of the curse along with other information important to the Accursed. Within the final circle are the icons of power – sun or moon; book, bell, or candle; words of power. These spell out, in detail, the abilities, deeds, and potential of an Accursed, and are the most mutable part of the Witchmark.

The Witchmark grants powers to the Accursed. It allows an Accursed to sense others of his kind, and some can even communicate over long distances. Some Witchmarks act like divining rods, drawing the Accursed to mortals in desperate need, as they quest for atonement. The powers a Witchmark grants are unique to each individual. Over time, an Accursed may gain or lose abilities depending upon circumstance or progress on the road toward redemption.

As an Accursed grows in experience, his Witchmark grows in detail and complexity. This typically reflects the mental and spiritual struggle the Accursed fights against the influence of the curse. In a few historical instances, Accursed have thrown off the shackles of the curse and sundered a Witchmark forever. This is extremely rare. More often if an Accursed loses his Witchmark—through loss of the limb that carries his mark or by having it cut from his flesh—it simply grows back on a different part of the body.

the Witch armies were not a unified force. Indeed, the forces of the Witches fought each other as often as they fought against the mortals. Allegiances formed and dissolved as the individual Witches jockeyed for power amongst themselves. This internecine fighting mattered little to the beleaguered defenders however. Few mortals could tell the difference between one army of hideous monstrosities and another despite their individual liveries and banners.

After the betrayal and the sundering of the Grand Covenant, the Witch armies scattered to the winds. Most of the surviving banes followed their fleeing matrons back over the mountains. Most mercenaries abandoned the effort as soon as they realized there were no more payments forthcoming. Truly loyal warriors died by the score defending their dying leaders. The few that remained slunk off into the forests and fens of Morden and took to being brigands, highwaymen, and even mercenaries in the armies of the resistance. The Accursed, in particular, were abandoned and forced to find new ways to cope with their transformation. Today, while Morden is still deeply in the thrall of the Witches' power, the once great armies that strode across Morden's plains exist only in story and in nightmare. The remaining Witches and their loyal banes are the most organized powers still active in Morden.

The Armies of Light

The true threat of the Witches' invasion was not felt throughout Morden until the Outlands were fully overrun; this signaled the beginning of the Bane War. With the border realms completely under the Witches' domination, the rulers of Morden's nations knew that something had to be done lest they face the same fate. King Stefan Hightower II of Valkenholm sent couriers to all the other realms of Morden, soliciting support for building a military alliance to face the Witches' army. Under King Stefan's leadership, Valkenholm became the staging ground for a counterattack against the Grand Covenant.

One of the first steps for creating the Alliance was King Stefan's call to form a council of representatives from all the other realms. Most nations sent troops as well as envoys, but the troubled realms of Hyphrates and Hebron struggled to provide more than a token presence. When the combined forces took the field near Kulidar, King Stefan declared them the Armies of Light and charged them with a mission that every nation in the alliance could agree to without hesitation: throw back the Witches' invasion and destroy the Grand Covenant at its head.

King Stefan's natural authority as ruler of Valkenholm, his personal charisma, and his considerable martial accomplishments made him the only logical choice to lead the Armies of Light. This is not to say his appointment was unanimous. Boyar Nikolai Yeltsev of Steppengrad considered himself a better leader and campaigned tirelessly for the position. Nikolai had a long and storied career serving in Steppengrad as the Tsar's right-hand general, having personally slain numerous Banes in battle. In the end, King Stefan chose the Boyar to act as his second-in-command, smoothing things over with the prickly Gradniki. Many nobles in the Alliance quietly discussed appointing High King Gaelan of Caer Kainen—a well-known leader and commander in his own right whose absence from the Alliance councils had caused a great deal of discussion.

In addition to the presence of the King and the use of its lands as a staging ground, Valkenholm provided several orders of veteran knights and light cavalry units to the Armies of Light. Boyar Nikolai had brought with him a sizable force from Steppengrad, including the famous winged hussars, fierce groups of Cossack warriors, and several units of Gradniki musketeers. Despite the confusing lack of High King Gaelan's presence, Caer Kainen sent numerous bands of highlander scouts and irregulars. These forces proved invaluable to keep track of the Witches' armies and their progress through the devastated Outlands.

While most of the refugees from the Outlands made their way south to Port Sorrow, a few remained behind and offered their services to the Armies of Light, desiring a chance to strike back against the Banes ravaging their homeland. These Outlanders formed the Free Militia, a force of raiders and skirmishers that King Stefan hoped would provide key knowledge of the land occupied by the enemy. Another addition came from Mainreia, as the council there dispatched a force of Mounted Riflemen wielding the latest design in that nation's firearms technology. Even the famously unpredictable Seelie Fey sent a small force of warriors clad in glittering mail, led by King Auberon himself.

The Armies of Light depended upon expert caravaneers from Hyphrates to coordinate their need for water and supplies. Farriers, blacksmiths, and quartermasters were sent from Hebron to assist with keeping the large forces of men and horses ready for battle. The Enochian faith sent hundreds of priests to help as well, and these holy men did not confine themselves to spiritual matters—whenever a wagon needed to be unloaded, whenever there were soldiers hurt or sick, wherever the need was greatest—the Enochians pitched in.

Over forty years, the Armies of Light defended Morden from the Witches' army, fighting back waves of inhuman Banes, foreign mercenaries, and the Accursed shock troops. King Stefan and Boyar Nikolai led hundreds of raids, hit-and-run attacks, and sallies against the growing threat. Although the Armies of Light racked up an impressive number of minor victories, the Banes and Accursed they fought were simply too numerous to defeat. Supported by the immense power of the Witches, the dark army pushed forward until the forests of Valkenholm were constantly under siege from horizon to horizon. Cauldron-born poured over the highland passes from Caer Kainen, forcing the Armies of Light to suspend offensive operations to focus on defending a border long though secure.

Faced with the prospect of defeat after four decades of constant war, King Stefan made preparations for one final battle—a desperate plan, relying upon King Auberon, was hatched to give the Armies of Light one last hope for victory.

The Betrayal

After decades of war with the Witch armies, the Alliance began to realize that there remained little hope for victory. The Outlands, which had first fallen to the invaders, were completely razed. The inhabitants had been transformed into tools of the Witches—the Accursed. Large portions of the surviving nations of Morden had already fallen to the banes and the Witchmarked. It seemed it would only be a matter of time before all would crumble.

The heroes of the Alliance recognized their impending doom, and began to discuss their more desperate options. Hard decisions were made, and various options were discussed. Assets that had been committed to making their homelands livable were instead assigned to exploration efforts and refugee support, in the hopes that a new region could be found for these homeless. At the same time, they prepared to make whatever sacrifices might be necessary in order to delay or deter the invasion's progress.

Ultimately, the leadership council decided that the only possible hope for victory would be to slay the Witches directly. Most of the council members believed that if the Witches were slain, their banes and Accursed would crumble to dust. A few suspected that the loss of even one Witch—who were believed immortal—could be enough to deter the others from pressing their attack.

A plan was hatched, in conjunction with the Seelie Fey. The Fey had played only a minor role during the invasion to date. Though both sides had attempted to recruit their assistance, the fickle beings had chosen to avoid direct participation in the war. However, as the

Witches continued to destroy vast swatches of Morden, the Seelie wept at the wanton loss of life and natural beauty. The capricious entities decided that it was time to commit to stopping the Witches.

After negotiations and planning were complete, the Fey made a false offer to ally with the Witches. The Witches knew well of their power, and recognized it, though they also knew not to trust the unpredictable creatures. As creatures of magic, the Seelie could provide a tremendous level of support to the Witches, and even offer transportation to the invading forces through their otherworld—the Summerlands. The invaders were naturally suspicious of the offer of alliance, but accepted it with reservations. The potential for benefit drew their greed, and overcame their reluctance and concern.

After a few initial sorties to build trust, the Fey began working with the Grand Coven to direct a final dramatic action, designed to finally eliminate all human resistance. Most of the Witches marshaled their forces, preparing a major offensive that could roll across the Ash Plains. At the same time, the Djinn took command of the reserves. She directed them on a drive through the Summerlands, so that they could strike directly at Manreia. During their hurried march, the Seelie Fey—in conjunction with the heroes of the Alliance—revealed their treachery.

While the armies of the Alliance fought a holding action against the Witch armies in the Ash Plains, the heroes and elite units had lain hidden in the Summerlands. As the Djinn and her forces passed by, the armies of Morden unleashed an attack. In the course of the battle, King Auberon's blade pierced the Djinn's ethereal flesh. A massive blast of uncontrolled magic was unleashed as the two forces came into contact.

In an instant, an enormous surge of magical energy passed between the otherworldly Summerlands and the physical world of Morden. The wave of energy killed tens of thousands who fought in the Ash Plains—on both sides of the conflict. Some who had fought in the Summerland's battle were spontaneously transported back to Morden. Others vanished from the physical world with no explanation—whether they travelled to the Summerlands, elsewhere, or were simply vaporized is unknown.

Since the Betrayal, there has been no further contact with the Summerlands, the Seelie Fey, or the Djinn. Not even the Unseelie Fey or the surviving Witches know the ultimate fate of those who vanished during the battle. In the end, this battle proved enough to end the war, though not in quite the way the Alliance had intended.

Recognizing their mortality, the remaining Witches lost their thirst for conflict. Many blamed each other for the mistake in allying with the Fey and for the apparent death of their sister, the Djinn. More than half of the Witches took their armies with them and retreated back beyond the Darkfall Peaks. Five remained behind, securing their hold over the nations of Morden. After all, without the leaders who had vanished in the final battle, there were no human armies to protect the remaining nations.

Aftermath

After the majority of the Witches' forces retreated beyond the mountains, they abandoned many of their tools. The armies that they used to conquer Morden were not needed to secure it. Their banes were adequate to keep the people and nations firmly under their control. The Witches released the humans that they had inducted into their service, so that these soldiers could once more care for the land, providing their taxes and homage to their conquerors.

THE ORDER OF THE PENITENT

After the majority of the Witches' forces retreated beyond the mountains, they abandoned many of their tools. The armies that they used to conquer Morden were not needed to secure it. Their banes were adequate to keep the people and nations firmly under their control. The Witches released the humans that they had inducted into their service, so that these soldiers could once more care for the land, providing their taxes and homage to their conquerors.

With the war concluded, the surviving Witchmarked were largely abandoned. The Witches and the new governments had no desire to support the Accursed. Common citizens wanted nothing to do with the reminders of the lost war and the terrible sacrifices made to the Witches. Governors were unwilling to try to force the citizens of their cities to accommodate the Witchmarked. Many feared that this could lead to rioting and further deaths, potentially adding new delays to the process of rebuilding after the war. Even the few Accursed who still had surviving families were unable to return to their homes. Most families were unwilling to accept the transformed monstrosities as their missing relatives. Many other Witchmarked were unwilling to even face their families, knowing the horrors that they had become.

It was the Enochian church that first offered a solution to this problem. The conclave of bishops feared that the souls of all Accursed were truly damned, but they did believe that there might be some faint hope for redemption. To attain this goal, they created the Order of the Penitent. The organization's goal was to offer the

Accursed an opportunity to cleanse their souls through service to God and humanity. The bishops designated St. Vitus—patron saint of redemption—as patron saint of the order. Upon joining, each Accursed was assigned a blessed medallion containing a relic of St. Vitus to remind them of their sacred obligation to the cause.

In the few short years since its formation, most Accursed have eagerly joined the Order. Accepting the title of Penitent, these desperate souls have found an organization that offers both a home and a chance at redemption. Members need not swear any vows—though many do. They simply must devote their lives to serving the Order's goals as best they can. Often, the church sends requests to the Order's members, asking for assistance in various tasks. In turn, Enochian churches offer shelter, succor, and basic amenities to the Penitents that visit seeking a place for spiritual and physical recuperation.

The Order's Factions

During its brief existence, many Accursed have used the Order for a variety of causes, and different factions have begun to emerge. While these factions are seldom truly divisive, there are often members holding conflicting viewpoints within the Order. The Enochian church has not taken an official stance towards any of these different sects. Some argue that this is a sign the church is unaware of their existence. Others believe more strongly that this is simply a way for the church to pretend that the Order is a unified group that remains true to its original focus of penitence and redemption.

One large group is fiercely devoted to establishing an Accursed homeland, separate from the places inhabited by humanity. Members of this faction, who refer to themselves as Adherents of Aliyah, have begun working to try to find places and resources so that they could establish an independent nation devoted to the surviving Accursed. The Enochian church has not acknowledged this effort, and—as there are no high-ranking Witchmarked clergy—would be unlikely to endorse it. In spite of this, adherents believe that the group is gaining momentum and making progress towards founding their nation. With the weakened governments and the massive losses from the war, there are certainly areas open to new settlement.

Other significant factions within the Order exist among the various Witchbreeds. It seems that many Accursed have come to prefer the companies of those who share their curse. In some instances, those Penitents who have learned new ways of unlocking their Witchmarks have begun to mentor those who are less accomplished. This has created an institutionalized system for learning more about their unholy corruption within an organization that is ironically devoted to redemption and forgiveness.

Cairn Kainen

The realm of Cairn Kainen once bore a different name. It was originally known as *Caer Kainen* and is still called that by many of its remaining citizens. At the time of its founding, *Caer Kainen* was home to many tribes of men that arrived in Morden through the mythical "lightning bridge." These tribes found a lush valley between high, arching peaks, a broad realm composed of sweeping moors, misty boglands, and long stretches of wild heath. They looked upon this rich and verdant land and knew it was theirs to call home. Over the years, through trade, treaty, and intermarriage, the tribes solidified into seven great clans. Fractious and prideful, these clans had great difficulties working together, waging war against one another as often as they warred against their neighbors in the Outlands and Hyphrates.

In time however, one man of will and courage managed to forge the clans into a single nation. His name was Bran MacLir, the true father of *Caer Kainen*. Bran assembled a group of mighty warriors as his shieldbearers and took them into battle after battle. Never defeated, Bran won the loyalties of each clan chief one by one. Once the clans were pacified, the defeated clan chiefs crowned MacLir High King, and gave over to him sole rule of the land. Bran's first order as king was to construct a powerful fortress to serve both as the realm's capital and to protect its people. The fortress took years to build and drew master craftsmen from all across Morden. Once complete, Bran named the fortress Shieldhaven, and his realm became known as *Caer Kainen*, meaning "the Unbroken Fortress" in the language of the MacLir clan.

There are many tales of High King Bran MacLir—that he was the first bearer of the magic sword *Spatha Sancta*, that he defeated a dragon on the shores of Loch Lumond, that he climbed the tallest peak in the Highlands to find his queen. The clansmen of *Caer Kainen* claim that they are all true. Bran's kingship was legendary, and his successors ruled the realm wisely and well for many generations.

The people of *Caer Kainen*, like their ancient king, have their own wild character to match the terrain of their home. Kainenites celebrate art and music as well as strength of arms. Each fall, they hold the Harvestmoon, a week-long festival famous throughout Morden. Considered both savage and decadent by some of the other nations, the citizens of *Caer Kainen* display little care for such labels, preferring to spend their time living life to the fullest.

In battle, the clans of *Caer Kainen* fielded large groups of light infantry and irregulars. It is said that few could match the stealth and cunning of *Caer Kainen* scouts nor the unbridled aggression of their berserk sword masters. Kainenites prized both courage and exhibition in warfare. The most popular warriors were those who had proven their bravery and skill in one-on-one duels and other displays of prowess.

In the end, what led to the end of *Caer Kainen* was no lack of courage or skill. Instead, it was love that brought the Morrigan into their lands. Her arrival began a tragedy the likes of which was never before seen in Morden.

Role in the Bane War

When word first reached *Caer Kainen* of the Witches' invasion, the clansmen readied for war. Some of the bolder clans led raids against the Witch armies, specifically targeting the foreign mercenaries who marched under the Witches' black banners. The High King summoned his advisors to Shieldhaven and made plans for how best to defend his home—and that of his wife and children. *Caer Kainen*'s topography made it a difficult land to attack and hold by an enemy force. The countless dense fens and moors below the Highlands were impossible for most forces to cross in any kind of order, and the soaring Highlands offered an excellent view for sentries spotting the foe long before any assault could be launched.

However, it was not long before Shieldhaven's attention was diverted by a visitor; a tall woman of unearthly beauty, dark of eye and hair. She had given her name as "the Lady Macha," and she humbly asked for High King Gaelen's protection and shelter within the walls. As a matter of courtesy, Macha's request was granted. Within a week, Lady Macha had made herself welcome in the city. Within a month, she had joined Gaelen's court as one of his most trusted advisors.

Shieldhaven was home to many of *Caer Kainen*'s most powerful heroes and wisest scholars, all friends and confidants of the High King. These councilors, along with the Queen, became increasingly concerned over the following months—while *Caer Kainen* had been spared the full brunt of the Witches' invasion, it had become clear that High King Gaelen was utterly besotted with the Lady Macha. So deep was Gaelen's obsession with her that he began to spend his time exclusively in her company, ignoring or delegating any matters of state and kingship to his councilors. Without the High King's leadership, managing matters with the various clan holds became difficult if not outright impossible. Meanwhile, the lack of direction began to sow sloth and confusion amongst military leaders. As the Outlands were ravaged by the Witch armies, the forces of *Caer Kainen* dithered aimlessly, focusing their efforts on drill and preparation for orders that never came.

Matters continued to deteriorate until the night of the new moon. That eve, High King Gaelan emerged, gaunt and haggard, his eyes feverish. He gathered his bodyguards and proceeded to slaughter his way through the keep. No one, not even the High King's wife, children, and oldest friends were spared. "I do this for my love," he said over and over, as his sword dripped red upon the flagstones. None could stand against the High King's blade, and he fought with a cold fury that none had ever before seen. No argument or reason would he hear, nor even the tears and pleas of his own family. In the end, even Gaelan's bodyguards abandoned the scene of carnage. The last clansman to flee Shieldhaven glimpsed Lady Macha draping her arms around the High King, and heard his final words as a whisper. "I am damned, and I am joyous."

The treachery and madness of the High King was a dire blow to the clans of Cairn Kainen. Many lost all hope or gave in to complete despair. Those who rode to Shieldhaven seeking answers found only a ruined shell, empty of life and stripped of its former glory. However, darker tidings were still to come.

The mysterious Lady Macha soon revealed herself as one of the foul Witches, claiming the title of the Morrigan—a queen of war and death. Stories of her necromantic powers spread across the land. All feared her power over the dead and the massive dark cauldron she used to concentrate her witchcraft. Her emissaries were dark ravens who fed fat upon the bodies of the slain, croaking word of her arrival to every corner of the land in strangely human voices.

Soon after the High King's rampage, bands of shambling undead warriors attacked many clan holds throughout the region. The clansmen were horrified to realize that nearly all of the corpse-warriors they faced were in fact their own countrymen, transformed by the Morrigan's witchcraft using her Dark Cauldron. Bereft of leadership and under constant siege by the living dead, the clans of Cairn Kainen shattered. Only four of the great clans managed to weather the attacks intact, and two more were completely wiped out. Each clan's losses were compounded when their own fallen would return to the field in another battle as a cauldron-born.

In time, the massive army of undead created by the Morrigan's magic marched over the highlands and into Valkenholm, attempting to smash the Alliance of nations that had been building its strength in that realm. The cauldron-borns' march left the land torn, the clan holds huddled behind their walls, and three men out of every ten dead or transformed. The clansmen mourned for their nation, for the fall of their High King, and for the end that they felt had come to their proud lineage. Their realm had become known as Cairn Kainen, a grave for all that they had lost.

Aftermath

After the fall of the Alliance, the Morrigan sent raven messengers to all the surviving clan holds in Cairn Kainen. Through her avian servants, the Witch established the basic tenets of her rule. First, each clan hold was to provide a number of men and women as tribute every season, without fail. Second, any commandment of hers was to be carried out without question. Those who resisted these two rules would, along with their immediate families, be transformed into cauldron-born. The ravens warned that the Blackroot Wode belonged entirely to the Morrigan, and any who trespassed beneath those boughs would welcome the Dark Cauldron's embrace. Lastly, the ruins of Shieldhaven were never to be rebuilt.

Divided We Fall

For the clans of Cairn Kainen, there is *always* a reason to hate another clan. The justifications for these feuds range from age-old disagreements over land and property to bitter vengeance for attacks, deaths, or slighted honor.

Even the High King was only able to compel unity of the clans through strenuous diplomacy and politics. The hopelessness that spread across the land in the wake of High King Gaelan's madness has led to the rifts between the clans widening even further. The sundered bonds and their stubborn refusal to repair connections beyond their own clan hold is Cairn Kainen's greatest weakness and the most heinous wound it suffered from the Witches' conquest.

The player characters are likely to become involved in these inter-clan conflicts whenever they visit Cairn Kainen. Perhaps one clanlord desires something held by his rival, or wishes the Accursed to enact revenge for a slight—real or imagined. Individual groups of Accursed may be able to make a difference between one or two clans and make a start at building some unity in Cairn Kainen. Discovering the truth about the Morrigan's involvement in the downfall of High King Gaelan and convincing the clanlords of its veracity would be a major step in the right direction toward repairing the damage done to the clans' sense of unity.

Since Cairn Kainen's conquest, the Morrigan has done little besides enforce her edicts upon the clan holds. Her ravens provide her with spies to seek out seeds of discontent, but in the last few years she has shown less interest in making examples of troublemakers. While this has caused some clansmen to grow bolder in their mutterings, the Morrigan's required tributes at the turn of each season and a few select demonstrations of her power have kept the clan holds in line. The ravens offer rewards to clansmen willing to inform on each other, and the black birds are always watching to see if outsiders are taking an interest in the realm.

For the people of Cairn Kainen, everyday life is now a struggle for survival, their future uncertain. So many clansmen have died that even the smaller clan holds are echoing empty, and some villages are entirely absent of inhabitants. The remaining clan holds have banded tighter to themselves, begrudging even the most basic of assistance to others. Hospitality is a thing of the past, and the once-treasured Harvestmoon festival has not been held in years. Simmering resentment builds between each clan and its neighbor as resources dwindle, with blame and mistrust on every clan lord's lips. The High King's treachery destroyed all fellowship in Cairn Kainen, and each clan looks out only for its own preservation.

In the meantime, the Morrigan has taken residence within Blackroot Wode, a thick forest on the edge of the Highlands. Within the wode, the Morrigan has slowly begun to build her own kingdom, a realm of the dead, populated by the more intelligent cauldron-born. Among the bracken, her unliving servants re-enact strange customs and skeletal knights in armor of no known style do battle beneath banners none have yet recognized. Upon thrones of bone, the Morrigan and her consort, the Horned King, preside over this grotesque parody of a royal court. Some scholars believe that the Morrigan intends to re-make all of Cairn Kainen in another image, to transform the realm into an echo of another kingdom that fell into dust long ago.

However, the Witch's preoccupations in Blackroot Wode, whatever the truth, have seemingly blinded her to the growing resistance within Cairn Kainen. The clanlords grow more restless with each passing season, as more and more homes and villages echo hollowly, as more and more tributes are sent to the Morrigan's ravens with none to ever return. Even the ravens' vigilance, once keen and seemingly omnipresent, has grown lax. Bands of Revenants have taken advantage of this to strike at outlying groups of cauldron-born. Irked by these renegade Accursed, the Horned King has recently been seen leading patrols through the highlands, seeking out any who would defy the rule of his beloved Morrigan.

Culture and Government

The culture of the Kainenites is irrevocably bound to their clans. The clan is not only a network of friends, family, and obligation—it is also part of a clansman's identity, shaping his beliefs and traditions.

A clan is centered around its clan hold, a fortified town or village that typically includes a walled keep or bastion. Smaller clans make do with villages and townships hardly dissimilar from those found elsewhere in Morden, while the great clan holds are more like squat, self-sufficient fortresses. Within a clan hold, the clan lord's word is law, although tradition demands that he must at least consider the counsel of his advisors and the eldest in his immediate family.

Once there were seven great clans, but that number dwindled over time until only five remain. According to the bards, one of the great clans was exiled from Caer Kainen three centuries ago, accused of consorting with creatures from over the Darkwall and plunging all of the land in danger. Two more clans were slain by the Morrigan and her cauldron-born to build an army of undead, fueling the conquest of all Morden.



The remaining great clans—Reacher, Branagh, Finnoul, and Martigan—remain isolated and insular. They refuse to even consider any alliance with one another after the treachery of the High King. A fifth clan, Moonfar, has recently risen to prominence by offering refuge to many smaller clans who would otherwise have not survived on their own.

Regardless of clan affiliation, the people of Cairn Kainen share a love for art and music. Skirling pipes and drums play while young men and women engage in wild, spinning dances. Many clansmen turn themselves into works of art with spiraling tattoos on their faces and arms, and craftsmen work these same spirals into their creations. Celebration of such pastimes used to be common amongst the clans, particularly during the Harvestmoon. It was said that at Harvestmoon, even the proudest clan lord granted boons, and every maid, no matter her birth, danced around the maypole. However, the current isolation of clan holds means that the festival has not been held in almost two generations. Instead, each clan has celebrated apart, in a more subdued fashion.

Bards keep the clans' oral traditions, stories, and songs. Respect for the arts lies deep in the peoples' hearts, and to this day, bards are rarely refused guest-right at any clan hold. They are nearly always provided with meals and shelter by a clanhold in exchange for an evening's entertainment in the form of story and song. In addition, it is traditional for every clan leader, up to and including the High King, to listen carefully to a Bard's counsel. A Bard's special status with the clans means that he is given great leniency with regards to laws and traditions of the clan hold.

Things have slowly changed amongst the clans over the centuries as outside influences have crept into Cairn Kainen's culture. Nowhere is this more evident than in the growing acceptance of Enochian priests as advisors to the clan lords. This role has been adopted by an increasing number of clan holds since the conquest.

The Morrigan allows the clans to govern in her name, having little interest in the finer points of rule. The Witch established her strictures and ensures that they are obeyed with her cauldron-born and her raven messengers, a situation that has endured for decades. As long as the clans continue to send their tributes and stay out of Blackroot Wode, the Morrigan is largely content to ignore them and let them do as they will. At any rate, the fractured nature of Cairn Kainen's people means that direct governance would be a challenge even for a being as mighty as a Witch.

No one is certain why the Morrigan chose to take Cairn Kainen as her roost. The most popular theories claim that the prosperous and plentiful clansmen would provide her with the greatest number of cauldron-born, whilst others believe that the Morrigan has some strange kinship or connection with the region itself, and point to the legends of High King Bran for proof. The Witch's ongoing transformation of Blackroot Wode causes muttering and trepidation. Some believe that the Morrigan chose Cairn Kainen because it would best suit her desire to re-build the realm in the image of another alien place, long since turned to dust.

Important Citizens

THE WHITE HART

Clansmen in the Highlands have passed around legends of a snow-white hart of unusual size and cunning, with antlers of pure, shining silver. The White Hart, as this beast has become known, is a mysterious being that has been glimpsed from time to time over centuries. In every appearance, the White Hart has been an omen of peace and well-being, guiding folk to safety or to their heart's desire. One particular legend claims that High King Bran once found the White Hart drinking from the shore of Loch Lumond, and followed its graceful, leaping form to the hiding place of his lost heir. Perhaps most worryingly, since the conquest of Cairn Kainen, the White Hart has only been seen once.

CATH SARDER

It is said that in this time of suspicion and unrest, there is only one being who can find shelter at every clan hold—the Revenant known as Cath Sarder. His hunger for revenge against the Morrigan drives the Accursed like a whip, and it is rare that he rests more than a few days before setting off again into the moors to hunt down and destroy more cauldron-born. Many clansmen say that Sarder is an exceptional tracker and one of the most impressive marksmen ever known—several clan holds swear that his blackbriar rifle never misses, and the Revenant casts his own shot from silver and cold iron. The hunter rarely lingers in any one place, but those who have spoken to him sense a terrible loneliness in the Revenant's aloof mein. He brushes off all but the most determined offers of aid and has so far never agreed to work alongside any others in his continuing efforts to strike back at Cairn Kainen's conquerer. However, anyone who seeks the best ways to move around Cairn Kainen unnoticed by the Morrigan's spies would do well to seek him out.

Hebron

Before the coming of the Witches, Hebron was a peaceful, bucolic land of rolling hills, rich, fertile farmland, and craggy mountains. Most people lived quiet lives on one of the many kibbutz, communal farms the size of small towns that dotted the landscape. They spent their days growing grain, raising cattle, and tending to groves of dates, citrus, and olives. The few cities that Hebron contained, including the capital Parnath, were centers of learning, art, and commerce that rivaled the cities of Manreia and Steppengrad for wealth and culture. The Hebronites themselves were peace-loving and deeply tied to their history. Their traditions valued family and community as opposed to the individual, and put a high value on hospitality and honest dealing. As far as the Hebronites were concerned, their only worries were the weather and the machinations of their ancient enemies in Hyphrates. This all changed in an instant with the coming of the Grand Coven and the start of the Bane War.

Role in the Bane War

When the Crone came to Hebron, the Hebronites were content to talk about it and let their decidedly unprepared army deal with the problem rather than take a more proactive stance. The people of Hebron had lived through invasions before—mostly from Hyphrates, but, in the dim past, also from Manreia and Steppengrad—and they had always survived. Why change their lives, they said, when the military can just run these intruders off as they always have? Isn't that what we pay our taxes for? This attitude was to be their undoing. The power and fury of the Witch Armies was unlike anything the Hebronites had seen before, and the goal of the invasion was nothing short of total domination. As the Crone and her Golems, constructs, and foreign mercenaries swept across the land, the Hebronites were slow to react. Even as their small, beleaguered military stood against the onslaught, the people talked themselves to death about what should be done.

It was only after a military coup in the city of Parnath that things changed for Hebron. Veteran military leaders, angry with their civilian leaders' seeming inability to take the threat seriously or get anything done, seized power for themselves and slowly, but surely, changed the course of the invasion. They quickly set about moving fleeing Hebronites into the cities, and then fortifying them against sieges. Much of the country's economy, which was mostly based on agriculture and foreign trade, was re-tooled toward the manufacture of weapons of warfare. Every Hebronite who could carry a sword, shoe a horse, forge

a tool, or bandage a wound was pressed into military service, including the sons and daughters of privilege. The national attitude was slowly shifted and focused on two primary goals: the destruction of the invading Witch Armies and the preservation of Hebron.

As the Witch Armies laid waste to Morden, the Crone entered Hebron at the head of her army of Golems and terrible constructs claiming the small country as her own. The Hebronites, devoted to their country and family, rose up as one to defy the invaders and drive them from the nation. They fortified their cities, and every able-bodied Hebronite took up arms to defend their homeland. The fighting in Hebron was every bit as fierce as it was in Valkenholm or Steppengrad, but in the end the Hebronites held fast.

After the great betrayal and the dissolution of the Grand Coven, the Hebronites stood triumphant among the corpses of their enemies and countrymen. While they had succeeded, they were a changed people. The easy-going, hospitable, live-and-let-live attitude the Hebronites were so famous for was gone, replaced by suspicion, caution, and deep bitterness. Over the decades, these farmer-scholars had forged themselves into some of the finest warriors in Morden, and had won, but at an incredible cost to their individual and national spirit.



Aftermath

The militarization of Hebron's society over the course of the Bane War was both a blessing and a curse. The intense training in military weapons and tactics allowed the small country to throw off the Crone's invasion when other neighboring countries succumbed to the Witch Armies. It gave the Hebronites a focus and a strong philosophy to rally around, that being the protection of Hebron and its people. Unfortunately, it also bred suspicion, xenophobia, and a totalitarian mindset in the Hebronites. They soon saw themselves as alone in the world and constantly beset by aggressors. They became a bitter, put-upon people, barely recognizable as the friendly and open people they once were. Their experiences in the Bane War have left them exhausted. They now have a huge buildup of military materiel and a surplus of hardened citizen-warriors, which has led to an unsustainable society that is slowly devouring itself and drowning in self-pity.

Culture and Government

For centuries before the invasion of the Witch Armies, a council of elders led Hebron. These councilors were elected leaders or wise men from the various cities, towns, districts, and kibbutzum that dotted the land. Once every year, they all convened in Parnath where they made reports on the happenings in their homes, debated legislation, and worked to improve Hebron and the lot of its peoples. During the weeks that these elders were in Parnath attending to their duties, they stayed in the Hall of Elders: a sprawling, palatial residence built solely to house the wrangling, squabbling collection of politicians and country wise men. In this heady environment of debate and high political thought, shot through with tobacco smoke, the smell of coffee, and vicious back channel politicking, the lively business of governance carried on undisturbed for generations. All of this changed in an instant with the coming of the Crone.

As the Witch Armies poured into Hebron, its cities fell and its far-flung kibbutz were overrun. Hebronites fled to the larger, better defended cities, and the long serving town and city leaders made their arduous way through the warzones to Parnath. There, they planned to sit down with their colleagues and discuss their plans for fighting the war against these new invaders. Sadly, their efforts were largely for naught. Nearly half of the leaders never made it to Parnath. Some were captured, others killed or died in accidents along the road. It was a severely reduced Council of Elders that met in the Hall of Elders. By the time they gathered their wits it became clear that there would be little for them to do. A cabal of military leaders took advantage of the invasion and the

confusion to seize control of the reins of government. They quickly consolidated power in Parnath and sent the assembled remnants of the Council of Elders back to their respective homes with the following simple message: Prepare your people for war. There were loud and sometimes violent protests against this coup from both the Elders and the civilian population at large, but the military had both the numbers and the weapons to back their claim. The Elders returned home bearing their martial message. Since then, Hebron has operated under a de facto military dictatorship. While this has served the country well enough in that it has allowed the military to turn the full extent of Hebron's resources against the Witch Armies without much civilian interference, it is also one more change to the country's national character. A change that was, arguably, for the worse.

Much of Hebron was rolling farmland before the war. The majority of this land was worked by men and women who lived and worked on the numerous kibbutz scattered about the country. The kibbutzim were collective farms, communities where the citizens all owned the land collectively, worked it together, and shared in its bounty. Many of these communities even owned their tools and farm implements collectively, possessing very little in the way of private property. The kibbutzim were the backbone of Hebronite food production for centuries, as the people who worked them, called kibbutzniks, sold the surplus left over after tending to their own needs to surrounding towns and cities. The kibbutznik themselves tended to be gracious, good natured, and generous. They lived together, worked together, raised their children together, and were a tighter-knit community than many in Morden. In fact, the ancient reputation for Hebronite hospitality—nearly extinguished by the Bane War—started among the bucolic kibbutznik.

Life on the kibbutz was physically demanding, but also more egalitarian and socially advanced in some ways than life in the cities. Every man, woman, and child on the kibbutz was expected to carry their weight and provide to the kibbutz as their talents and abilities allowed. All were treated relatively equally, and there was little distinction between genders. Ample time was made for recreation and personal betterment through use of clever scheduling and rigorous adherence to various bylaws voted on by the kibbutznik. This included the "eight hours of work, eight hours of sleep, and eight hours to do as one will" stricture popular among kibbutzim, a luxury not even enjoyed in wealthy Parnath. While farming is weary, backbreaking work no matter how it is packaged, the kibbutznik were on the whole happier, healthier, and more level-headed than their city-dwelling cousins.

Sadly, little is left of the kibbutzim today. Most were destroyed during the Bane War, their crops put to the torch and kibbutznik captured by the Crone's forces. Those who survived fled to the fortified cities or to far away places like Port Sorrow.

In contrast to the communal, relaxed life on the kibbutz, city life in Hebron was a boisterous, hectic life with little balance between work and play before the war. Beautiful, mighty Parnath was the jewel of Hebron, and much of Southern Morden, since its founding centuries ago. Once a talkative, open-handed people, Hebronites more inclined toward business or creative endeavors—as opposed to the working of a plow or the tending of a date orchard—settled in the cities and made them among the busiest and most vibrant in Morden. Hebron's cultural centers once pulsed day and night with activity: with music and singing, the steady thrum of business, and the coming and going of countless caravans from all across Morden. The Port at Parnath was one of the busiest in the Western World. The wealth it brought in from Hebron's neighbors and from the mysterious peoples across the sea made Parnath a destination for professionals and artists alike. It was in this crucible of commerce, art, and learning that the kaffeeklatsch was born.

Similar to the samovar and tea drinking ceremonies of Steppengrad, the kaffeeklatsch is a tradition of gathering over coffee and light meals to discuss the issues of the day. Where the samovar ceremonies typically took place in homes, the kaffeeklatsch was formed in the high-street cafes and the alleys of the bazaars. Here, in cool, dimly lit rooms, men and women would gather around tiny, poisonously strong cups of coffee and glasses of arak or sherbet and discuss the pressing issues that caught the attention of the well-informed. Few subjects were off limits in the kaffeeklatsch, and discussion ranged from politics to culture to societal issues to the price of grain. These gatherings and the coffee houses that hosted them were also breeding grounds for gossip and rumor, and were the birthplace of Hebron's dizzying array of political and religious factions. Very few kaffeeklatsch exist today, and those few are to be found in Parnath alone.

There is little time for idle coffee drinking in Hebron's new militaristic regime, and it seems that most of the once garrulous Hebronites have lost their taste for both coffee and spirited debate. Those that persist however, mostly in the bazaars and working-class areas of the city, are still hotbeds of gossip, dissent, and some say revolution.

Important Citizens

GIDEON BAR HESHET

Gideon bar Heshet is a man with a single driving goal in life, preservation of the Hebronites. A soldier's soldier, bar Heshet is a tall, rangy man in his autumn years with short-cropped white hair and gray eyes. His features are sharp, his expression equal parts weariness, fury, and cool resolve, and his clean-shaven face is pocked and criss-crossed with the scars of a thousand battles.

Among his peers, bar Heshet was one of the few who took the Bane War seriously from the start. He could see the destructive potential of the Witch armies, and the unyielding determination of their troops. Attempts to rally support for greater response and military buildup were met with dismissal, and his advice was only considered when, one after another, the cities of Hebron were taken and burned by the Crone's forces. Feeling that he alone had the will and foresight to save Hebron, bar Heshet gathered a like-minded group of officers together and, in a single night, wrested control of the ship of state from the lazy and prideful old men who had guided it for so many generations.

He fought the war vigorously, and eventually defeated the Crone's army. In the course of his war however, he managed to change the demeanor of an entire country and to turn a once healthy and happy people into suspicious, hard-eyed soldiers. He cares little for the opinions of others though, and cares nothing for the judgment of historians and academics.

Points of Interest

Like its people, the natural beauty of Hebron is incredibly resilient and has withstood the decades of war remarkably well. Also, much like the Hebronites, the land has been irrevocably changed and bears only a passing resemblance to the beautiful place it was before the coming of the Crone.

REPENTANCE ROAD

For centuries, the saying "All roads lead to Parnath" was common among teamsters and caravan drivers all across Morden. As a major port and commercial city, Parnath was among the most important destinations for trade before the coming of the Witches. Now, though, the roads leading to Parnath carry refugees and sorrow instead of spices, grain, or gold. The Repentance Road is the name given to the main artery that runs south from the Ash Plains and ends at the port of Parnath. Tens of thousands of refugees have traveled this road since the beginning of the Bane War, fleeing the advancing Witch

armies in the hopes of finding a safer place. The roadside is littered with tiny shrines, graves, and the cast off treasures of generations of asylum seekers. These sad, tattered piles of rags, mementos, and trinkets tell the human cost of the Bane War better than any historian or storyteller.

MATZEDA: THE MARTYR'S REST

Matzeda is one of Hebron's lost fortified cities, and the site of the longest siege of the Bane War before the siege of Parnath. Nestled high in the Baal-Goleth mountains, the ancient fortified town of Matzeda stood watch over a strategic mountain pass between Hebron and Hyphrates. For centuries, the garrison at Matzeda was responsible for monitoring traffic between the two neighboring countries. In addition, they also acted as the first line of defense against incursions into Hebron from Hyphrates. Their final test came as the forces of the Djinn assisted by elements of the Crone's army came through the pass to attack Hebron on its flank. Thanks to their not insignificant knowledge of siege warfare and their stalwart natures, the Matzedan garrison stopped the invading army in its tracks.

Bogging the enemy down with tricks learned from centuries holding off the Hyphratians, the garrison held the combined Witch forces at bay for years. Eventually, however, attrition, dwindling supplies, disease, and the constant stream of new reinforcements for the Witch armies finally took their toll. After more than a decade, the walls of Matzeda finally fell to the banes and mercenary siege engineers. As the Witches' forces flooded into the town, the remaining members of the garrison and the civilian population committed suicide in a mass martyrdom, using their bodies as one last obstacle to the Witch Army's onslaught.

Today, Matzeda lies in ruin, home only to ghosts and monsters. The city's name was a rallying cry in every city throughout Hebron, and gave comfort and hope to the people during the long siege of Parnath. In places where the Crone's forces still hold sway, the name of Matzeda is anathema. Even the whisper of it is cause for incarceration, torture, and death at the hands of the Old Witch's forces.

THE WEeping COLOSSUS

Far to the east of Parnath, in the foothills of the Baal-Goleth Mountains, stands a statue of an ancient Hebronite warrior on a massive octagonal plinth of cracked and weathered marble. This massive statue is constructed of thin weathered bronze plates stained with verdigris held together with rivets over an intricate lattice of rusted iron. The warrior, dressed in ancient Hebronite armor, stands nearly one hundred feet tall from the soles of his sandals to the crest atop his helmet.

In his left hand he carries a huge, square, convex shield embossed with ancient sigils, and in his right a long, leaf-bladed spear half again as long as the statue is tall. The carriage of the Colossus' head and the set of its broad shoulders suggest a regal, haughty demeanor. Its face is mostly worn away thanks to time and the elements, but what can be made out is set in grim determination as it stares westward over the lands of Hebron. This is the Weeping Colossus, a mysterious statue of great antiquity.

Legends say that for every drop of Hebronite blood spilled in anger, the Colossus sheds a solitary tear. Before the coming of the Witches, this was largely a fanciful tale told to amuse children. Now however, the statue does weep. Since the fall of Matzeda, the Colossus has wept bitter, rusty tears that stain its plinth and the ground around it a deep red. The reasons for this phenomenon are unknown, and in the desperate decade since the end of the Bane War no one has had the time nor inclination to investigate. It is said by those who have the time to ponder such things, that only when the last vestiges of the Crone's forces are driven from Hebron and the lives of every man, woman, and child who lost their lives in the Bane War are avenged will the Colossus stop its incessant weeping.

There is little in the long, meticulously recorded history of Hebron to explain the provenance of the Weeping Colossus. No king claims it, no people worship it, and no artist put his stamp on it. Here and there are hints of its creation, the suggestion of a patron or mighty ruler who called for its construction, but nothing approaching confirmed fact. The sigils etched into the statue's shield are largely illegible, faded by passing centuries and defaced by vandals. Letters carved into the statue's plinth appear to be of the ancient alphabet of Hebron, but like the writing on the shield have faded nearly beyond recognition. No matter its origin, a number of fantastic tales have sprung up around the Colossus, including the one that gives the statue its colorful name. One such tale even suggests that the statue came to life during the early days of the Bane War and destroyed a nearby town. No one has been able to prove or disprove this rumor however, since the area is nearly impassable due to the high concentration of banes and roving bands of displaced mercenaries still in the foothills surrounding the statue.

Hyphrates

As one of the first areas settled in all of Morden, the earliest colonists had boundless opportunities to select an idyllic locale. These eager explorers chose to take advantage of the gulf sheltered by the southern extension of the Darkfall Peaks, and the bounty of the Iteru River. Finding fertile grasslands, a warm climate, and a navigable waterway, Ur-Xandria became a thriving city in only a few years. In short order, its culture expanded up the river, as the city grew and the population expanded beyond the delta. Agricultural and mineral resources both proved readily available, and only time and the size of the population limited rapid growth and development.

From the time of Ur-Xandria's founding, the nation's culture blurred mysticism with its religion and government. Hyphrates' leaders, its Pharaohs, were considered divine manifestations of the Creator, and their judgment and wisdom were infallible. Any who questioned their decisions were found guilty of both heresy and treason. Because of this, the Pharaoh and his closest advisors were expected to closely oversee virtually everything that happened within the land. Independent thought was stifled, as the population constantly feared prosecution for taking actions that might conflict with the wishes of the Pharaoh.

Over generations, this led to a nation with vast public works, but almost no sense of entrepreneurship. Even as new cities were established, the Pharaoh appointed local officials to closely oversee the inhabitants. In many instances, those who dwelt in the newly established cities were relocated by government direction rather than their own volition. While some resented such strict oversight, others accepted the new role, as mindless obedience had become such an intrinsic part of Hyphrates' culture.

In part, this was because each of the Pharaohs held a tremendous amount of power. During the earliest days of their dynasty, Pharaoh Onuris successfully summoned and bound the Witch known as the Djinn. They played a strategic game of chance, with a powerful wager on the line. The Pharaoh offered permanent authority over Hyphrates, while she countered with an offer to grant a wish for every member of his dynastic rule. The Pharaoh won the game, and the Djinn reluctantly honored the agreement, for as long as the Pharaoh Onuris's bloodline held power in Hyphrates.

Taking full advantage of their allotted wish became a major part of each successive Pharaoh's rule. A few made their wish during the earliest days of their rule, and then tried to exploit it for the remainder of their lives. Others spent decades trying to find the best possible use for their wish, waiting until they were on their deathbed to summon the Djinn to fulfill a request.

Ultimately, most wishes met with mixed degrees of success. This was because the Djinn was incredibly manipulative and selective in her interpretations. Though she was obligated to fulfill them, she was never eager to do so. Within the first two generations, a large portion of each Pharaoh's education became focused upon how to best phrase the wish and how to best select the possible goals.

In time, the line of Pharaohs became some of the world's most educated men. They built up a culture of advisors and priests to serve them and to increase their understanding of the world at large. During this stage of the Hyphrates' history, they were arguably the most intellectually advanced portion of the known world. However, that knowledge was never universally shared.

This is because the nation's culture was sharply divided. The ruling class had a fantastic understanding of natural sciences, philosophy, and mathematics. However, members of the massive underclass were little more than slaves. Due to the tremendous power available through a wish, many came to worship the Pharaohs as living gods. Some of the more egotistical rulers keyed off of this, and developed a Pharaonic Cult over several generations. Its central tenet stated that each Pharaoh was a god unto himself. The nobles, priests, and scholars among the ruling class seldom held true to the religion's tenets, but they observed its beliefs for the sake of reinforcing their authority with the underclass.

Whenever a Pharaoh died, the heir demanded the construction of a massive tomb, known as a Luxarra, to honor the predecessor's memory. The religious indoctrination of Hyphrates population was reinforced through the use of culturally and religiously encouraged mind-altering drugs. A bevy of hallucinogenic substances played a key factor in Hyphratian religious ceremonies. Some were consumed regularly by the faithful as a key component in their personal worship—the drugs were believed to enable the worshippers to speak to the gods. Others were incorporated into the incense burned during formal community observances. As these were largely addictive and euphoric, it also encouraged the faithful to continue attending church services.

As the faithful were generally very open to suggestions during religious observances because of their intoxicated nature, the Pharaonic Cult incorporated a great deal of mysticism. To the sober observer, few of the Cult's traditions and beliefs made a great deal of sense. Rituals devoted to appeasing, summoning, and even controlling various non-existent spirits played a major part. Some scholars speculate that the fey may have played a major role in the ancient faith, but there is little discrete evidence to support this theory.

When the Enochian faith began to spread through Morden, the Pharaohs struggled to oppose it. They made this decision because they recognized that the Enochian faith would no longer recognize Pharaohs as divine and infallible. For generations, devoted warriors and zealous missionaries from the other nations invaded Hyphrates, in a series of attempts to spread the truth of the virtues. Most believe that this was simply a case of zealotry and idealism, though some say that eliminating the suffering of the slave state and gaining access to Hyphrates' pharmaceutical wealth were also powerful motivations. In any case, the battles that took place between them reached truly epic proportion. Evidence of fey involvement at this stage played a major role, as plagues and storms swept across the land, destroying vast swaths of territory at the same time as the inhabitants began to abandon their former faith and embrace the new one. Much of the nation was transformed from fecund agricultural territory into inhospitable desert by the terrible curses.

The battles might have continued for centuries if it were not for the actions of the Pharaoh Memmon. During his brief tenure as the ruler of Hyphrates, he enacted sweeping changes for treatment of the underclass. He enacted strict rationing for all materials—including religious pharmaceuticals—as well as a far more grievous system of legal enforcement. It was at this point that the population finally rose up in revolution. The underclass joined with the Enochian invaders and overthrew the Pharaoh along with many of his most trusted advisors. In time, a new system of government was introduced, in the form of a Consul appointed through the agreement of the nation's wealthiest merchants.

This was because the Pharaohs and their scholars had begun to recognize the nation's vast wealth even as the invaders from other nations had sought to obtain it. Rather than fighting tooth and nail, many Hyphratians began to willingly sell the goods they possessed. Over the course of a few generations, a vast merchant class specializing in spices, medicinal herbs, precious metals, and even jade emerged. Merchant caravans devoted to transporting and selling these goods throughout the other nations of Morden returned vast wealth to Hyphratia.

Under the new government's authority, different factions created a huge range of different political offices, divisions, and bureaucracies. Many of these groups had comparable levels of authority, often over the same subject matters. The question of who was actually responsible for governance, justice, and equity became far less important than the titles that went with it. A culture of backstabbing and treachery soon came to the forefront.

As the government entered a state of perpetual dysfunction, many of the nation's citizens retreated into the comforting oblivion of intense drug use. Herbs and soporifics that were key elements in the old religion became extremely popular for daily use among the population. From the nation's laborers to its administrators, most spent the majority of each day comfortably oblivious to the world around them. Instead, they performed a bare minimum of work, while blissfully unaware.

In the early days of the war, it was one of these underlings that led to the nation's current crisis. A minor bureaucrat named Hasani was a descendant of Pharaoh Memmon. In a bitter rage over a financial setback, he chose to summon the Djinn. After arguing that she owed him a wish because of his bloodline, he demanded that she return Hyphrates to its ancient glory. With a gleeful smirk, the Djinn granted his wish. She raised the necropolis from the sands and uncovered ancient pyramids and statues. Memmon, the last Pharaoh, and every citizen of his kingdom were returned to life as Mummies. Hyphrates was cast into chaos. Hasani survived and fled, though no one knows where he is now.



Role in the Bane War

During the early stages of the invasion, Hyphrates turned a blind eye to the armies of the Grand Coven. They blithely ignored the reports that came from the Outlands about huge and horrifying armies descending from the Darkfall Peaks. Some believe that this was simply incompetence among the bureaucrats who initially saw the message. Others, more familiar with the nation's culture recognize that it would have taken decades for even the highest priority message to reach a person capable of making a decision.

Many believe that it was Hyphrates early missteps that played a critical role in the war's ultimate outcome. When Urukdhria rose from the sands, the Djinn suddenly had a huge army of Witchmarked and banes far behind the main battle lines. Nations that had been focused upon an attack from the outlands—primarily Hebron, Cairn Kainen and Valkenholm—now had to face a threat from another direction. Most of the Djinn's strikes moved towards the area that soon became known as the Ash Plains, but both Cairn Kainen and Hebron had to keep competent units in reserve, to defend against a potential attack.

The Djinn's armies also crippled Hyphrates, so that it went from being a potential asset in the war to another major liability. The presence of a massive undead army within the nation's boundaries forced untold masses to flee from their homes, decreasing productivity and eliminating access to many of the nation's resources. Refugees from the areas nearest Urukdhria swarmed into the surrounding lands. Plagues of massive locusts destroyed the nation's agriculture and spread disease to the citizens. The nation's armies—though largely dysfunctional—were wholly committed to battling the Djinn, leaving them unable to assist in the larger conflict.

In essence, Hyphrates' membership in the Alliance was largely in name only. Only their merchant traders were able to meaningfully contribute to Morden's other nations by providing an effective means of transportation for goods. That lack of assistance certainly plays a factor in explaining the meager resources those nations have provided to Consul Bikheris in his resistance efforts against Memmon-Aswar.

Aftermath

With her seeming death, the armies that the Djinn once commanded remain largely in disarray. In fact, they did suffer massive losses at the time of the Betrayal. Rather than continuing to wage the war, when the Grand Coven was sundered, the armies from Urukdhria returned to that Necropolis. After a brief power struggle, the mummified Pharaoh Memmon came to power and began to spread his authority across the desert once more. In the Djinn's absence, he has become her de facto voice among those who had followed her direction in Morden. With the support of the Djinn's banes and an allocation of cauldron-born from the Morrigan, the Pharaoh now commands the largest organized military in all of Morden. His forces are far better organized and disciplined than those under the command of Hyphrates' still-living Consul Bikheris. Because Memmon never made his wish during life, it is believed he now searches for the Djinn in the hopes of restoring her so that she might grant it now.

Unless something happens to turn the tide, the nation's vices may be enough to cause their ultimate collapse. Even in the face of imminent threat, drug addiction and internal conflict continue to be the society's central cultural characteristics. Unable to provide a united front against the undead armies, Consul Bikheris's holdings become smaller every day. Soon, he may have no choice but to seek refuge beyond the nation's boundaries.

Culture and Government

Hyphrates is a nation that is in crisis, but one that does not have a distinct path forward. More than half of the nation is inhabited by Mummies under the direction of the Pharaoh Memmon. Sitting atop his throne in the necropolis of Urukdhria, he commands his armies of banes to restore Hyphrates to its long forgotten glory, proclaiming his holdings as Memmon-Aswar. Many of the living in these territories now bow down to him, rather than attempting to resist the call of long lost glory.

At the other end of the spectrum, Consul Bikheris attempts to rally his population to resist Memmon and his followers. Fully half of his nation is already under the thrall of the expansionist mummy. He now struggles to find any effective means of resistance, and has pleaded with the other nations of the fallen Alliance, as well as the Enochian church to offer him some assistance. He has begged for assistance in terms of manpower, technology, and even the magic offered by charlatans. The only organization to respond to his requests has been the Order of the Penitent. To date, the Consul has reluctantly accepted this offer, but the nation's populace remains uncomfortable with their assistance. Some fear that the Witchmarked may actually be tools of Urukdhria.



Among the living, there remain many who attempt to ignore the threats that they face. A large proportion of these are citizens who escape the daily doldrums through the refuge of narcotics and hallucinogens. For outsiders, the consumption of these different drugs seems to be the cornerstone of Hyphratian society.

Those who have come to better grips with their nation's fate are undecided about how to deal with it. Even among those who are strongly opposed to the Witchmarked Memmon, few have faith in Consul Bikheris. Many wish to see a strong leader come to the forefront. Some of the bureaucrats are all too willing to secure a position of authority for themselves, often by eliminating their competitors.

Important Citizens

Those who are able to keep their wits about them are rare in Hyphrates. Such people are the only ones who must seize authority, if the nation is to successfully resist the advance of Memmon-Aswar. Consul Bikheris is not a strong leader. He continues to try to find someone who can provide the necessary leadership and guidance. At this point, he is willing to promise virtually anything to someone who could overcome the threat posed by his unliving foes.

BISHOP LUCIANO TIERNO

A native of Manreia, the Conclave of Enochian Bishops assigned Bishop Tierno to oversee the faithful in Hyphrates. Upon his arrival he was horrified by the state of the nation and the church in this land. He has attempted to rally the faithful to throw off the shackles of addiction and complacency.

While he is a charismatic speaker and a man of deep faith in the Creator, his words have largely fallen on deaf ears. He has come to believe that any effective resistance within Hyphrates needs to be built through the efforts of outsiders. It is because of this that he has appealed to the Order of the Penitent for assistance. The Bishop has praised the efforts of these dark heroes and tried to spread tolerance for their presence among his congregation. Penitents who join the battle in Hyphrates are certain to receive generous assistance from the Enochian Church, but are unlikely to receive acceptance from those outside of its structure.



VIZIER AMENKHET

As one of the Consul's closest advisors, the Vizier is privy to his strategies and well aware of the struggling nation's limited resources. As he has seen plan after plan fail, he has begun to lose faith in whether his nation has any hope of resisting the seemingly implacable advance of Memmon-Aswar. Just as the Consul scrambles to find some new salvation for Hyphrates, the Vizier has begun to turn to possibilities that have greater moral ambiguity.

Most recently, Amenkhet has begun exploring ancient rites and rituals. He seeks to uncover the secrets of mummification. His plan is to ensure immortality for himself and Consul Bikheris as Witchmarked. The Consul is not yet aware of the Vizier's intentions, and he is unlikely to be receptive to its use. Of course, Amenkhet recognizes this, and expects to implement it for the good of Hyphrates whether or not the Consul cooperates. He believes that with the power of a Witchmarked, the Consul could more effectively work with Pharaoh Memmon as a peer and reunify the nation.

RAJEEV SEKANI

Prior to the Bane War, Sekani's family claimed to control hundreds of caravans, shipping freight all across Morden. The family had garnered substantial wealth by providing a means to transport materials between the various population centers in a reliable fashion. Deliveries were not always swift, but they did show up with a very high level of consistency. This reliability meant that craftsmen and farmers throughout the different nations had come to respect and rely upon them.

The Bane War, however, was not kind to these merchants. The vast majority of their holdings were lost in service to the Armies of the Light. Since then, Rajeev has become a man desperate to recover his lost fortune. No longer actively participating in shipping materials for others, he has instead focused on acquiring items and reselling them solely for his own profit. It is rumored that many of the items he has recovered were less than legal.

Several grave robbers were recently executed who claimed to have been breaking into tombs and stealing materials in service to Sekani. There was no evidence and Sekani denied all charges. However, he has continued to include a broad range of rare artifacts in his dealings.

Manreia

Citizens of Manreia believe that their nation is the cultural, technological, and religious center of Morden. They have the greatest poets, artists, and composers. Aureliano de Acosta's academy and workshop produce endless marvels. The Conclave of Enochian Bishops meets at St. Stephen's Basilica in Manreia's capital city of Palmyria. The citizens also argue that the land's mild year-round climate is a sign of the Creator's favor upon them. Their fields are fertile, their mines are rich in precious ores, and the sea provides a generous bounty. Manreia's citizens believe that they are the most fortunate and the most accomplished in the world.

Among Manreia's greatest achievements is its ongoing technological innovation. The nation's scientists and engineers have developed a network of steam-powered locomotives that bewilder outsiders. Using these tremendous machines, Manreians could deliver raw ores from the nation's mines and fresh cut lumber from her forests to capable craftsmen within a few days of extracting them. Similarly, the bounty of the Discordian Sea could be transported to even the furthest inland regions. The system is far from perfect—its performance is poorly suited to transporting passengers—but has still been a major boon for the nation. In fact, many argue that the rail network has helped to drive Manreian craftsmen to achieve ever greater levels of innovation.

The nation's detractors often argue that Manreia's successes are due entirely to the modest losses that this region suffered during the Bane War. Far from the front lines, the Manreians contributed technology, soldiers, and assets to the war effort. Even after defeat, however, they never suffered the depredations of a direct assault by the Witches' forces. Instead, with a peaceful surrender, they ceded authority to the Witch council, and continue to pay a tithe of goods, soldiers, and raw materials to the Witches. While the other nations of Morden have struggled to rebuild societies shattered by decades of war, Manreia simply bought their way into relative postbellum comfort, a state of affairs that has caused much bitterness among Manreia's neighbors.

This is not to say that the war did not damage Manreia. Tens of thousands of her able-bodied young men and women died fighting the Witch armies in other lands. Food that could have gone to feed her citizenry instead fed the survivors in other lands. Manreia's ruling senators readily provided the arms and equipment necessary to keep her army—and the armies of her allies—actively engaged in the battle against the Witches. In losing the war, all of these goods and soldiers were surrendered to the remaining Witches. In addition, few of the surviving soldiers ever returned home, leaving Manreia's workforce badly

depleted. Assets necessary to keep the nation's economy stable and her people fed were long lost. At the same time, refugees from other lands attempted to settle in Manreia's cities, viewing the less damaged environs as a welcome change from the shattered architecture of their homelands.

Outsiders have a mixed view of this beautiful country, in large part because of its relative prosperity. Some see this as sign of how little they contributed to the war. They resent that Manreia suffered so little, while their homelands were devastated by the attack of the Witches. Many go so far as to insist that all who remain in Manreia are little more than cowards with no honor. Had they truly been loyal to the Enochian faith and their human brethren, then the nation's citizens could have had no choice but to invest every possible resource in the war against the Witches. Most who hold this belief go so far as to directly blame Manreia for losing the war.

Others see Manreia's continued existence as a sign of hope for an eventual revolution against the Witches. These optimists recognize that the nation's current status is the closest thing remaining to what Morden had been like before the war. Some believe that by embracing the grandeur of Manreia, they can use it to reseed the rest of the continent. As the only nation to have survived in good health, these idealists often insist that it be used as the example moving forward. Among Palmyria's slums and the nation's refugee camps, there are many who fled the conquered nations that now pretend to have ancestral ties to Manreia.

Role in the Bane War

Manreia never served as a true front during the war against the Grand Coven. Instead, the nation was the primary supplier to the Alliance's armies. While she did supply some troops, the greater service came in the form of the food, weapons, and armor that the nation shipped to the front lines. While the other members of the Alliance were crippled by the war that continued inside their border and disrupted their economies, the tradesmen and landbound of Manreia could continue their productivity. Landbound were pressed into ever-greater service in an effort to grow enough food to supply both the nation and the armies of other nations. Master armorers and weapon smiths worked endlessly to provide weapons that could be shipped off to the front lines. In fact, both of those organizations promoted disproportionate numbers of new apprentices to masters, in hopes of being able to fully provide the necessary supplies. Landbound, tradesmen, and even a few nobles were pressed into military service, so that additional units could be sent to reinforce the war effort, particularly in the nearby Ash Plains.

During this time the Council of Lords focused closely upon the war effort, often to the exclusion of everything else. Production was their primary concern, and little thought was given to the expenses necessary to insure it. The nation's treasury was exhausted and promissory notes were issued to many nobles, merchants, and tradesmen. The vast majority willingly accepted these sacrifices, for they recognized what had happened to the Outlands and feared the dangers of the banes reaching their beloved nation.

Aftermath

Many of the nation's best and brightest fought and died in the war against the Grand Coven's armies, including many members of the Manreian Nobility. In addition, these losses also included countless skilled tradesmen whose loss also represented a very real detriment on the nation's collective body of knowledge and talent. Furthermore, common landbound soldiers, who were often little more than cannon fodder, died by the tens of thousands in the war, gutting Manreia's workforce and leaving the nation far less capable of sustaining high levels of productivity. While Manreia's infrastructure was not destroyed in the way of the Outlands or Cairn Kainen, the population loss still caused tremendous difficulty in the production of food and crafted goods.

In addition to these losses of population and capital, the act of surrendering to the Grand Coven also cost Manreia its sovereignty. The Council of Lords was not disbanded, but it was stripped of all of its authority and left an impotent body of little real worth. Now, instead of legislating on its own through the buying and selling of influence, the once august council can do little but bring their decisions to the Lord Warlock for his approval. At his discretion, he can choose to act upon their recommendations or ignore them. At the same time, he has the authority to issue edicts that all within the nation must obey. In general, Lord Warlock Hesterly has been reasonably considerate of the nation's citizenry. However, in those instances where a region has failed to meet its tithing requirements, he has been merciless. It is abundantly clear that the Witches have very high expectations for the region they have conquered. His patience is limited by the requirement that he must meet their expectations.

Not surprisingly, the promissory notes issued by the Council of Lords hold no value today. This has resulted in many tradesmen who now lack the necessary resources to continue in their business, with resources having been expended during the war, and new ones nearly impossible to acquire. In many cases, this has left skilled craftsmen with no way to exercise their trade. Consequently, they have had to either flee



to escape bill collectors or surrender their mastery and accept the life of a landbound. This loss of talent has caused Manreia's productivity and culture to stall, as many of its craftsmen have ceased production.

Many refugees came to Manreia expecting to find a new opportunity in a nation untouched by war. Instead, they discovered a land that was stretched to the breaking point, scarcely able to care for her own citizens. Natives were compassionate toward refugees, but food, water, and shelter were all precious commodities. Some of the newly arrived were already master craftsmen, but without a sponsor, they were unable to take the necessary tests to enter the ranks of tradesmen. In a nation with limited resources and many needy, tradesmen required unattainable compensation to take on new apprentices—regardless of their expertise. Similarly, many nobles were unwilling to accept the obligation to care for additional landbound. Now, refugees beg and squat outside of Manreia's cities and towns desperate for an opportunity.

Culture and Government

Historically, the inhabitants of Manreia were divided into three broad social classifications: Nobility, Tradesmen, and Landbound. Anyone who owned land within the nation—no matter how small a plot—was considered nobility. Tradesmen were talented individuals who reached the rank of Master in a particular craft or trade such as masonry, carpentry, or chandlery, an accomplishment that earned them their freedom from servitude to the nobility and the right to travel the land selling their expertise, labor, and handicrafts. The least of the three, the landbound, were considered essentially the property of the nobles who owned the land upon which they dwelt, and were treated as indentured servants or slaves.

Manreia was collectively ruled by a Council of Lords composed of the country's nobility. Each noble's relative rank and authority within the Council of Lords was determined by the amount of land that he owned. In principle, every noble was expected to regularly attend council sessions to keep up at least an appearance of statesmanship. In reality, fewer than a dozen nobles attended with any regularity, and they effectively ran the entire council. This small group regularly borrowed or rented the voting rights of their peers who chose not to travel to Palmyria for sessions. By consolidating the votes, nobles could command tremendous power, as only a simple majority was required for the passage of most votes. This led to a culture where alliances and loyalty became the defining elements of every noble. First impressions were often determined by knowing to whom a noble had ceded his voting rights.

Culturally, Manreia's tradesmen played a major part in developing the nation's artwork, architecture, and social climate. To become a tradesman, individuals were required to pass the approval of a board of masters. Only with their acceptance could a trainee become a recognized tradesman—masters who accepted apprentices were expected to pay a tithe to the nobles who technically owned them. After attaining their own recognition as tradesmen, masters were expected to tithe a portion of their income to their former teachers to repay this debt.

Nobles retained some power over tradesmen by limiting the number of fields in which students could earn their mastery. Every new field required the approval of the Council of Lords as well as the designation of the field's initial masters. Tradesmen were also expected to be sufficiently profitable to support themselves with their expertise. Those who fell ill or proved incapable of practicing their craft would often become indigent or return to landbound status. There were no provisions from nobles to care for tradesmen who failed to effectively practice their trade.

As stated earlier, everyone who did not own land fell into the landbound class. All landbound were subject to the whims of the nobles where they were born and lived their lives. The local nobles would assign their duties, sometimes on the basis of ability, but most often based upon local needs. Little consideration was paid for a landbound's desires. In return, nobles were expected to provide adequate shelter, food, and protection.

While a tradesman could freely leave a region, bringing a spouse and children along for a trip required the permission of the local noble. This often substantially restricted the travels of even the most skilled tradesmen. This also has caused significant confusion as new refugees have moved into Manreia after the war, as many of these immigrants are unwilling to cede their freedom in exchange for the security of status as landbound.

Important Citizens

In many ways, Manreia is a nation defined by its technological development. Through the acceptance and recognition of the tradesman caste, the nation has offered significant benefits to innovators and great thinkers. While these people do not necessarily have a direct responsibility for leading their nation, they have played a significant part in shaping its overall outlook. There are two tradesmen whose efforts continue to transform Manreia, even as the nation struggles under the authority of the Witches.

HERR DOKTOR FRANKEN VON NACHTMACHEN

Von Nachtmachen immigrated to Manreia more than a decade before the Grand Coven's attack. Most assume that he originally came from Valkenholme, though he never speaks of his origins. From the time of his arrival, the inventor began working to completely revolutionize technology within Manreia. It was his skills that provided the innovations to build the nation's railroad systems. Without his talents, the mines in the hills and the lumberyards in the forests would never be able to transport goods to the cities so quickly. Prior to his arrival, there were no steam engines and transportation relied only upon beasts of burden and the nation's well-paved roads.

With the dawn of the Bane War, the Council of Lords appealed to the inventor to weaponize his creations. They felt that his incredible creations could provide an incredible boon to the war effort. Von Nachtmachen, however, was initially strongly opposed to creating tools of war. He claimed that such creations would go directly against his moral code. A bane attack upon his tower—Noche Torre—was enough to change his mind. After losing research and the lives of several apprentices, Von Nachtmachen fully devoted his resources to creating tools of war for the Alliance.

However, his work had a serious impact upon the inventor's sanity. While the initial creations were effective, with time, many of the weapons he built seemed to be as dangerous for the wielders as they were for the foe. When the Council of Lords appealed to him, they found that Noche Torre had been transformed into a veritable fortification of deadly inventions. The madman's tower has now been isolated for more than thirty years. The crazed inventor's last communication with the Council came in the form of a letter, where he indicated that he would resume his wartime production as soon as he completed his plans to destroy the moon.

AURELIANO DE ACOSTA

Once a student of Von Nachtmachen, Aureliano De Acosta had completed his apprenticeship shortly after the beginning of the war. As a recognized master inventor, he was a member of the tradesmen caste. It was his responsibility to see that the nation's trains ran effectively, and to continue the development of Manreia's transportation system.

De Acosta proved his skills in short order, earning a commendation from the Council of Lords for his efforts, as well as a gift of land within Palmyria, transforming him into a minor lord. Soon, he used that land to build his own research tower, where he began to train apprentices in the mastery of the steam engine, along with a broad range of other techniques.

After Von Nachtmachen isolated himself from the Council of Lords, they turned to De Acosta to fulfill the role of master inventor for the nation's armies. He reluctantly accepted the position, and began recruiting many additional apprentices—including a few who had fled from Noche Torre. Making full use of the rail system, he began to increase production, using less skilled apprentices to build the necessary components for many of his inventions. Though his production levels were never enough to completely stop the Witches, they proved a huge boon during the Bane War.

Since the surrender, the Lord Warlock has imposed tremendous tithes upon De Acosta specifically. The ruler must first review every invention he creates before it can be sold to anyone else. Rumors abound that De Acosta's students have been smuggling creations out of his tower, so that underground groups can use them to fight against the Witches.

LADY FILOMENA SALAMANCA

As an active member of the Council of Lords, Lady Salamanca has played a role in ruling Manreia for nearly a decade. She assumed her place on the council shortly after the conclusion of the Bane War, when her mother—the prior Lady Salamanca—did not return from the battle against the Djinn. Devoted to helping the nation recover from its wartime losses, Lady Salamanca is constantly trying to find the most effective ways to allocate available resources, to best use the nation's natural assets and to propel Manreia into a new golden age.

Sadly, Lord Warlock Hesterly seems determined to halt her every advance. Any idea that she champions he consistently turns down. Initially Salamanca believed this was simply his opposition to her beliefs and goals for Manreia. However, it has become apparent that this is actually a personal vendetta that targets her plans specifically. Even when the Lady proposes ideas that would directly benefit the Witches, the Lord Warlock still finds ways to prevent them from completion.

In an effort to help solve this crisis, Lady Salamanca has begun to investigate the Lord Warlock's history, hoping to find out why he is so opposed to her. Of course, the ruler has already forbidden any such inquiries. Because of this, the Lady has begun working with a number of covert organizations, including the Order of the Penitent. Because she has limited access to official Manreian assets, she has begun to delve into her personal ones—as well as those already allocated for the Witches. If the Lord Warlock were to discover these expenditures, Lady Salamanca's actions could have serious repercussions for herself and for all of Manreia. Which is why some within the Order speculate that she may soon advocate for open rebellion.

Shadows of Civility

Most of Manreia's citizens fail to recognize the dark secret that lurks among the nation's many secret societies and criminal organizations. In spite of its distance from the battlefield, the Blood Witch played a major factor in developing the nation's role in the war. This is because her vampires—along with hundreds of Dhampir—were sent forth to infiltrate and influence the nation. Even today, few of the normal humans are even aware of the terrible dangers that lurk within their cities. Losses are simply blamed on the tithes that must be paid, and in a sense, the humans that are sacrificed to these banes and Accursed are a tithe to the Witches.

Steppengrad

The sprawling, windswept land of Steppengrad is a place of extremes. Nestled in the far Northwest of Morden, between the Ash Plains and the Discordian Sea, Steppengrad is at once the poorest and most desperate of the countries of Morden and also arguably the loveliest and most breathtaking. It is a land of feral beauty, of thick ancient fir forests wreathed in mist, of soaring, saw-toothed mountains, and of broad, bone-chilling rivers. Everything seems to be built on a larger scale in Steppengrad. Where the massive blue-black forests don't blot out the sun, the broad and rugged steppe lands stretch from horizon to horizon in a never ending plain. The great, sprawling cities of Mother Steppengrad, now largely abandoned and overgrown, the victims of decades of siege warfare, are masterful expressions of the architect and engineer's art. Even through the caked on soot and grime of decades of warfare, one can still occasionally see gold leaf and vibrant colored lacquer peeking out from beneath the filth.

The first peoples of Steppengrad, the ancestors of the modern Gradniki, were largely nomadic tribesmen who eked out their meager existence following herds of grazing animals across the endless steppe. Many centuries ago, some of these tribes grew tired of their hardscrabble nomadic lifestyle and sought to change their lot in life. Led by a powerful and charismatic chieftain named Yaroslavl, these tribes formed an alliance and settled in the fertile Khazaar river valley. Yaroslavl was a savvy politician and a dangerous opponent in both war and politics. With a cadre of hand-picked advisers, he set about the business of organizing the disparate tribes into a cohesive people. Laws were codified, trade routes established, emissaries were sent to neighboring nations, and the small confederation of squabbling tribes grew slowly but surely into a wealthy and powerful empire.

Steppengrad's people, the proud and indomitable Gradniki, are perhaps the country's greatest and most precious natural resource. They are, in general, a tall, broad-shouldered, powerful-looking people whose deep-set eyes, high cheekbones, and strong jaws are largely described as striking rather than handsome or lovely. A passionate people, they wear their hearts on their sleeves and it is a rare Gradniki who can hide his emotions from his friends and family. On the whole they are a moody, dour, fatalistic people much given to introspection and heavy drinking, the latter a habit that only serves to intensify their emotions. Even in the old days, before the coming of the Witches and the suffering of the Long War, the Gradniki had a reputation as brooding and capricious people whose moods changed as swiftly as the weather.

Over the course of their history, the Gradniki suffered the ups and downs of empire stoically and, some would say, even insensibly. They accepted the victory over the peoples of the Ash Plains and the rebellion of the peoples of Valkenholm—and the creation of their breakaway country—with the same grim fatalism. To the Gradniki, everything is predestined; every great victory or crushing defeat has already been written by the Creator. They believe the best way to survive their lives is to accept this fact and to embrace it. They spend their time trying to improve what conditions they can around them in the here and now as opposed to screaming against the injustices of the hard world.

The Gradniki are not all gloom, fatalism, and black melancholy, however. They also tend to be sentimental, deeply romantic, and, in their own way, even joyous. They can be generous and open-handed, almost to a fault, and their hospitality to foreigners and fellow Gradniki is legendary. In addition, the feasts and festivals of Steppengrad are as legendary as their military prowess. The Gradniki love a party as much as they love a battle, and they come together with little provocation to eat, drink, dance and sing, often for days at a time. The Gradniki also boast of rich music, literary, and art traditions that include some of the most famous artists, composers, and political thinkers in Morden's long history. Even in these times of grinding poverty and desperate want, the Gradniki are a proud, sometimes haughty people who believe strongly in themselves and the supremacy of their culture.

Role in the Bane War

Steppengrad was nearly destroyed during the Bane War, and suffered perhaps more than any other nation in Morden. As they had countless times in their long history, when the Witch Armies boiled over the mountains and Baba Yaga swept into Steppengrad at the head of a column of Vargr and foreign mercenaries, the Gradniki rose en masse to defend their motherland. So massive were Steppengrad's armies at the beginning of the war that it was said that their formations stretched from horizon to horizon. It seemed that every able-bodied man and woman turned out, some carrying little more than farm implements or cooking knives, to protect their motherland. The first few skirmishes with the Witch Armies went well for the Gradniki forces, and the armies soon found their stride fighting shoulder to shoulder against the massed living nightmares of the Witch Armies. The war continued apace, the Gradniki fought bravely, and at first the victory seemed certain and the foe vulnerable.

Eventually, though, the Gradniki began to falter. The forces of Baba Yaga would not stop coming. There were always more enemies to fight, a seemingly endless stream of monsters and horrors and foreign mercenaries. Weeks dragged into months, and months into years as the fighting dragged on with no end in sight. The only rest for the war-weary Gradniki was Steppengrad's savage winter. While the Gradniki were acclimated to months of endless twilight, deep snows, howling winds, and brutal, sub-zero temperatures, the Witch Armies had no such protection and died in droves over the long wintertime. Not even the Gradniki winter could stop Baba Yaga and her armies, however. Vast areas of the country were depopulated as the Gradniki fled, were rounded up by Baba Yaga's marauding forces, or were drafted wholesale into the Tsar's armies. Crops were trampled and uprooted by marching soldiers, while livestock were killed or took sick and died in droves. The magic of Baba Yaga spread across Steppengrad like a toxic cloud, withering plants and poisoning the land. Famines and plagues swept through the country with terrible frequency, wiping out whole towns and regiments of soldiers. It became clear to the military and civil leadership that they were losing, and as a last ditch effort to save themselves and their beloved country, the Gradniki completely changed their tactics to a strictly defensive style of siege warfare.

Countless miles of trenchworks were dug, cities were fortified, and engineers built fortifications around strategic sites such as the few remaining agricultural zones and areas of important infrastructure. The Gradniki retreated behind the walls of their cities, where they would hold the line against the encroaching darkness or die trying. This only delayed the inevitable, unfortunately. One by one the grand cities of Steppengrad fell, their defenders slaughtered or captured and sold into slavery. Finally Baba Yaga stood at the gates of Aziyev with her army behind her, and the Gradniki within had little doubt of the outcome. The remains of the Gradniki army, and what was left of their leadership, saw the hopeless situation and with death in their hearts called for the evacuation of the capitol. As the gates fell and Baba Yaga's hordes swept into the city, the army fought a delaying battle to give the people time to escape, then slowly retreated to the Imperial Palace where they were slaughtered to a man. As they fled the city, the Gradniki set fire to Aziyev in one final act of defiance, and the last that many saw of their grand capitol were the howling flames consuming both their homes and the befuddled, flabbergasted Witch Army forces trapped in the conflagration.

Aftermath

Today, much of Mother Steppengrad's once beautiful countryside is a charred and blasted ruin. Her grand cities are abandoned, emptied by decades of war and famine and overgrown with weeds. They are now little more than burned out shells, devoid of life and testament to not only the horrors of war but also to the iron resolve of the Gradniki. In the forests around the abandoned cities, the proud Gradniki have returned to a life similar to that of their ancient forebears, making what living they can from the poisoned, starving land.

Culture and Government

Gradniki culture is based primarily around family life and the church. For centuries before the appearance of Enochian missionaries, the Gradniki worshiped a pantheon of minor gods and nature spirits who embodied the land itself instead of a single Creator. The first missionaries from the Enochian Church found a dizzying array of major and minor deities, and several conflicting local calendars clogged with holy days and observances, many overlapping and contradictory. While the putative Gradniki spoke a number of languages, there was little in the way of written history, and no native alphabet.



In an effort to bring the Gradniki, who were at once bemused by and suspicious of the missionaries' efforts at conversion, into the Enochian fold, the Missionaries' first order of business was streamlining the calendar and integrating the old pagan ways into the One True Faith.

Among the first missionaries sent to Steppengrad was a scholarly priest by the name of Leonius, who took it upon himself to pen an entire alphabet for the common Gradniki language. In doing so, he allowed for the translation of Enochian holy tales into this new Leonic alphabet, which made the conversion of the Gradniki much easier. While the Gradniki took to the teachings of the Enochians with great zeal, the Old Ways—including the festivals and traditions surrounding the worship of the old nature pantheon—were such an ingrained part of their culture that they were never fully eradicated. To this day, the Enochian faith as practiced in Steppengrad is a mixture of Orthodox Enochianism as it was taught to the first converts, and numerous traditions that are as ancient as the land of Steppengrad itself. Despite Baba Yaga's best efforts, the attempts to squash the Enochian faith in Steppengrad have largely failed. The people continue to attend mass and observe their holy days even under the threat of death.

Family is also incredibly important to the Gradniki and is, along with the church, one of the two pillars upon which Gradniki society is built. Gradniki families tend to be very large, with even the wealthy elite having six or more children. Homes are often sprawling, hodge-podge affairs under whose roofs multiple generations of the same family live more or less in harmony. Childhood, as it is known in other countries, is relatively brief in Steppengrad. For the wealthy, children are typically sent to military or boarding schools at around five or six years old, and are expected to enter adult society well before their neighbors in other lands. For the poor, children are set to work as soon as they can use a broom or handle an oxen and plow, and there is little time for childish pursuits. Education is seen largely as the purview of the wealthy, and very few Gradniki beneath the professional class can read or write.

One of the most important parts of Gradniki family and social culture is the tea ceremony. At a given point in each day, dictated by local custom and daily schedule, Gradniki all over Steppengrad gather around ornate communal tea kettles called samovar to drink a powerful, incredibly sweet and highly concentrated tea-like beverage called zavarka and to take their ease for a few minutes. Zavarka is typically served with tiny, cylindrical, almond cookies or with small sandwiches of dark bread and hard cheese. The samovar and the ceremony that accompanies drinking tea are universal among Gradniki, and even the poorest family has a

samovar in their house. While a typical tea ceremony is over in a few minutes for the working and poor classes, the Gradniki elite elevate drinking tea to an art form. In elite social circles, an invitation to "come and sit by the samovar" can entail hours of spirited conversation and countless cups of powerful zavarka.

Another Gradniki cultural touchstone is the banya, or public bath. The banya is a communal sauna, typically built on the shore of a lake or river, where Gradniki gather to bathe, relax, and socialize. Even the most impoverished village has a banya, which at their most basic are a small wooden structure consisting of three chambers; the dressing chamber, the washing room, and the steam room. The steam room is usually heated by a massive iron oven, which in turn heats racks of small stones upon which water is poured to produce steam. Various aromatics are often added to the water to improve the bathing experience. Temperatures in the banya can reach so high that bathers often wear felt hats and gloves specifically designed to protect the head and hands from the intense heat. While in the steam room, bathers take turns whipping one another with fir or oak branches soaked in fragrant water to improve the circulation. Once the first good sweat is induced and they've beaten one another sufficiently to get their blood flowing, the bathers exit the steam room to cool quickly in the air or to dip in the close by water, or even in the deep wintertime snow. Once cooled, the bathers re-enter the banya and the cycle starts again. The bathing ritual typically ends after the third or fourth cycle, at which time the bathers typically retire to another room in the banya or to someone's home to drink tea or cold beer, to play games, and to further socialize.

From the formation of the confederacy and the crowning of Yaroslavl the First as supreme ruler of all of Steppengrad, Gradniki government was a top-down autocracy. At the very top was the Tsar, the ruler of all the lands belonging to Mother Steppengrad and father to all Gradniki. Beneath the Tsar were the Grafs, powerful nobles who ruled over large stretches of land and who split their time between their lavish dacha, or country estates, and jockeying for position and favor in Aziev. Beneath the Grafs were the Voyskovodya, powerful warlords who commanded Steppengrad's armies and advised the Tsar on matters of military importance. Next in line were minor landed nobles who spent their time at court squabbling for the few crumbs of influence dropped by their betters, and whose intrigue and internecine fighting was some of the dirtiest in all of Morden. Lower on the political ladder were the average Gradniki, professionals and craftsmen who formed the backbone of Gradniki society, and in whose hands was concentrated much of Steppengrad's wealth. On the very

lowest rung were the Serfs, landless tenant farmers who were slaves in all but name, and whose lives absolutely depended on the Grafs and Voyskovodya who owned the land they worked.

For centuries, a succession of Tsars and Tsarevnas ruled from the Imperial Palace in the capital Aziev. Over these centuries of Imperial rule, a constantly striving and conspiring court of Grafs, Voyskovodya, various minor nobility, artists, dilettantes, and political apparatchiks of every stripe has also taken up residence in the halls of power. The current Tsar is a spineless puppet of Baba Yaga of no Imperial lineage named Nikolai I. He is a man seen by his court and the general populace as a weak appeaser, a mewling quisling, and a traitor to the Gradniki and to Mother Steppengrad.

Important Citizens

LIDIAH YEFREMOVA

Known as Tyenichka, or little midnight, Lidiah Yefremova is one of the most active resistance leaders in Steppengrad. Once a high-ranking member in Baba Yaga's army, Lidiah is a Vargr whose small, lithe stature is made up for by her iron will and naked savagery in battle. She currently leads a ragged band of guerrilla fighters based somewhere along the Manreia-Steppengrad border. Her and her group operate as saboteurs, commerce raiders, and witch hunters, disrupting Baba Yaga's supply lines and killing countless Banes, mercenaries, and still loyal Vargr.

Points of Interest

There are many great and wondrous sights to behold in Steppengrad, even in the aftermath of the Bane War. While her cities lie in ruin, Mother Steppengrad's natural beauty, though marred by decades of war, is still quite evident.

THE KHAZAAR RIVER

The Khazaar River is, perhaps, the most important of Steppengrad's natural features, and the one that is most commonly associated with that country. Originating high in the desolate mountains at the northern edge of the Tarayev Wastes, the Khazaar river splits Steppengrad in half. It runs the length of Morden through the Ash Plains, through the far eastern territories of Manreia, through Hebron where it finally empties into the Bay of Parnath.

Just south of the Tarayev Wastes, the mighty river widens into the massive, shallow Lake Vostoya, the center of Steppengrad's fish and aquaculture producing regions. Although surprisingly shallow and very fast moving, the river is quite navigable, especially during the spring thaws when the rushing snow melt from floods the entire length of the river.

The Khazaar's fertile valleys and deltas drew the attention of the first Gradniki, and it was here that the original confederation of tribes collected to start their new lives as farmers and townsmen. As much as the river has formed the face of Steppengrad, so has it formed the people who dwell there. Many of the most important Gradniki folk songs revolve around the Khazaar and the hardy men and women who make their living upon her churning waters.

STONE'S END

Running for hundreds of miles west from the Khazaar River to the northern foothills of the Serra de Precio mountains, the massive system of canyons known as Stone's End marks Steppengrad's southern border with Manreia. Formed by a tributary of the mighty Khazaar, Stone's End is nearly two miles deep at its deepest and varies from a few hundred feet to over five miles across in places. Many Gradniki have taken refuge from Baba Yaga and her monsters within the canyon, either on the broad floor alongside the river or in the numerous cave complexes that dot the sheer walls and cliff faces. It is rumored that remnants of the Gradniki army are hiding in the canyons, gathering their strength and honing their skills for one final strike at Baba Yaga.

TARAYEV WASTES

Marking the far northern border of Steppengrad are the endless tundra and dense forests of the Tarayev Wastes. Very few Gradniki are brave or hardy enough to live in the hard and thankless Wastes. Instead, it is largely home to massive, lumbering bears, huge packs of wolves, and numerous smaller prey species upon which the bears and wolf packs feed. The few human settlements are either hermit dwellings, hunting camps that gather meat and hides for the more civilized parts of the country, and the occasional homesteader. Rumors have persisted for centuries that the Tsars kept secret prisons and labor camps in the Wastes where they would deposit dangerous criminals and enemies of the state. The rumors claimed that once sent to these camps, prisoners were worked to death in mines and mills where no one would take notice. If these desolate prison camps ever existed, they are likely gone now as Baba Yaga has no need for them.

Valkenholm

The northern realm of Valkenholm has long been seen as one of the most pre-eminent regions of Morden. Its vast, thick forests provide many benefits—amongst them rich lumber, furs, and food. Valkenholm sits astride the mighty Scythe River, itself a prime source of fish and minerals. To the southeast, the realm's forests give way to a deep and largely unexplored series of bogs and swamps known as the Sunken Lands.

Valkenholm was originally settled as part of Steppengrad over seven centuries ago. For many years, the first inhabitants of Valkenholm built villages and farmholds, peaceably working the land, exploring deeper into the forests, and establishing the first roads and trails. The people of Valkenholm were industrious, independent, and honorable, establishing several traditions of hospitality and fairness. However, the Grafs of Steppengrad saw the region's rich forests as a resource to exploit rather than a culture to embrace. Many of the area's settlers were stripped of their profits and forced into indentured servitude under the direction of Steppengrad nobles. Most settlements in Valkenholm evolved into plantations and logging camps. These centered around fortresses and castles built by the Grafs to defend their wealth against the occasional peasant uprising or bandit raid from the neighboring Outlands.

After thirty years, the countryside of Valkenholm was scattered with developed villages and looming towers, but citizens of the region had reached their breaking point. Messengers traveled from settlement to settlement in the dead of night, and townsfolk gathered to collect weapons they had cached against just such a need. In one bloody week of uprisings, the rebels drove out most Grafs, while a handful of the cruelest or least fortunate noblemen were rounded up and killed.

Having attained its independence, one of the leaders of the rebellion rose to prominence and named himself King Stefan Hightower the First. This began a tradition of royalty in Valkenholm that King Hightower's descendants cemented over the following decades. Valkenholm became famous for the institution of feudal order. The former Grafs' castles were turned over to the King's supporters, creating peers and a system of vassalage. Nor were the commoners ignored; a House of Commons was established to help advise the king and provide a voice for those without noble blood.

The more egalitarian realm grew in size and influence until it became arguably the foremost nation in Morden. Valkenholm dealt affably with all realms of the Outlands, traded with Cairn Kainen, and was a popular destination for caravans leaving Hebron and Hyphrates. Relations with Steppengrad were less than warm, but the two realms learned to coexist.

The Enochian church chose Valkenholm as a central meeting point and constructed a mighty cathedral there—the fortress-monastery of Massif Helsenn. In fact, the Enochian church has a prominent presence in Valkenholm. Over the centuries, the monks have worked with the monarchy to establish several orders of knighthood in service to both the crown and the church.

The nation lasted in this manner for centuries, and it was the invasion of the Witches into Morden that changed the character of Valkenholm. Prior to its conquest, Valkenholm prospered over its neighbors. Forestry, carpentry, and lumbering were some of Valkenholm's largest industries, followed by fishing, mining, and riverway trade. The capitol of Kulidar—even after the ravages of war—is amongst Morden's largest and most well-developed cities, featuring numerous guild houses, villa homes, and Enochian cathedrals.

Citizens of Valkenholm were famously proud of their nation, having gained a reputation for believing they were just a little bit better than any other realm in Morden. That pride was shattered by twin blows. The first blow was the loss of the war against the Witches. The second blow to Valkenholm was enduring the crushing grip of subjugation under its conqueror.

After the conquest, Valkenholm is a symbol of what awaits the rest of Morden. It is a realm fallen from grace, firmly under the thumb of a ruthless Witch and preyed upon by monsters. Its people, once proud and prosperous, cower and walk with their heads cast down—an object lesson in how the Witches exert their dark influence across the land.

Role in the Bane War

The invasion of the Witches smashed through the Outlands and ran directly into the bulwarking forests of Valkenholm. For centuries, Valkenholm depended upon the Outlands—specifically, the strong military forces of Riverspring—to shield it from the beasts and terrors lurking in the Darkwall mountains to the north. Once that shield was stripped away, Valkenholm was forced to scramble to prepare its own defenses against the Witches and their Accursed armies.

At the time of the invasion, Valkenholm's ruler was King Stefan Hightower II, regarded by many across Morden as a wise, courageous, and just monarch. With the utter devastation of the Outlands, the true scope of the Witches' invasion became clear. Knowing that time was short, King Stefan made great efforts to build the other realms of Morden into a unified force that became known as the Alliance. The King became the spokesman for this council of nations. Under his leadership, Valkenholm quickly became the center of

organization for the Alliance's efforts to turn back the Witches and their dark armies. Barges travelled the Scythe River to transport men and supplies, while the forest roads were thick with knights and cavalry riding patrol circuits and messages between camps. The Alliance used Valkenholm's staging grounds to launch numerous raids against the Witch armies. These raids were, for the most part, quite successful, for the Witches were focusing their efforts on subjugating the Outlands and augmenting their Bane forces with the newly-created Accursed.

However, the Alliance soon gained an answer to their raids from an unexpected source. Hordes of reanimated corpses poured over the Highlands—the cauldron-born had entered the war. This dark surprise was the creation of the Witch known as the Morrigan, and she launched her assault from the moors of Cairn Kainen, a border that many in Valkenholm—including King Stefan—considered safe. This mistake cost the Alliance dearly, as the shambling horrors wiped out many villages in the Sunken Lands and the eastern forests of Valkenholm.

King Stefan took charge of the survivors and gathered his host for the final battle. The Alliance made a pact with the Seelie Fey in a desperate gamble to sunder the Witches' Grand Coven and break their hold

upon the dark hordes threatening to overrun Morden. It was a moment for heroes, and the king did not flinch from his duty. He rode at the head of his knights, his guards carried the banner of the crown of Valkenholm into the teeth of the Witches' assault. In another time, another land, such a stand would be made into legend—but that day, in Morden, the King and his band of loyal knights fell. They died to the last man defending their home, but all of their valor was not enough to stem the tide. The Alliance's plan did succeed in destroying the Grand Coven, but it was too late. The ruthless Witches had conquered Valkenholm, and all of Morden.

Aftermath

It did not take long for Valkenholm to feel the grasp of the Blood Witch cementing her victory. Sanguinara swept into Kulidar, the capitol city, arriving within days after the Grand Coven was sundered and most of the dark hordes dispersed back over the Darkwall Peaks. The Blood Witch made few appearances, but she made it known throughout the land that she laid claim to the ancient title of Countess. The trappings of King Stefan's monarchy were wiped away and she established herself quite comfortably in her court at Kulidar. The glory and majesty of Valkenholm had been plucked like a ripe apple from the tree.

Life in Valkenholm after its conquest continues much as normal. The farmers bring in their crops, hunters sell pelts and meat to the outer villages and cities alike, and miners dig away in shafts beneath the forest searching for veins of precious ore. However, the atmosphere in Valkenholm is much bleaker than can be remembered. The dark, thick forests that the region is so renowned for are now home to terrible, blood-hungry beasts. Banes have driven out all but the bravest or most stubborn settlers from the swamps in the Sunken Lands. Many villages are more frightened of the Redhawk knights who ostensibly patrol the realm for their safety than the monsters that lurk in the night.

For the self-styled Countess Sanguinara Nasady, Valkenholm is a plaything that she enjoys toying with endlessly. She has shown no signs of tiring of her games. From Kulidar, she spins intricate webs of plots and schemes, ensnaring young noblemen with her beauty and charm. Many of these paramours end up as pale corpses drifting in the Scythe. Villagers in the surrounding settlements have learned to hide their more attractive sons and daughters, for many beautiful young men and women—some barely out of childhood—have been taken away by the black-armoured Redhawk knights to serve as "pages" and "ladies-in-waiting" for the Blood Witch's amusements.



Sanguinara does not have as much control over the realm as she might prefer. She has largely chosen to ignore the Enochian religion within her borders, finding the monks and their studies to be highly boring and mundane. In truth, the Enochians and their support of the Order of St. Vitus are one of the greatest threats to her rule. Similarly, some of the plots that hatch within the Blood Witch's court are hidden from even her awareness within the highly byzantine political maneuvers that surround her. There are a handful of nobles who remember the Valkenholm of old and have no love for their conqueror, no matter how fair and pleasant she might seem. For the nonce, the Blood Witch seems content to solidify her power and prepare for expanding her rule—it would seem that her desire for power is nearly insatiable.

Culture and Government

Valkenholm is no longer a beacon of civilization in Morden. Instead, it has become the seat of power for one of the most feared and hated conquerors—the Witch known as Sanguinara. What drew Sanguinara to Valkenholm in the first place is unknown—many believe that she finds turning the center of the vanquished alliance into her personal fiefdom amusing. One of Sanguinara's first acts upon assuming control of the realm was to completely abolish the monarchy, instead choosing to reinstate feudal rule through the titles and traditions of ancient Steppengrad, when the two nations were one. The Blood Witch crowned herself as "Countess" (a version of the Steppengrad title of "Graf") and formed a court primarily composed of sycophants and minor nobles to rule the realm. Having done away with the older trappings of Valkenholm's statehood, Sanguinara next formally disbanded each chapter of knights, with one exception—the Redhawks. This singular order of knights became the core of the Countess's military force after its commander was transformed into a vampire. He now serves at Sanguinara's right hand as her bodyguard.

The Blood Witch rules Valkenholm with both the velvet glove and the iron hand. She tolerates no open dissent, but she seems to thrive on the schemes of her court. She enjoys playing factions against each other and encourages unchecked greed amongst her courtiers. Ambition, in fact, is the core of Valkenholm's politics today. All of Valkenholm's citizens commonly assume that any involvement of the nobility or Sanguinara's court is undertaken to gain some political advantage (large or small).

Sanguinara understands the value of subtlety as well. She keeps the majority of her banes outside of Valkenholm's cities—although many of the smaller villages are fair game—and is careful not to replace too many important citizens with vampires or her own confidants. Most citizens of Valkenholm are aware of the Witch's "restraint" and are given periodic reminders by patrols of Redhawks or notices nailed up on the village green. The Blood Witch's preference for ignoring the Enochian presence in her lands is also used as a demonstration of her restraint rather than any true respect for the religion.

The citizens of Valkenholm live a life of comparative luxury to many of the other realms in Morden. Food is usually plentiful and opportunities for work are not lacking. In fact, many of Valkenholm's merchants are quite wealthy, and the nation as a whole is still strong in the aftermath of the Witch's conquest. However, Valkenholm suffers under a shadow of fear and cruelty. Not only must they live under the domination of the Blood Witch; her agents walk amongst them to ensure compliance with her will. This secret police is known only as "The Watch," and it has been quite effective in silencing any opposition amongst the common folk. There are many nobles as well who stay aloof from Sanguinara's court, but few dare say anything against her rather than face a brutal reprisal. More than one rich burgher or agitating baronet have been made examples of by the Watch in the last twenty years.

Important Citizens

LITTLE RED CAP

A figure of much whispered legend in Kulidar is an assassin known only by an unusual nom-de-guerre: Little Red Cap. Her name comes from the brilliant dark crimson color of her hooded cape, a quite distinctive piece of apparel she is never glimpsed without. This wild, blonde-haired young woman sets high prices for her services, but she has never failed in a contract to end her target's life. Many say that she ritually dips the hood of her cape in her victim's blood in order to maintain her snake-like swiftness and precision. Little Red Cap's origins are similarly mysterious—those who have seen the young girl in action claim that only one of the Unseelie Fey could move with such liquid grace and strike with such deadly aim. Wild rumors surround this assassin. She is said to be anything from Sanguinara's natural daughter to the hidden head of the Watch. Whatever the truth, some things about Little Red Cap are known for certain. She is ruthless in her approach, defends herself with fierce swordplay, and has taken many consecutive contracts for the Blood Witch's favorite nobles in the court of Kulidar.

SIR AZRIEL

The realm's most staunch defenders once filled the knightly order known as the Redhawks. This brotherhood was founded by King Reacher—an ancient Valkenholm monarch—in honor of a great victory against Nordheim raiders. Much like their homeland, however, the Redhawks have been completely seduced by the Blood Witch and now serve only her will. At the head of the Redhawks is a tall, gaunt knight whose grey-burnished armor and massive black sword have become a feared sight across the land. This knight's name is Sir Azriel, and he is a vampire. Previous to the Witches' invasion, Sir Azriel was merely an unremarkable knight. Sanguinara chose him to receive her curse and transformed him into a powerful bane. Sir Azriel combines all of the supernatural powers of a vampire with his own skills of war, and his dour, grim nature makes him perfect to serve as the Countess's chief bodyguard. Many have condemned the knight's change of loyalties from the man who knighted him—King Stefan himself—to the charming conqueror, the Blood Witch. None who knew Sir Azriel would have credited him with a surfeit of pride or ambition that would mark him as a man likely to turn his coat, so a lingering mystery remains. What happened to this once-honorable knight that he would bend his knee to the evil Countess?

BARON GEHEMNIS

Not all schemers confine themselves to the capital. In the castles and towns outside of Kulidar, a certain nobleman has been playing his own game against the Countess. Baron Gehemnis is his name, an older and distinguished noble whose family line has been a part of Valkenholm's upper class for centuries. Gehemnis is quietly fomenting rebellion against the Blood Witch and has made contact with numerous agents, including several bands of the Accursed, in order to further his plans. The Baron presents himself as a reasonable man pushed to extremes by the repugnant evil of Sanguinara's rule. In truth, however, Gehemnis desires the throne above all else. The Blood Witch merely provides him with an excellent lever to use in order to gain support for the many-layered plots he has hatched in every corner of Valkenholm. Some amongst the Order of St. Vitus suspect the Baron's altruism is merely a ploy, but many Accursed and other freedom fighters in Valkenholm are willing to work with anyone who can provide them with funding and direction in efforts to cast out the Witch and her bloodthirsty followers.

Intrigue and Assassination

Valkenholm is a hotbed of intrigue, espionage, and secret schemes. Nobles conspire with each other in the shadows, weaving byzantine plans with merchants and commoners alike as their catspaws. All of this is exactly as the Blood Witch likes it—she encourages schemes and ambition amongst her court, playing little power games to amuse herself and her closest confidants. The two most important tools used to make these schemes come to fruition are coin and death. The first tool takes the form of bribes, select investments, and economic warfare, seeking to elevate allies while ruining enemies. The second are the knives of assassins, striking down both pawns and players alike. So prevalent are these plots that there are no less than three known assassin guilds operating in Valkenholm and twice as many moneylenders who specialize in providing funds and expertise purely for the purposes of making waves with timely investments and calling debts due.

The prizes that these plotters hope to gain are many. Numerous resources remain untapped within Valkenholm's forests, from long-forgotten mining claims to luxurious hunting lodges or a valuable pre-invasion portrait. Often, however, the prizes are much less tangible. Instead, position and influence over the appointments of various bureaucrats or military commanders, trading rights, and—increasingly, of late—positions likely to benefit from Valkenholm's expansion into the Ash Plains and Hyphrates are equally of value and trade hands in the shadows.

Player Character Accursed are likely to become involved in many of these schemes, most often in ways that—at least, on the surface—are meant to diminish the Blood Witch's power and influence over the land. However, so complex are the plots and schemes of Valkenholm that it is also just as possible that the Accursed will find out that, in the end, they have been working for Sanguinara all along. The Blood Witch is not above sacrificing a lieutenant or two in order to advance some longer or subtler game. She is also willing to use her adversaries, including Accursed, as her catspaws.

Beyond the Nations

Morden is a land of more than just its mortal inhabitants and its organized governments. There are geographic features of majestic splendor and terrifying danger. There are groups whose power and influence extends far beyond the national boundaries. There are also beings that can have horrifying and unknowable effects upon humanity.

The Darkwall Peaks

Soaring tens of thousands of feet into Morden's sky and stretching for thousands of miles all along its northern, eastern, and southern borders, the Darkwall Peaks are one of the most imposing and ill-omened mountain ranges on all of Saturnyn. For countless centuries, this jagged, saw-toothed range kept Morden safe from the predations of the Witches in their far off lands. The range itself is an inscrutable maze of deep, miles long crevasses, switchbacks, winding cave complexes, hidden passes, dead end box canyons, and trails that are little more than goat paths. Very little of it has been charted, and those few crazy, brave explorers who have tried have met their ends in the treacherous passes and defiles at the hands of avalanches, rock slides, falls, and other, more terrible accidents. The Darkwall is a place of death and madness, full of conflicting legend. It is both a haven for monstrous creatures and the great wall that kept Morden safe for millennia. Safe, that is, until the Witches finally unlocked the way through the mountains and descended on Morden like locusts.

Few humans aside from the occasional brigand, goatherd, or foolhardy adventurer make their homes in the Darkwall. Instead, the range is home to countless species of flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world. Tales tell of huge raptors with wings so big that they blot out the sun, deadly great cats that can scale sheer cliff faces, savage feral humanoids, and massive carnivorous plants.

Other horrors are rumored to live there. Creatures from beyond the grave, slithering beasts from the mists of time long thought extinct, and a thousand gibbering nameless horrors are all said to stalk the trails and lurk in the dark caves. What is true and what is fiction regarding the Darkwall is hard to say, as few who enter ever return. Those damaged few who do are typically in no condition to give coherent accounts.

The Discordian Sea

The Discordian Sea is the capricious, constantly changing, largely unexplored ocean that marks Morden's western borders. Inshore, it is a relatively shallow body of water, typically around seventy or eighty fathoms and rarely deeper than a few hundred, with a craggy, rock-strewn bottom largely composed of gray sand shell shards. Spanning most of the hemisphere, the sea varies in climate and temperament from the choppy, ice-choked bays in the far north off the coast of Steppengrad to the calm, clear bathwater of Hyphrates' Bay of Parnath. Beneath its turbulent surface live a dizzying array of creatures from schools of common and benign fish to the dangerous sabreback whales of Steppengrad to larger, more dangerous things from the black depths such as armored, evil-tempered sea serpents and giant, multi-limbed kraken.

The sea is littered for hundreds of miles from the shores of Morden with countless atolls, archipelagos, and solitary islands, the majority of which remain uncharted. Those that have been explored differ wildly in their size, shape, climate, and inhabitants. Many are uninhabited, home only to scrub, sea oats, coconut palms, and the occasional colony of cattle, swine, or goats left by passing ships. Others are largely uninhabitable due to climate, volcanoes, gas vents, or other hazards. Pirates, smugglers, wealthy plantations, and various stripes of societal dropout inhabit others. One of the more famous inhabited inshore islands is Port Sorrow, located off the coast of Manreia. Port Sorrow is part smuggler's den, part refugee camp, part pirate haven, and part massive commercial shipyard. It's a dangerous and desperate place where thousands of displaced Mordens live in constant danger and abject poverty under the thumb of a collection of powerful criminal organizations. Very few of the other islands have been charted, especially those further from land, and especially now in the aftermath of the Bane War, few official efforts at exploration and colonization are being undertaken.

Each of the nations of Morden that border the Discordian Sea – Steppengrad, Manreia, Hebron, and Hyphrates – has a long maritime tradition based on local and overseas trade. The sea lanes all along the coast are crammed with shipping carrying goods from port to port, a practice that has gone relatively uninterrupted even through the Bane War. Limited trade is also carried on with the far away countries of Nordheim and the Sakurada Shogunate. These mysterious lands lie across the ocean, and few men have successfully traveled to them. What few official naval forces exist are largely small, rag-tag affairs consisting of small fleets of national ships shored

up with hired civilian vessels and privateers. These fledgling navies are mainly used to defend the shipping lanes from pirates and commerce raiders. Manreia and Steppengrad had, before the invasion of the Witches, been developing more professional national navies, but the War put a stop to that long ago.

The Fey

In the ages before the Bane War, mortals and fey only had limited interactions. Most of humanity—even those who were devoted to the Enochian Faith—recognized that there were creatures that dwelt at the fringes of human perception. Some called them nature spirits, others called them little people, and a few recognized them as beings of power. Regardless of their name, all who knew of them knew that they were capricious and volatile. Some among the fey could be generous—legends of rescuing orphaned children, recovering lost goods, or protecting innocents from predators abounded. Others, however, were less kind, including those who stole children, took precious items, or treated humans as little more than chattel. The challenge to anyone who had a chance to interact with these beings was to identify the friendlier fey—known as the seelie—from the treacherous, unseelie fey.

This was partly challenged by the fact that the fey had only limited dealings with humanity. While they dwelt in a place that seemed to be nearby, their comings and goings had little rhyme or reason to the perceptions of a normal human. In point of fact, the fey mindset and philosophy was decidedly inhuman. Their ideas of barter, property, and even time were so different from that of mere mortals that any kind of understanding was limited.

Because of this, what would seem like a reasonable agreement to a pair of humans might seem less so to a pair of fey. Further, any negotiation between a fey and a human could have significant ramifications that neither party could expect. As a consequence, fey would often come to blows with humans whom they viewed as untrustworthy, while humans grew to fear the fey whom they viewed as treacherous. In both cases, this stemmed from a central and nearly unavoidable difference in their perceptions.

The fey were often capable of interacting with the world in ways that humanity could not comprehend. They had arcane abilities that could transform the world in unusual ways—including changes transformations to living things and alterations of unloving things. Similarly, fey could alter the perceptions of humans, often triggering emotional changes as well. It is for this reason that there are countless legends of fey causing people to fall in or out of love with one another. Folktales also speak of fey creating precious gems and metals



from worthless materials, causing fields of grains to ripen, or for nature's bounty to wither and die on the vine.

Not surprisingly, mortal humans have long lusted after these talents. Often, the fey have been willing to exercise their abilities in the service of humanity, but always in exchange for some price. In many instances, a mortal would willingly trade something that seemed valueless to them, but precious to the fey. However, more often, a human might trade something to the fey without understanding the full repercussions of the bargain. It is unknown how many humans have traded emotions or memories to fey in exchange for some service, but few have recognized the true value of their loss until the deal is done.

Were it not for the course of the Bane War, the dealings between humanity and the fey might still remain a vast mystery. However, in the waning days of that War, the Alliance of Light recognized the truly dire nature of their situation. The Outlands had long since fallen, and forces were engaged in a battle on multiple fronts. Between the Djinn's army in Hyphrates and the loss of Cairn Kainen's leadership, the Alliance's component nations were badly fractured. In desperation, King Stefan attempted to seal a pact with King Auberon of the seelie fey.

The cost of that deal is unrecorded, but it likely involved some degree of self-interest. Clearly, the seelie fey were no more enthusiastic about the presence of the Witches and their banes than were the human defenders. Enochian scholars speculate that this is because of an interaction between their different understandings of the magical realm, but there is no good evidence to confirm or deny this.

What is clear, however, is that after the betrayal, there are no surviving fey who act out of kindness to humanity. Rather, those who remain clearly see mortals as little more than playthings. Their negotiations have also taken a far more rigorous tactic. When a human seeks to gain the favor of an unseelie fey, there is often a physical—and frequently gruesome—price included as part of the negotiation. Where the seelie might want a memory of pleasure or love, the unseelie prefer to take pain and cruelty as payment—preferably when the suffering is freshly administered.

Today, only the unseelie fey remain active in Morden. Even they are seldom seen—save for the few that work in support of the Witches. The unseelie are native to the Winterlands, which seemingly interact with Morden in inconsistent ways at variable places. Their presence and actions are unpredictable, but are always motivated by their self-interest.

The Enochian Faith

When the first settlers crossed the lightning bridge to Morden, they brought the Enochian Religion with them. Not all were devout followers—particularly those who settled in what eventually became Hyphrates—but the religion was well established and had already existed for thousands of years. The central focus of their belief involves a single, all-powerful creator who made the world of Saturnyn and continues to oversee it. The religion is monotheistic, and holds that their Creator shall return to provide the world its ultimate salvation in their moment of greatest need.

Devout followers of the Enochian path hold three virtues to be the ultimate core of human experience. These three are Gratitude, Generosity, and Diligence. Followers are expected to appreciate the world around them and show their thanks in their daily life. They are expected to avoid waste and to share the blessings that the Creator provided with those around them. Finally, they are expected to use the gifts that they have received to work in a steadfast manner so that they can improve the world.

Enochians feel that the three virtues are the ultimate expressions of the Creator's providence. Those who effectively embrace them are individuals who can dwell within the Creator's embrace in the afterlife. Conversely, those who ignore these virtues

are damned to spend their afterlife in a state of perpetual torment, as they try to make restitution for their actions during their lives. So while there is certainly a reward offered to the faithful, there is a significant threat that overhangs those who believe.

Of course, in practice, few are as diligent in following these beliefs as the high ideals might suggest. Similarly, there are a variety of different interpretations to the faith, not only within Morden's different nations, but even varying by region as well. This is largely because the bishops that oversee the different areas of Morden tend to focus the faith differently for the priests and monks who preach under their direction. Notably, the Conclave of Enochian Bishops has accepted and even embraced this variation. Rather than creating an air of hostility, differences in focus are often shared and discussed. After Conclave meetings, many bishops often return to their Bishoprics, and revise the educational style of their focus. This is partly because none of the bishops hold authority over one another. Instead, all members of the Conclave are considered peers, regardless of experience or the particular elements of their Bishoprics.

Prior to the Bane War, Enochians often praised the virtue of Gratitude over all others. This was because their land was fruitful, and there were few who lived in a state of perpetual need. While there were invariably members of the population in need of help, the region's vast bounty more than provided. Generous donations made to the churches were more than adequate to make certain that few ever truly suffered.

Since the nations fell to the Grand Coven, the world has changed and the faith has splintered. In many places, the bishops have changed their focus, demanding that the faithful be diligent at all times. For they recognize that the only possible hope for survival is a seemingly endless amount of hard work. Others believe that even the meager portions available to most must continue to be shared among the needy. For this reason, they preach a message that focuses entirely upon Generosity.

Notably, there remain elements who continue to preach against the Witches and their banes. When their activities are confirmed, the banes invariably burn the churches to the ground and inflict public reprisals upon the church leaders responsible. In spite of this, the resistance and its affiliation with the Enochian faith continues to grow. Many constantly remind their followers that the Witches epitomize examples of those who ignore the sacred virtues. Because of this, they know that all who have suffered a Witch's touch must be damned to an afterlife of penance to the Creator.

The Adherents of Aliyah

To the casual observer, the Order of the Penitent appears as a monolithic structure within which its members, the Accursed, walk in lockstep with one another toward some common goal. This could not be further from the truth. Within the Order of the Penitent are countless cliques, factions, and sub-groups all vying for power, members, and prestige within the larger Enochian hierarchy. Some break down along lines of Witchbreeds, others along political, social, or culture lines. There are groups trying to get more rights for the Accursed within the Church and Morden society at large, while others seek to isolate and repatriate the Accursed to distant lands. One of the most vocal is a group that calls themselves the Adherents of Aliyah.

The Aliyahans are a group of Accursed who work toward the creation of an independent Accursed state, a place of and for the cast-off children of the Grand Coven. Named for their leader, a charismatic Damphir from the south of Manreia, this group has been slowly gathering resources and supporters over the past decade. Members scour the shattered remains of Morden and even cross back into the Outlands in search of the perfect place to build a new Accursed homeland. They hope to build a place free of human bigotry and interference, a land in which they can live out the remains of their days in relative peace and, hopefully, some semblance of comfort. Not every Accursed agrees with their quest, and most Enochian officials who have heard of the movement give it no countenance whatsoever.

The final outcome, whether the Aliyahans succeed in their quest to create a new Accursed homeland or fail spectacularly, remains to be seen. The idea of a place to settle and distance themselves from the horrors of the past is incredibly attractive to many Accursed however. More and more of the Accursed join the Adherents every day.

Morden's Future

Morden is now a region of puppet governments. The minions that the Witches largely abandoned now run the nations that they conquered. In some places, these banes answer directly to surviving members of the Grand Coven who have remained behind to experiment or toy with their new subjects. In others, the banes in authority continue to struggle with surviving elements of mortal resistance. Most populations are kept under control through strict rationing and cultures characterized by fear and brutality.

Many of Morden's survivors—the innocents, the wounded, and the cowardly—fled to the islands of the Discordian Sea. In some of these places, like Port Sorrow, they suffer through desperate rationing and overcrowding. Most gladly accept this in return for freedom from the Witches and their creations. On other islands, the desperate have found little hope of salvation, as they encounter other dangers. Trading death at the hands of the Witches for death at the hands of other terrors. Those who struggle on, continue to dream of the day that they can return to the homes they once knew and loved. Hoping that some power could oust the vile entities that have destroyed the lands.

Within the fallen nations, most mortals scratch and claw to survive each day. Rationing continues, as the rulers demand horrific tithes. Those who toil to work the land are largely survivors of the war. Many were too old or too weak to join the Armies of Light. Among the veterans who returned, most were badly scarred both physically and mentally. They have battled horrors and lost portions of themselves to them. The majority has little will to live and even less energy to fight a war they have already lost.

In spite of this, there are some who still resist. Among these, the warriors of Unconquered Parnath battle because they refuse to accept that the war has already been lost. Others fight on as they desperately seek to obtain some vengeance, out of religious fervor, or out of simple blind determination. The surviving veterans of the Armies of Light are few, but they are canny. They have studied the enemy for decades. The soldiers know their enemies' weaknesses, and they recognize their assets and their limitations. There are fewer strikes with each passing month, but they continue to become more effective, as these guerilla fighters become ever more desperate.

Perhaps most importantly, there are the Accursed of the Order of the Penitent. Once terrors to humanity, they are now considered traitors by the banes and Witches. In stark contrast, mortals who study the situation now view them as one of the few surviving groups of potential heroes. With discipline and organization, it is these transformed and cursed men and women who hold the powers necessary to overcome witchcraft. Not only can their powers be used to recognize enemy units, their physiques are often adequate to overcome their opponents directly. In some instances, their inherent understanding of Witchcraft offers them a tremendous advantage as they seek to battle the very beings that once used them as tools.

In the end, the Accursed are the ones most likely to aid Morden in escaping the Witches' tyranny. If enough can be persuaded to use their unholy abilities for humanity, then they might reshape the world. This could only be possible if leaders were to emerge. It would require heroes who could rally and coordinate the different Accursed into a group capable of eliminating those who unjustly hold power; the same people who damned them with their Witchmarks.

The Outlands

The tale of the Outlands is a tragic one. Once, the Outlands were the most wild, the most vibrant, the most untamed and open lands in all of Morden. Settled over 700 years before the Witches and their armies crossed the Darkwall, the Outlands were originally a home for pioneers, adventurers, and farsighted merchants. The Outlands were verdant, rich in flora and fauna, and they were only limited in their development by the growing wealth and influence of the more southern realms such as Hyphrates and Manreia.

Some folk, however, desired wide open spaces and new opportunities to the entrenched culture and civilization of Morden's southern and western regions. These settlers headed north, into the shadow of the Darkwall, and there they founded the Outlands. Three realms made up the Outlands: Deepshadow, Riverspring, and Seaharrow.

For centuries, these realms were Morden's rough-and-tumble frontier, home to hunters, trappers, and the most stubborn of settlers. Drifters, vagabonds, and opportunists from the other nations of Morden added to the Outlands' population. In time, the Outlands grew to rival any or the other realms in population, civilization, and military might.

Foremost amongst the Outlands was Riverspring, centrally located just north of Valkenholm's vast forests. Riverspring was home to a proud and martial people, tough and athletic. The climbing contests of skill and strength celebrated by the people of Riverspring were legendary, and they celebrated many heroes who battled against the aggressive beasts lairing within the deep mountain passes. Riverspring had a large and well-trained army, composed mostly of blocks of pikemen supported by light cavalry.

Seaharrow was the westernmost of the Outlands, far north of Steppengrad. Seaharrow's settlements were largest near the coast of the Discordian sea, and its citizens were a resilient and hardy people—mostly sailors, fishermen, and farmers. Seaharrow weathered numerous disasters over its lifetime, from typhoons and floods to devastating earthquakes. However, the

people of Seaharrow survived, and thrived, in spite of these setbacks. The storm-lashed coast of Seaharrow bred some of the most courageous sailors and sea-captains ever known, and its well-trained force of marines were able to defeat forces many times their size in any sea-going encounter.

To the east once lay Deepshadow, lush with grassy foothills and windswept plains. Deepshadow served as a breadbasket realm for Morden, filled with herds of sheep, cattle, and winter-furred deer. The realm was home to ranchers, hunters, and trackers – its people were in tune with the land and the seasons like few others. The defenders of Deepshadow were a mobile force made up of rangers, prowlers, and a surprisingly effective group of knights, the legendary Shadow Riders.

The Outlands were the first to suffer when the Witches and their hordes came for Morden. The people of the Outlands fought for every inch of their lands. They resisted—in fact, they battled to the last. And, for all their valor, the Outlands fell.

The survivors of the Outlands were gathered by the Witches into camps, and one by one they were transformed into mockeries of their former lives. Some became Banes, others transmuted into the dreaded Cauldron-Born. However, most of the Outlanders were destined to become the Accursed, unwillingly serving as shock troops against the remaining nations of Morden.

Port Sorrow

Port Sorrow lies southwest of Morden, a week's sail from Palmyria. Before to the start of the Bane War, the island became a haven for pirates, smugglers, and other undesirables. The city grew up to serve their needs, as did its reputation as a dangerous, unsavory free port. There is no central governing body in Port Sorrow, only a viper's nest made of warring pirate factions. They rule different areas like tiny fiefdoms, each with its own laws and punishments. The pirates take advantage of incoming refugees, extorting their goods and subjecting them to all manner of humiliations. Most refugees live in desperate conditions, jammed into overcrowded, vermin-infested tenements or living hand to mouth in the street. Some are lucky enough to have work, but many have turned to a life of crime. Life in Port Sorrow is nasty, brutish, and short. Those who come as refugees long for the day when they can return to their homes.



Chapter 2: The Accursed

Lightning flickered across the sky, outlining a sprawling set of crumbling ruins atop the hill. Sarder crouched in a copse of trees near the hill's base, his gaze fixed upon the once-magnificent manor house. The revenant methodically checked the readiness of his musket, adjusting the fit of the silver bayonet blade affixed to the end. Only once he was satisfied did he speak. "Up there. That's the Witch's lair."

D'argen nodded, his broad-brimmed hat shedding rain and shadowing his hauntingly handsome features. Blade-thin and slender, the dhampir exhibited all the inhuman grace of his half-vampire ancestry. "There isn't much time." He replied, easing the fit of his rapier in its sheath. "If we don't interrupt the ritual before midnight, the village will suffer."

"I like that village. It would be a shame to lose access to their library." A deep voice rumbled, echoing the crash of thunder from the storm clouds overhead. A massive shadow shouldered through the underbrush as Von Coric joined them. A golem, Von Coric was a creature that had been made and not born - his limbs stitched together from the flesh of dead soldiers. A pair of crude bolts protruded from his neck, and his jutting forehead made many underestimate his intelligence. However, it had been the golem's careful investigation that had led the group here to the manor house in the first place.

Von Coric removed a small pair of spectacles from his pocket and polished them upon a handkerchief. "The moon is rising. We need to hurry."

Sarder was already in motion, his ragged cloak swirling around him as the revenant eased into the night like a silent shadow. It was always a surprise to find out just how quietly a dead man could move.

D'argen brought up the rear, his enhanced senses searching the darkness for any threats. The storm was ending, and shafts of moonlight speared down through the clouds to illuminate the passage of the small group towards their goal.

The manor appeared deserted, its windows dark, its roof halfway caved in. The door leaned drunkenly to one side.

D'argen and Von Coric carefully crossed the threshold, the golem staring with curiosity at the faded paintings hung upon the walls whilst the dhampir sneered at the ancient décor.

A decaying hand tapped D'argen on the shoulder, halting the dhampir's movement. Sarder's return was as silent as his departure, and D'argen bit back a snarl.

"Danger." The revenant hissed. "I sense a bane nearby."

Von Coric gripped his flintlock pistol and pulled his cutlass. D'argen called to mind a charm of fire, readying to unleash his magic upon the foe.

A wolf's howl rang out from somewhere behind the group, and all three of the Accursed could feel their witchmarks burn with warning.

Von Coric chose that moment to state the obvious. "The Witch knows we're here."

Who are the Accursed?

The core experience of the Accursed RPG allows the players to take on the roles of monsters, fighting against great supernatural evils to free a conquered land. These monsters are the Accursed—once normal folk transformed into monstrous forms through a Witch's curse. The curse takes a physical form on the Accursed's body as a witchmark; a sigil branded into his flesh that displays the nature of his particular curse.

A Grand Coven of Witches launched an invasion of conquest against the allied nations of Morden. As part of this assault, six Witches transformed thousands of normal human settlers into the Accursed. The Witches forced their creations to fight in the front lines against their former countrymen, destroying vast swathes of Morden's defenses.

At the height of the final battle, the Grand Coven was sundered by betrayal. Although the Witches had ultimately triumphed over their foes, the dark horde of monsters, Accursed, and mercenaries fragmented. Most of these forces along with the remnants of the Grand Coven returned back over the Darkwall mountains from whence they came. A small group of Witches remained in Morden to consolidate their hold on the newly-conquered nations.

For their part, the Accursed found themselves freed at the war's end. However, the Accursed found it impossible to return to their former lives—their curses and their monstrous forms removed them from the bosom of friends and family, and their homelands had been ravaged by the invasion. With nowhere else to turn, many Accursed became mercenaries, wanderers, adventurers, and bandits. Many Accursed have been drawn to a recently-founded organization known as the Order of St. Vitus—also known as the Order of the Penitent—a group dedicated to opposing the dark influence and minions of the Witches and seeking to free the conquered realms of Morden from oppression and evil.

THE WITCHBREEDS

There are six known types of Accursed in Morden, known as the witchbreeds.

Dhampir

The Dhampir are “half-vampires,” and the most human-looking Accursed. They hunger for blood and suffer grievous wounds from wooden weapons. Dhampir are lithe, graceful, and charming; agile in both combat and conversation. They are the creations of the Blood Witch and must beware her wrath.

Golems

Golems are humanoid creatures formed of unliving materials—often dead flesh, wood and straw, or stone and clay. Their shapes contain a human soul, the only remnant of their former selves. The Crone takes a cruel pleasure in placing a human soul into an unliving vessel.

Mongrels

These men and women were “gifted” with body parts taken from beasts. The enhancements vary wildly, from a gorilla's arm to a cat's eyes. The Chimera who created Mongrels is obsessed with transmutation and the secrets of life.

Mummies

The most ancient of the Accursed, Mummies have been returned to life after centuries of death. They draw strength from a sarcophagus, and wear remnants of burial trappings as armor. The Djinn created them, in the process of granting a twisted wish.

Ophidians

A hybrid of snake and man, these fast and slim Accursed are as deceptive and slippery as their reptilian brethren. They are also every bit as poisonous. The Gorgon created them, but despises all those who have betrayed her.

Revenants

These living dead corpses animated by an overwhelming obsession for revenge. Already dead, Revenants are difficult to injure. The Morrigan created them, while using her necromantic arts to create hordes of undead cauldron-born during the Bane War.

Shades

While physically insubstantial, few barriers can stop these Ethereal Accursed. They must constantly struggle to maintain their form. The Dark Queen created them to be her eyes, ears, and mouth, so that she could observe and coordinate the Bane War.

Vargr

Vargr can shift between human and bestial forms at will. They possess extremely sharp senses and are swift and savage foes on the battlefield. The capricious Baba Yaga holds little love for her creations. Seeing them as part of the land she devastates with famine.

Character Creation Steps

Building your Accursed is a multi-stage process. This section presents one sequential approach to creating the character that you can portray through the game sessions. Note that this order is not hard and fast. As long as all the steps have been completed and the character follows the rules, creation has been done the right way. Sometimes, a player may find that it is more important to have a certain Edge or Trait than a specific Witchbreed. This is perfectly acceptable.

1. Choose your Witchbreed.

Pages 50–65 describe the available options for the different types of Accursed. Select only one of these to represent the basis of the curse that your character bears.

2. Traits

Characters must assign values to all of their traits and statistics.

A. ATTRIBUTES

Your Accursed begins with a d4 in each attribute, and has 5 points with which to raise them. Raising an attribute a die type costs 1 point.

B. SKILLS

Your Accursed has 15 points for skills. Each die type in a skill costs 1 point, up to the linked attribute. Increasing the skill above the value of the linked attribute costs 2 points per die type.

C. SECONDARY STATISTICS

- Charisma is equal to the total bonuses or penalties given by Edges and Hindrances.
- Pace is 6".
- Parry is equal to 2 plus half Fighting.
- Toughness is equal to 2 plus half Vigor.
- The Fate track begins at the central 0 point.

3. Edges and Hindrances

Your Accursed may gain additional creation points in return for selecting Hindrances. Up to One Major Hindrance (2 points) and two Minor Hindrances (1 point each) may be selected.

For 2 points, you can either:

- Gain another attribute point
- Choose an Edge

For 1 point you can:

- Gain another skill point

4. Gear

Characters begin with a selection of gear based upon the character's backstory as well as the Skills, Edges, and Hindrances that the player has selected. Game Masters should work with players to compile a list of equipment that is particularly well suited to the character's needs. Gear for Novice characters, however, should never be of the highest quality or best caliber. Such equipment is reserved for a character who has earned it through experience. Further, a character should only have a reasonable amount of equipment that they can easily carry—or that can be carried on their mount, if applicable.

Note that the acquisition of additional gear after creation is subject to the character's Personal Resource die (see page 84). This begins as a d6.

5. Background

Explain your character's backstory and motivations. This should include his country of origin and may reference places that he has travelled prior to and since his transformation. The circumstance of his capture by the Witch Armies and the specific details of his Witchmark should also be considered. Create the Accursed's specific starting Witchmark (see page III).

Skills

Athletics ‡	Fighting
Gambling	Guts
Healing	Intimidation
Investigation	Knowledge *
Notice	Persuasion
Repair	Riding †
Shooting	Streetwise
Subterfuge ‡	Survival
Taunt	Throwing
Tracking	

* Knowledge specialties include vehicle control skills, such as would be used to pilot a hot air balloon, train, or even a sailing vessel.

† Riding includes the skills relevant to drive any horse-drawn vehicle.

‡ Subterfuge includes all abilities and tests normally associated with core Savage Worlds skills of Lockpicking and Stealth.

Athletics includes all abilities and tests normally associated with core Savage Worlds skills of Climbing and Swimming

Dhampir

Of the known Accursed witchbreeds, the Dhampir are amongst the most normal in appearance. At first glance, a Dhampir may appear completely human. Only a glimpse of her fangs or the crimson glint in her eyes may reveal her true nature.

The origin of the Dhampir lies with blood—it is the essence of their power and their curse. During the assault that toppled nations and conquered Morden at last, the Witches transformed countless citizens of the Outlands into monsters known as banes. The Blood Witch, Sanguinara, turned the passions and desires of her victims against themselves. Those who failed to control their desires were crafted into terrifying Vampires, monsters who thrived on consuming the blood of the innocent. However, many Outlanders somehow found the strength to deny the Blood Witch's seduction and find some measure of control over their passions. These brave folk were instead changed into Dhampir and became one of the Accursed. Their forms became supple and lithe, their movements graceful, their voice and manner lush and soothing. It is said that a Dhampir could charm a man out of his own soul.

Aside from their presence and charisma, Dhampir are also universally swift, agile, and sure-footed. Dhampirs tend to prefer lighter, faster weapons to suit their mobility, such as rapiers, main-gauches, and black-powder pistols. It does not hurt that such weapons are also light, generally easy to conceal, and are not unusual amongst the nobility of Morden—a group often fooled by the silver tongue of a Dhampir. Dhampirs are often pale of skin, dark of hair, and all possess a sharp sense of sight that helps guide them through the darkest of nights.

Although related to Vampires, Dhampir are not forced to exclusively drink mortal blood to survive. They still possess a powerful hunger for fresh blood, however, and tasting even a single drop is pure ecstasy to a Dhampir's senses. Like the sweetest wine, many Dhampir become addicted to drinking blood. The fresher the blood, the sweeter its taste, and heart's blood—taken directly from the veins or suckled out of the heart itself—is the most potent of all.

A Dhampir's hunger is difficult to suppress whenever she is exposed to spilled blood, but some have managed to master this more monstrous side of their persona.

In addition, Dhampirs share some of the Vampire's weaknesses along with their strengths. For example, Dhampirs suffer grave wounds from weapons made from wood. Dhampir find that even touching the texture of wood makes many of them uncomfortable. For this reason, few Dhampir master archery, preferring black powder weapons instead.

A sincere desire to control their bloodlust often motivates the Dhampir who join the Order of the Penitent. This is because many older and more experienced Dhampir can be found amongst the Order, fomenting rebellion against Sanguinara's rule in Valkenholm. Others choose to assist the Order to slay banes and other minions of the Witches. The Order always requires that Dhampir pass several tests before they can be trusted—there are few noticeable differences in appearance between a Dhampir and a Vampire, and the Order cannot afford to be lax in its vigilance lest the Witches root it out entirely from the lands of Morden.

Only a handful of Dhampir continue to serve Sanguinara, for there is little love lost between the Blood Witch and her creations. It is well known that Sanguinara does not tolerate defiance lightly, and she has bent the efforts of the banes in her service—including the true vampires—to constantly seek a means of eradicating her wayward Accursed.

Since their creation during the Bane War, Dhampir have continued to experiment with their abilities. While many Dhampir have simply gained powers similar to those of their cousins, the vampires, other Dhampir have discovered new ways to enhance their supernatural gifts. Many Accursed amongst the Order of the Penitent believe that Dhampir are one of the most versatile witchbreeds, second only to the Mongrels. It is known that a strong link between witchcraft and blood exists, the same link responsible for the creation of many banes. This link also explains why Dhampir have a marked propensity to learn and utilize witchcraft as well.



WITCHBREED PACKAGE

All Dhampir characters gain the following racial package:

Dark Charm: The Witchmark transforms a Dhampir both physically and mentally. The character's physical form transforms to be in greater accord with the Blood Witch's vision of an idealized physical form. This greater inherent beauty and grace grants a Dhampir +2 Charisma.

Graceful: The transformation into a Dhampir gives the character far greater control over his body. Dhampir characters begin with a d6 starting Agility.

Keen Senses: Because they are often expected to serve as the Blood Witch's eyes and ears, Dhampir must be able to closely observe all that transpires around them. These characters begin with a d6 Notice skill.

Low Light Vision: Many of the Blood Witch's agents are most active under the cover of darkness. To better interact with them, the Dhampir's witchmark gives them a gift of night vision. Dhampir ignore the attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

Wood Weakness: Dhampir suffer +4 damage from weapons made from wood.

Enemy: The Blood Witch has very high expectations of her creations. She does not tolerate those who have turned away from her majesty. Instead, those who work against her are to be eliminated. Vampires and other banes created by the Blood Witch always seek to attack a Dhampir in preference to other targets. If they become aware of a Dhampir that is not loyal to the Blood Witch, they immediately begin working to eliminate the character.

Blood Hunger: Dhampir have a strong urge to drink flesh blood when it is available. This is treated as a Minor Habit Hindrance. In the event a character falls prey to this habit frequently and publicly, Gamemasters may choose to increase it to a Major Habit.



RACIAL EDGES

Dhampir have exclusive access to the following Racial Edges. These Edges can be taken at character creation if Edge selections are available and the requirements are met. Alternatively, they can be purchased with Experience Points as the character grows and develops.

Call the Blood

Requirements: Novice, Dhampir, Charisma 4+

Some Dhampir learn to fully evoke a visceral reaction in those around them. When attempting to use Persuasion on an opponent, the Dhampir may first make a Spirit test. On success, the Dhampir is able to directly influence the target's blood to induce a more amenable personality; the target character is treated as Neutral, for the Persuasion test. With a raise, they are treated as Friendly. On failure, the target senses the Dhampir's efforts, and the initial reaction moves one step toward Hostile.

Call to the Wild

Requirements: Seasoned, Dhampir, Spirit d8+

Some Dhampir learn to call to the blood of a particular breed of mundane animal. Once per day, the Dhampir can attempt a Spirit test. On success, the Accursed summons a single specimen of that animal to come to their aid. With each raise, another animal joins in. The animal assists the Dhampir until the next sunrise or sunset or until it suffers a wound. For smaller animals (e.g. bats, insects, worms) a swarm constitutes a single specimen. When selecting this Racial Edge, the Dhampir must choose a specific type of animal, with Gamemaster approval. This Racial Edge may be taken multiple times, selecting a different animal each time.

Blood Fury

Requirements: Veteran, Dhampir

The Dhampir has learned to master some of the abilities of a true Vampire. Once per day, upon consuming blood, the Dhampir can boost one attribute by one die type until the next sunrise or sunset. The blood must be freshly consumed.

Graceful Leap

Requirements: Novice, Dhampir, Agility d8+

Some Dhampir learn to take full advantage of their Witchmark. Dhampir who master this Racial Edge have a base horizontal jump of 2" and a run and go jump of 4". A successful Strength test grants two extra inches of distance. When calculating damage from falling, reduce the distance fallen by 10 feet prior to calculating damage. These characters do not suffer damage from falls of less than 10 feet.

Golems

In Hebron, legends tell of a powerful being made of clay built to protect the people in their hour of need. Details vary by the telling, but most agree that the creature was formed from dust and clay by a powerful priest and given life through magic words carved on its body. Alternately, the creature is brought to life by a magic formula written on parchment and placed in its mouth. In some of these stories, the creature is little more than a mindless automaton; a powerful construct that possesses no personal initiative and can only follow orders—typically very literal and much to the chagrin of its controller. In other stories, the creature is highly intelligent, deadly, and cunning; a monster requiring constant supervision and a danger to both its creator's enemies and the creator himself. These Golems, as they were called, existed in one form or another throughout Hebron's antiquity. They were largely a morality tale, being at once metaphor for man's hubris and a representation of man's power and his wish to protect hearth and home. When the Crone and her armies boiled out of the Mountains and entered Hebron, at their head strode massive, hand-built horrors who seemed to walk straight out of Hebron's legends. Automata of bone and clay, of iron and straw and pallid flesh, these nearly unstoppable creatures cut a swath through Hebron's defenders and tore many of her shining cities down with their bare hands. Those few who survived the invasion called the monsters Golems and fled before them, their ancient stories come to life at long last.

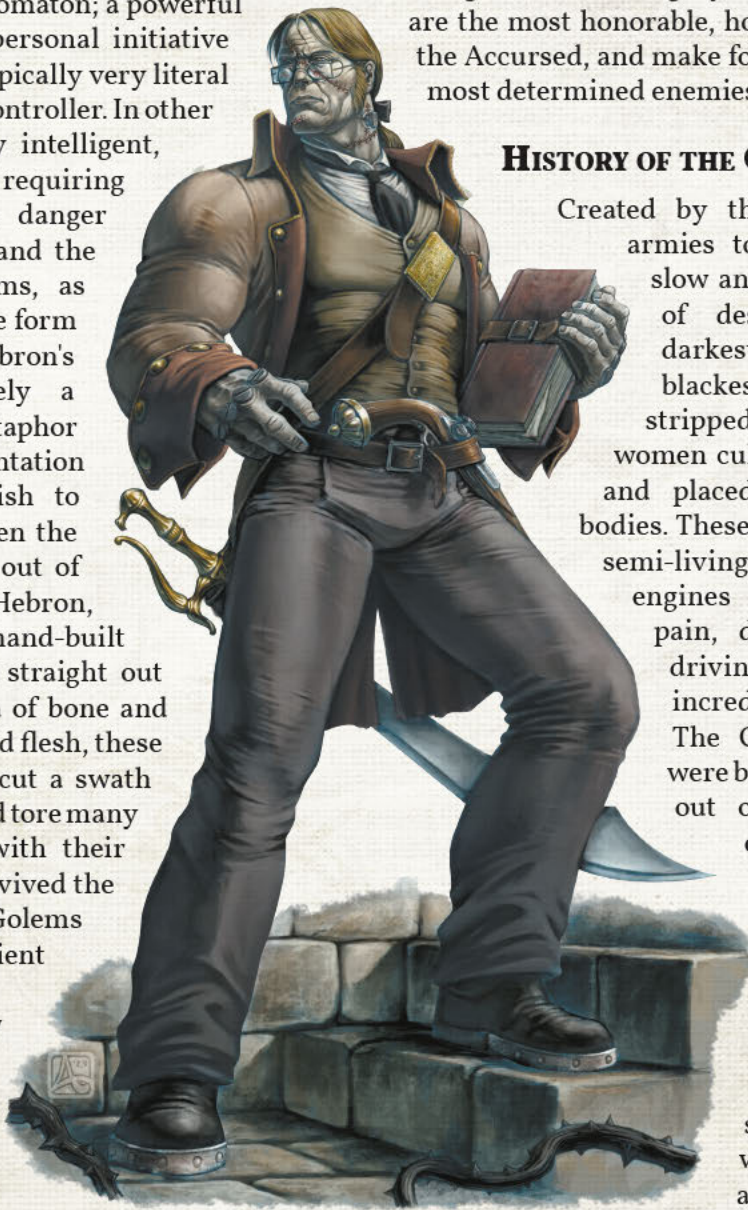
In combat, Golems are slow and methodical, implacable killing machines most of whom prefer a straight-forward frontal assault to fancy battlefield tactics. Unfortunately, Golems also tend to be oafish and clumsy, graceless in movement and prone to destroying things by accident rather by malice or forethought. They often don't know their own strength, or the limitations of their bodies, even those who have lived for decades. Consequently, they often pose as much danger to themselves, their friends, and their allies as they do to their enemies. In their day-to-day interactions, Golems often appear aloof and cold, detached from

those around them. Much of this can be attributed to their means of creation. Their tortured souls have lost much of their humanity after being ripped from their mortal bodies and spending decades trapped in a lurching shell doing the evil bidding of the Crone and her sisters. Many, however, prefer to keep a distance between themselves and their smaller, more fragile companions lest a wrong move or action cause major harm. That being said, those mortals who have had dealings with the mighty Golems state that they are the most honorable, honest, and forthright of the Accursed, and make for the finest friends and most determined enemies.

HISTORY OF THE CURSE

Created by the Crone to lead her armies to victory, Golems are slow and implacable machines of destruction. Using the darkest of rites and the blackest of magics, the Crone stripped the souls of men and women culled from the Outlands and placed them in inanimate bodies. These tortured souls acted as semi-living power sources; spirit engines burning hatred, rage, pain, despair, and suffering driving their new bodies to incredible feats of savagery. The Crone's initial Golems were built in a variety of styles out of different materials, each one designed to fill a specific niche from heavy infantry to infiltration. Some were made of stone or iron, living statues whose dense hides could turn even the sharpest blade. Others were made of dead flesh and bone, disparate body parts sewn together and brought to life through

Witchcraft, alchemy, and liberal application of newer, untested scientific techniques like the harnessing of the electric fluid. Still others were made of straw, wood, scrap, clay, sand, or anything that could hold a humanoid form and contain a soul. To control them, the Crone had Witchmarks carved or branded into their bodies, making them subservient to her in perpetuity.



WITCHBREED PACKAGE

All Golem characters gain the following racial package:

Constructed: While a Golem's soul is that of a mortal human, his body is a construct of stone, steel, straw, reclaimed flesh, or some other material. Golems do not suffer from disease or poison. They do not suffer extra damage from called shots, nor do they suffer penalties from Wound Modifiers. In addition, they add +2 when attempting to recover from being Shaken. Golems cannot heal damage like their mortal companions. To heal a Golem, a character must use the Repair skill instead of the Heal skill.

Deliberate: The Crone chooses to build her golems so that they are physically strong and capable of enduring grave damage. She willingly sacrifices flexibility and speed in exchange for this physical resilience. A Golem may not improve his Agility above d6.

Hulking: Golems are, on average, taller, broader, and stronger than other Accursed or the average mortal. They gain a +2 Toughness modifier thanks to the sheer mass of their constructed bodies, and the reinforcing elements added to them.

Weakness: Golems made from organic materials (flesh, straw, wood) suffer an additional +4 damage from fire and flame-based attacks. Golems made from inorganic materials (glass, clay, steel, stone) suffer an additional +4 damage from weapons that primarily deal blunt force damage.

RACIAL EDGES

Golems have exclusive access to the following Racial Edges. These Edges can be taken at character creation if Edge selections are available and the requirements are met. Alternatively, they can be purchased with Experience Points as the character grows and develops.

Thunderclap

Requirements: Novice, Golem, Spirit d8+

The creation of a Golem is a complicated process involving a number of strange and arcane sciences known only to the Crone. Among these is the application of the fluid to fuse the mortal soul to the artificial body and start the life processes in motion. Some Golems retain a bit of this energy and can use it to deal stun damage to opponents. When a Golem with this Edge makes a Fighting roll to attack with his fists, his opponent must make a Vigor roll at -2 or be Shaken and knocked prone. This test occurs whether or not the attack deals any damage.

Disembodiment

Requirements: Novice, Golem, Vigor d8+

The Golem has been designed in such a way that its components remain under the control of its soul, whether or not they are physically connected. As an action, the golem may detach (or reattach) a single limb, which can continue to function in spite of its separation from the body. Even if that limb does not appear to contain sensory organs, the golem retains access to the full gamut of sensory input from the detached limb. The limb is also capable of crawling, slithering, or hopping independently at Pace 2. It cannot, however, take combat actions, but is treated as a completely separate character for determining non-combat actions. Further, the main body suffers from the One Arm or One Leg Hindrance until the limb is reconnected.

True to Its Origin

Requirements: Seasoned, Golem, Vigor d8+

Some Golems embrace their artificial nature. When in the presence of its base material, the Golem may spend a benny to absorb its Toughness in pounds of that material and immediately recover one Wound.

Expand the Senses

Requirements: Seasoned, Golem, Spirit d10+

Some Golems learn to embrace the materials from which they are made. Rather than trapping their souls within the original form of their construction, they may briefly extend their senses to other materials made of that same material. With a successful Spirit test, the Golem's soul can leave its body for up to one hour to inhabit—though not control—another object of that same material within the body's line of sight. Each raise adds up to an additional hour to the duration. When this time is up—or at a sooner time of the Golem's choosing—the soul snaps back to its body. If the Golem's native body is destroyed while the soul is absent, the Golem's soul goes on to the afterlife. Note that the target object may move outside of the body's line of sight after the transfer is initiated. There is no range requirement for the Golem to return to its body. The Golem does not have any physical control over the target object, it merely extends its senses to the location.

For example, a straw golem could shift its perception to a bale of hay or a field of straw. A flesh golem could transfer its perception to other dead flesh. A stone golem could shift its perception to that of a mountain or castle. Limitations are entirely subject to the Gamemaster's discretion.

Mongrels

The Chimera's obsession with transmutation led to the creation of the Mongrel Witchbreed. Their curse, however, is not entirely manifested by the dark magics that the Witchmark imparted. Rather, it is the Witch's unholy curiosity that represents the heart and soul of the curse. Because of this, the perception of a Mongrel and the reality are two very different things. Few outside of its victims recognize the true essence of this Witchbreed's curse.

Most people recognize the monstrous form—bodies fused with the countless animal species vary substantially from specimen, and no two have an identical physical modification. Some include the horns of a goat, the ears of a cat, or the shell of a turtle. The Witch modifies animal organs so that they are proportionate to the size of the victim who bears them. Some replace an organ or limb completely, while others are disproportionate, leaving the victim with a horribly distorted appearance. These replacements endow the victims with inhuman abilities, commonly ones that would be better served in combat as a part of the Chimera's army. At her command, those under her sway are forced to make use of these enhancements to overpower their enemies who had once been their comrades in arms.

Yet these transplants are merely the essence of their curse. The parts are examples of how the Chimera modifies the victims who bear her Witchmark. The essence of the curse is the ability to survive the surgeries the Witch performs. It makes the subjects harder and enables their flesh to merge with that of other organisms. However, it does nothing to reduce the pain that the surgeries inflict. Even as these transplants empower the recipients with inhuman abilities, they also inflict a life of constant agony. Whether it is a consequence of the torturous pain or her magic, the Chimera has even greater control over her Mongrels than any of the other Witches hold over their Accursed.

During the war, the Chimera frequently drove her Mongrels into a frenzy of bloodlust before unleashing them on the armies of the Alliance. In this state, the Accursed were not only able to inflict incredible damage to their foes, but they were also often unaware of the damage that they suffered. Battlefield legends speak of Mongrels who fought on long after their bodies should have collapsed from blood loss and massive organ damage. Enochians who have studied this curse suspect



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sought to retain their humanity would have to constantly obtain fresh stores of the elixir from the Order or even learn to synthesize it themselves.

For many Mongrels, the elixir becomes as great a concern as their Witchmark. They recognize that without its presence, they quickly lose their minds and succumb to base desires. However, the elixir does not keep indefinitely. New reserves must be obtained regularly. Mongrels who travel to unfamiliar lands must carefully monitor their supply of elixir and focus upon obtaining new suppliers at the earliest opportunity.

WITCHBREED PACKAGE

All Mongrel characters gain the following racial package:

Agonizing Pain: The Mongrel's mutations leave the character in a perpetual state of pain that has worn down and sapped his will to live. Mongrels must spend two points per step to raise Spirit during character generation, and the Mongrel must dedicate two Advances to raising Spirit during game play. Further, because of their short tempers and animalistic appearance, Mongrels suffer a -2 Charisma.

Animal Components: Each Mongrel is modified in different ways through a combination of implanted organs and limbs. These limbs are always resized so that they are reasonably proportionate to the character. For example, a pair of insect's eyes would be grown massively so that they bulged from human eye sockets, though a giraffe's neck or a gorilla's arm could remain disproportionately large for the human.

Mongrels may select any two Edges—with Game Master approval—as indications of their constitutional modifications. At the Game Master's discretion, these could include Edges that have requirements that the character could not normally fulfill, including experience or racial requirements.

Rather than taking Edges, the character could instead have two combinations of abilities that provided a net +2 bonus from the Savage Worlds Making Races rules. Note that the abilities must be reflected by an animal implant. The Construct ability is an exception and may not be taken.

Mongrels do not normally acquire additional implants over the course of their lives. If a character wishes to acquire additional Animal Component Edges, this would normally be an indication that new organs or limbs have been implanted. Such an event should incorporate story elements and may require the direct intervention of the Chimera or at least one of her highest-ranking agents. Alternatively, this could come about through the direct intervention of the character's Witchmark.

Sample Modifications

Inhuman Attributes: The Mongrel's implantations have increased one of the character's Attributes, but only when that implant is in use. For example, a character with the legs of a kangaroo could leap further and kick more strongly, but would not do additional damage when wielding a handheld weapon. This could be treated as a situational bonus to Strength.

Inhuman Senses: The Mongrel has additional sensory implants, which extend beyond those of a normal human. These grant the character a +2 to Notice rolls. He is always considered an active guard for Stealth checks.

Long Limbs: The Mongrel gains +1 reach.

Low Light Vision: Grafting of feline eyes provides the Mongrel with night vision. The character ignores the attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

Natural Armor: The Mongrel has an implanted hide or shell, which provides natural protection against attack. He is treated as having +2 Armor.

Natural Weapons: Some Mongrels have implanted claws, horns, or fangs. When using these weapons, they may deal lethal damage (Str + d4) and are always considered "armed."

RACIAL EDGES

Mongrels have exclusive access to the following Racial Edges. These Edges can be taken at character creation if Edge selections are available and the requirements are met. Alternatively, they can be purchased with Experience Points as the character grows and develops.

Bear the Pain

Requirements: Seasoned, Mongrel, Vigor d8+

Those who have lived with the Mongrel Witchmark for an extended period of time sometimes become numb to any pain beyond that felt from their implants. He may ignore 1 point each of both wound and fatigue penalties.

Bestial Connection

Requirements: Novice, Mongrel, Spirit d6+

The Mongrel extends his senses through one of his implants and achieves a mental connection to an animal of the same type that provided the implant. The animal must be within five miles. Its presence is subject Gamemaster discretion. If present, the Mongrel can automatically summon the animal to his current location, where it renders some minor assistance. Note that the Mongrel has no further control over the animal nor does the animal possess a heightened intelligence or communication.

Hybrid Survival

Requirements: Novice, Mongrel, Smarts d6+

Some Mongrels are able to tap into the instincts associated with their implants. For these individuals, time spent far from human civilization is far easier to bear. When making a Survival test in an environment associated with one of their implants, the Mongrel receives a +4.

Mummies

The horrors of the Mummy Witchbreed originate with a foolish mistake made at the time of the initial Grand Coven invasion. As the Outlands began to fall before the Witches' armies, the other nations were scarcely aware of the dangers. For them, their daily routines were untouched by the political instabilities in far off lands. Consequently, the inhabitants of Hyphrates continued to scheme against one another, in hopes of gaining ever greater control over the fertile land. It was part of this scheming that led to the creation of these Accursed—and proved an early turning point in the war.

Centuries before the invasion, Hyphrates was a lush grassland—which is the reason the initial colonists chose to settle the location. Irresponsible magical excesses, poor agricultural practices, and a number of hideous insect plagues eventually transformed the once fertile land into the largely barren desert that now characterizes the nation. However, the full extent of that change was dramatically accelerated during the early days of the Invasion.

This was when a lesser bureaucrat thought he was using a long-lost ritual to summon the Witch known as the Djinn. Legends indicate that the bureaucrat sought to return Hyphrates to the state of glory it had known in the centuries past. As the nation had become increasingly dependent upon imported goods from Morden's other nations that glory had long lain dormant. When the bureaucrat wished for the Djinn—whom he thought ostensibly under his control through the ritual—to restore that ancient majesty, the Witch chose to carefully interpret that exact wording.

Fully exploiting her powers, as fueled by the permissions granted through the wish, the Djinn chose to restore the majesty of the ancient Hyphrates nation. However, she did so in such a way that they became tools for her use. Ruins of forgotten cities and lost temples emerged from beneath the nation's deserts. The mummified remains of the ancient Hyphrates residents lived anew.

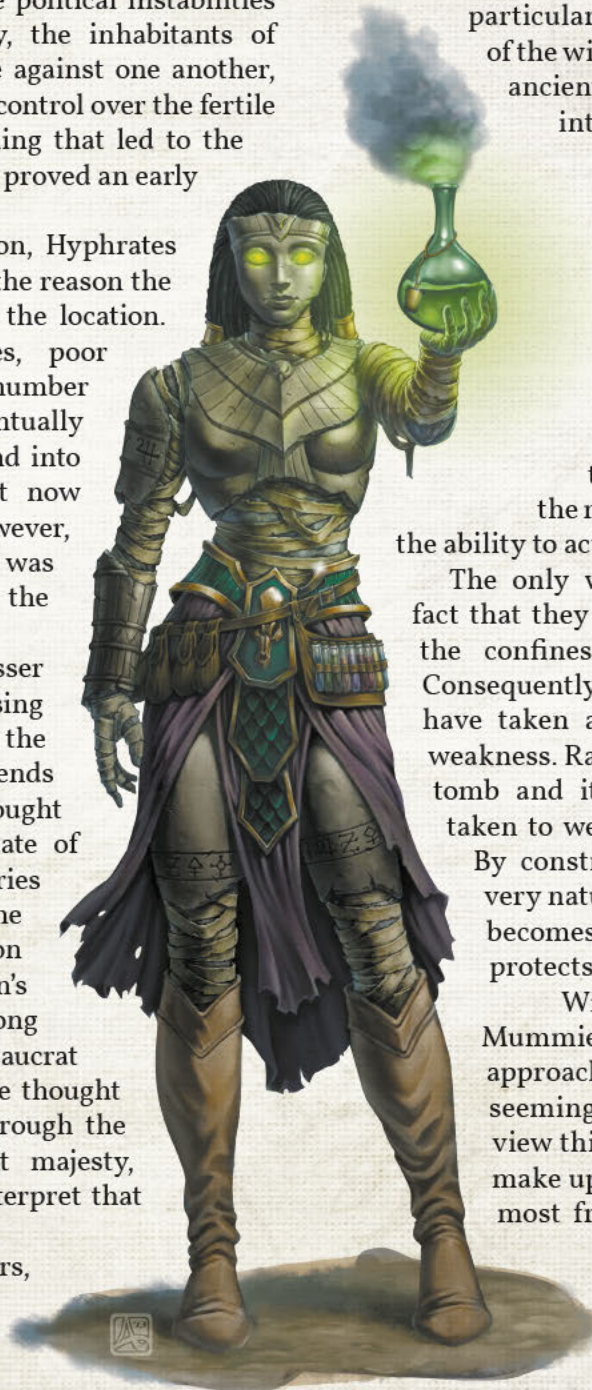
Rather than resurrecting the nation and its inhabitants, she restored them to a hideous unlife. While they retained their memories and much of their personalities, the vast majority of these undead were completely under the sway of the Djinn.

The exception to this control was the mummified remains of those burials that had incorporated a particular style of cartouche. When the power of the wish rolled through Hyphrates, these ancient symbols magically reconfigured into Witchmarks. The mummies who bore them were restored to a state of unlife, but with a degree of freedom of thought and personality. Initially, they still had little choice but to obey the Witch's direction, but after the time of her defeat this became far less of an issue. In fact, when the Fey vanquished the Djinn during the Betrayal, all of the members of this Witchbreed gained the ability to act of their own volition.

The only weakness of these undead is the fact that they must take their daily rest within the confines of their ancient sarcophagus. Consequently, the vast majority of Mummies have taken a novel approach to solving this weakness. Rather than having to stay near their tomb and its structure, the mummies have taken to wearing much of their sarcophagus. By constructing joints and straps into its very nature, the statue and coffin-like affair becomes a veritable suit of armor that protects their bandage-enshrouded corpse.

With their minds restored, the Mummies have taken on a variety of different approaches to their new incarnations—and seeming immortality. Some have chosen to view this new chance as an opportunity to make up for past sins. It is these who have most frequently joined the Order of the Penitent and joined the fight to overthrow the remaining forces of the Witches. Others believe that this is their due, as they had believed that they were gods in life. It is Mummies of this

faction, most of whom have given their allegiance to the false Pharaoh Memmon, who now rule over the Memmon-Aswar portion of Hyphrates. Those who fight against the Witches have been forcibly banished from this land, and are sentenced to dismemberment should they return.



HISTORY OF THE CURSE

Most Witchmarked lived as mortals relatively recently. Many recall the time before the Witches invaded Morden. They long for the life they knew without their curse, particularly as daily life reminds them of what they have lost. With few exceptions, Mummies lived as mortals hundreds of years ago. Except in the company of their fellows, they see a world that is hardly reminiscent of the one they experienced as mortals. While other Accursed long for the life of a mortal, Mummies often long for the peaceful return to the grave. They recognize that their time has passed, and they have no desire to live anew.

The exceptions are those who have more recently transformed into a Mummy. This, element speaks to the permanence of the curse, and the ingenuity of the Djinn. For even though she is not there to create new Accursed, their numbers have remained constant. Each time that a Mummy is destroyed, its curse is passed on to the one who eliminated the Accursed. This is because the cartouche is seemingly indestructible. When a Mummy is slain, this marker somehow separates from the desiccated form of the undead, and bonds to the skin of the attacker. In short order, the person who had once attacked the Mummy becomes Witchmarked. In cases where a Mummy died through less direct courses, the cartouche seems to draw out new prey. On several occasions, one of these marks has been recovered under seemingly innocuous circumstances, and created a new Accursed.

WITCHBREED PACKAGE

All Mummy characters gain the following racial package:

From the Tomb: The souls of those who once inhabited the bodies now control their unliving yet animated forms. Because the soul-body connection has been severed, they are far more resilient to damage. Mummies have a +2 to recover from being Shaken, and suffer no additional damage from Called Shots. Because their bodies no longer live, they are immune to disease and poison. Further, they do not suffer wound penalties.

Hideous Visage: Beneath their unmoving death masks, a mummy's body is a desiccated corpse. Unable to effectively interact with mortals, they suffer -2 Charisma. The character cannot take the Attractive Edge.

Inveterate Pawn: Resurrected by the Djinn, Mummies were intended to serve her without question. Mummies must pay two points per step to raise Spirit during character creation.

Sarcophagus Shell: The materials that were once the Mummy's Sarcophagus have been transformed into a suit of armor that protects its animated remains. The Accursed gains +2 Armor and can make bashing attacks with the armored skin for Str+d6 damage.

RACIAL EDGES

Mummies have exclusive access to the following Racial Edges. These Edges can be taken at character creation if Edge selections are available and the requirements are met. Alternatively, they can be purchased with Experience Points as the character grows and develops. In some instances, the Edge might incorporate an important element of the character's background. If the Witchmarked takes such an Edge after character creation, this can be explained as a recovered set of memories—ones that only resurfaced later. The memories had likely been damaged by the centuries in the tomb.

Multipurpose Sarcophagus

Requirements: Novice, Mummy, Repair d6+

The Mummy has become extremely familiar with his sarcophagus, and has constructed it to serve in many different ways. With a successful Repair test, the character can reconfigure it to serve as any non-weapon mechanical tool of man-size or smaller. While in this alternative configuration, the Mummy loses the benefits of the Sarcophagus Shell aspect of its racial package.

The full extent of these transformations are subject to Gamemaster discretion, but the options should be vast. The Sarcophagus might be used as a small boat, a complex pulley-system, a powerful lever, a drilling device, or even small cart. In essence, the wooden, metal, and fabric components are reshaped to serve some expanded purpose.

Royal Tradition

Requirements: Novice, Mummy, Spirit d8+

The Mummy's sarcophagus and death mask are elaborately painted and articulated. The character is unlikely to pass for human, but is far less disturbing than most of his Witchbreed. The character's Charisma is improved by 2.

Ophidians

A strange and terrible amalgam of reptile and man, Ophidians are among the rarest and most reclusive of the Witchbreeds. Ophidians possess a lean and muscular humanoid body and the head of a snake or lizard. Many also possess a prehensile tail that can be used to attack, defend, or pick up light objects. Their glittering eyes have the vertical slit pupil common to all reptiles, and their mouths are typically filled with sharp teeth and venomous, retractable fangs. An Ophidian's tongue is long and sinuous, forked at the tip and packed with sensory organs that grant them a powerful sense of smell. Their speech is slow and sibilant, often breathy and difficult to hear. They have scaly skin that is smooth and dry, cool to the touch, and emanates an almost dusty smell. The color and texture of their scales varies by the individual. Some are a single color all over, others covered with dazzling patterns. Some have smooth, glossy scales, some dull and thick, and others rough and formed into ridges and spines.

Ophidians are the children of a secretive and cunning Witch called Melusine. Known also as The Gorgon, during the Bane War she preferred working from the shadows as opposed to the full frontal violence and domination espoused by many of her sisters in the Grand Coven. To assist in her work, she turned her considerable magical talents to creating her own Witchbreed. Melusine considered the serpent blessed with prodigious natural gifts that allowed them to move quickly and silently. Through her Witchcraft, she combined the various gifts of the serpent with the intelligence and cunning of humankind to make her Ophidians. Once created, they were given carte blanche to further the goals of their mistress and the Grand Coven at large, then released to wreak havoc.

Ophidians exhibit abilities common to Morden's native reptiles. Their senses are incredibly acute—especially smell—and they are keenly aware of their surroundings at all times, making them nearly impossible to catch unawares. They possess the strength and speed of the serpent, moving with unnatural swiftness and grace, while striking with the power of a coiled spring.

Ophidians can dislocate their limbs and flatten their bodies at will. Doing so allows them to slip through small spaces inaccessible to other Mordenites. This gives them the reputation of being able to pass any barrier and enter any locked room. Perhaps most importantly, Ophidians possess glands in their mouths that create an incredibly powerful, fast-acting neurotoxin that can paralyze even the toughest opponent in seconds. As they age, the potency of their venom increases, and some Ophidians have even developed venoms that kill rather than incapacitate.

Ophidians do suffer from a number of restrictive, often debilitating vulnerabilities. They are cold-blooded and extremely susceptible to variations in temperature. These Accursed suffer greatly in cold climates, preferring hot and tropical climates like those found in southern Morden.

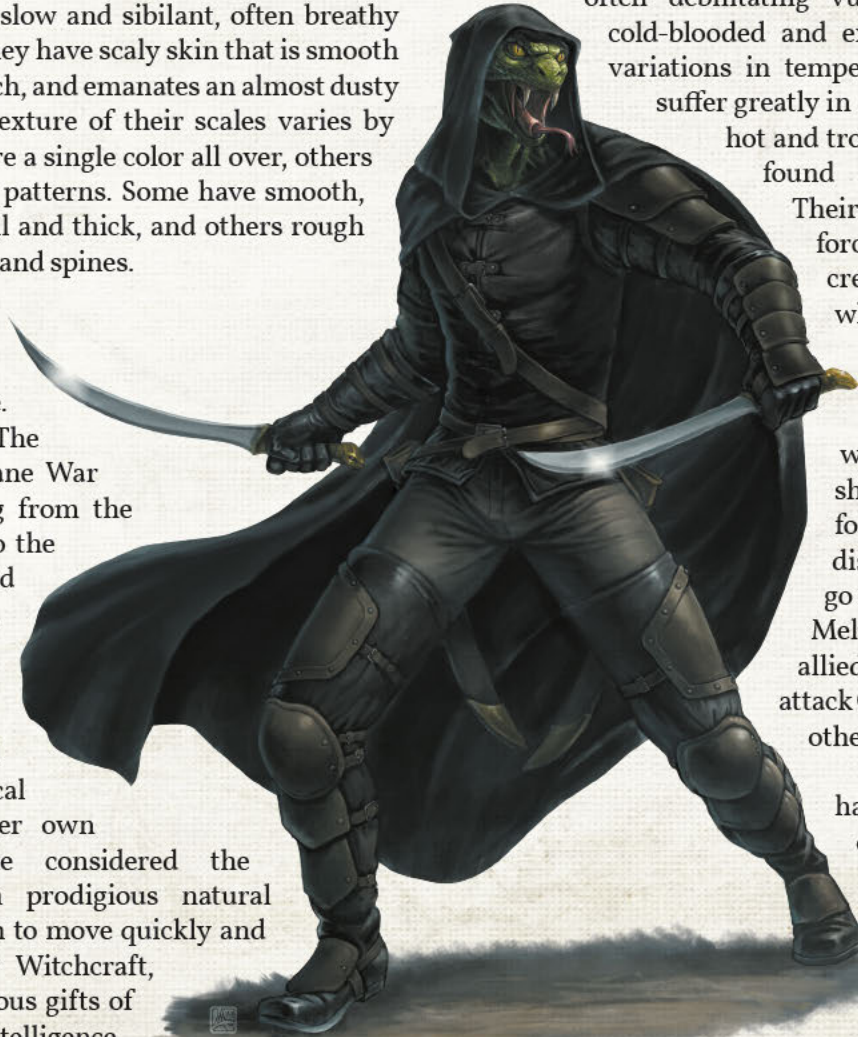
Their final limitation is one forced upon them by their creator Melusine who, while strong willed and cunning, is also quite paranoid. Fearful that her creations would turn against her, she has marked each one for death if they dare disobey her or otherwise go astray. In battle, any of Melusine's banes or other allied creatures preferentially attack Ophidians first, ignoring other often greater threats.

Those Ophidians who have become independent of Melusine often take on work as scouts, guides, and Witch Hunters.

A number of these Accursed have found their way into working with

the Order of the Penitent,

although only a comparative handful have ever ventured as far north as Massif Helsenn in Valkenholm. Victor von Drake is considering a number of candidates to serve as a spymaster for the Order, and it is rumored that an Ophidian named Hassan is the preferred choice. Most Ophidians in the Order are valued as agents in the southlands and along the coastline of Morden. Many act as the Order's eyes and ears in Port Sorrow to try and keep the refugees there safe from the Witches' reprisals.



WITCHBREED PACKAGE

All Ophidian characters gain the following racial package:

Venomous Bite: As a free action, a Ophidians may unfold their fangs and secrete a potent venom. Upon making successful bite attack (STR+d4 damage) and Shaking or wounding a target, the victim must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer the effects of the Paralysis power. Racial Edges may increase the toxicity of this venom up to Lethal, and the Ophidian may only secrete this venom once per turn. Ophidians may activate this ability in conjunction with actions outside of the normal initiative sequence, including their First Strike.

Disjointed: Thanks to their flexibility and loosely jointed skeletons, Ophidians may fit themselves into or through any space at least as large as their head. They may move at their normal Pace while doing so, and can Run.

Serpent Strike: The enhanced senses and constant alertness of Ophidians prevents opponents from catching them off-guard in battle. Ophidians automatically gain the benefits of the First Strike edge, regardless of the requisites.

Cold-Blooded: Due to their serpentine nature, Ophidians suffer a -1 penalty to all Trait rolls, and their Pace is reduced by half while they are in extremely cold climates such as those found in Steppengrad and Valkenholm during the cold seasons. This is a consequence of lethargy.

Caustic: Ophidians are constantly, but subtly corroded on the inside by the toxins they wield. This eating away at their innards wreaks havoc on their nervous and immune systems. Ophidians also have great difficulty keeping their internal temperatures in check, and must constantly sun themselves to keep up their health. Vigor requires two points per step to raise during character generation and the character must dedicate two Advances to raising Vigor during game play.

Enemy: While Melusine does love her Witchbreed, she ultimately fears them, and cannot stand the thought of their betrayal. Those who have escaped her metaphorical coils however, know what it means to be brought her control and have no desire to return. Basilisks and other banes always seek to attack a Ophidian in preference to any other target.

Serpent Senses: The Ophidians' forked tongues constantly dart in and out of their mouth. They actually taste the air, giving them a +2 to Notice rolls. This ever-present advantage means that they are always considered 'Active' when consulting the results of a Subterfuge roll.

RACIAL EDGES

Ophidians have exclusive access to the following Racial Edges. These Edges can be taken at character creation if Edge selections are available and the requirements are met. Alternatively, they can be purchased with Experience Points as the character grows and develops.

Whiptail

Requirements: Novice, Ophidian

The Ophidian is either created with, or grows through some genetic imbalance, a long, powerful, prehensile tail. This tail can be used to attack or entangle an opponent, has reach, increases an Ophidian's defensive capabilities, and can even be used to pick up small, light objects, typically no bigger than a knife. A tail grants an Ophidian Reach of 1, deals Str+d4 damage, and entangles like a whip. Rules regarding whips and entanglement can be found in Chapter 4.

Deadly Venom

Requirements: Seasoned, Ophidian

As they age, an Ophidian's venom becomes more potent. Some Ophidians increase this potency through various means, such as by eating poisonous plants, and their venom becomes strong enough to kill. An Ophidian can take this Edge to increase the potency of his venom from Paralysis to Lethal. For the effects of Lethal poisons, see the Poison Effects Table in the Savage Worlds Core Rulebook.

Constrictor

Requirements: Veteran, Ophidian, Strength d8+

Drawing on genetic memory, an Ophidian can train himself to coil his body or tail in a way that entangles or crushes an opponent. When he gets a raise on a Fighting roll, the Ophidian entangles his foe with his body. The round they entangle and each round thereafter, they cause damage to their prey equal to Str+d6. The Ophidian may take an additional non-movement action at the same time as dealing the entangling damage. Prey may attempt to escape on their action by getting a raise on an opposed Strength roll.

Speed of the Serpent

Requirements: Novice, Ophidian, Agility d8+

The Ophidian is an idealized serpentine striker, capable of racing around land much quicker than others. An Ophidian with this Edge gains a base Pace of 10.

Revenants

A Revenant may appear human at first glance, but a closer look reveals more of his Accursed nature. As one of the living dead, Revenants have a faint scent of rotting flesh around them at all times, and their eyes are a milky-white in color. Their flesh is often disfigured with mortification, and the wound that ended their former life is often the most prominent of their many scars. Due to their unsettling appearance, Revenants have a difficult time dealing with the people of Morden. Most citizens consider Revenants untrustworthy at best, and there are many who consider all living dead—Revenants included—to be horrid pawns of the Witches.

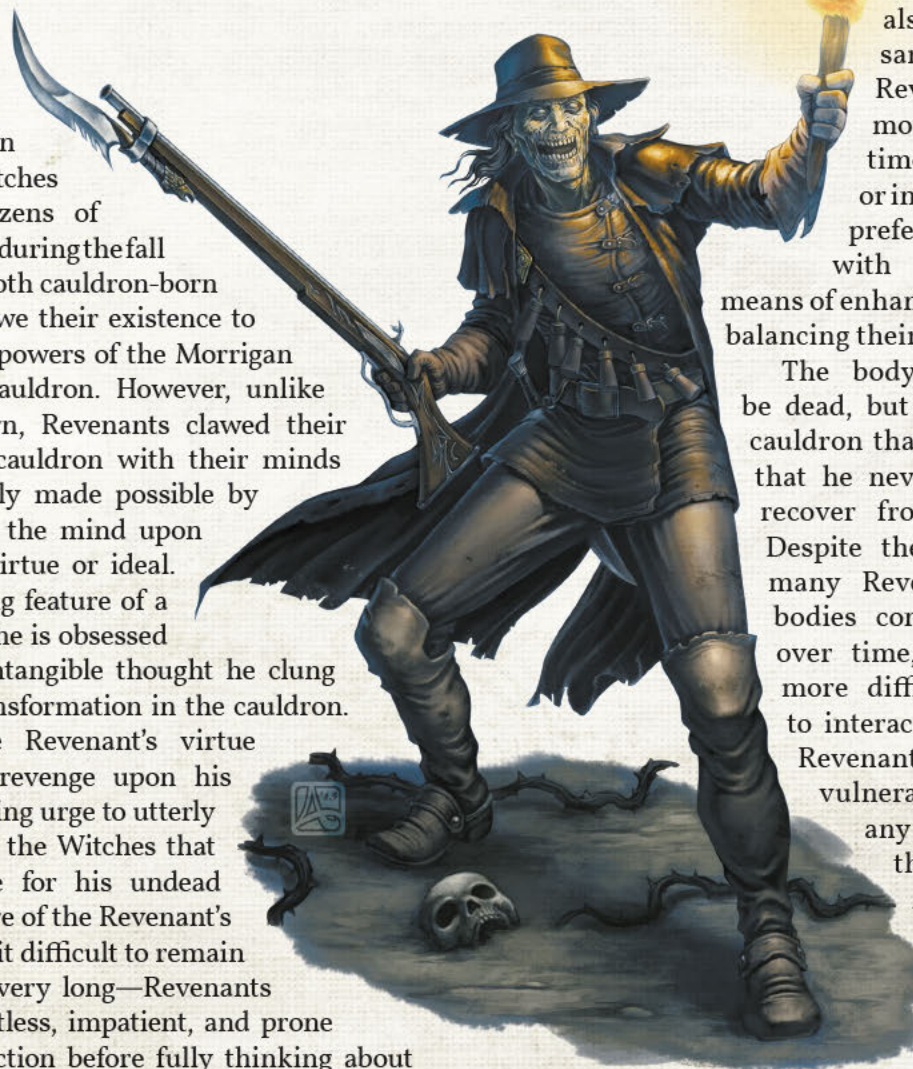
It is true that Revenants are, in a way, kin to the shambling cauldron-born that serve the Witches and overran dozens of defending armies during the fall of the Alliance. Both cauldron-born and Revenants owe their existence to the necromantic powers of the Morrigan and her Dark Cauldron. However, unlike the cauldron-born, Revenants clawed their way out of the cauldron with their minds intact—a feat only made possible by an iron focus of the mind upon one overriding virtue or ideal. The most defining feature of a Revenant is that he is obsessed with whatever intangible thought he clung to during his transformation in the cauldron. Most often, the Revenant's virtue is a desire for revenge upon his tormentor, a driving urge to utterly defy and destroy the Witches that were responsible for his undead state. The pressure of the Revenant's obsession makes it difficult to remain in one place for very long—Revenants are famously restless, impatient, and prone to leaping into action before fully thinking about the consequences.

Revenants gain many powers upon their transformation that make them formidable enemies of the Witches. First, Revenants feel no pain, suffer no fatigue, and are immune to poisons and disease.

As one who is already dead, a Revenant has no need to breathe or eat, and only requires a modicum of rest—more for the sake of the Revenant's mind than for his unliving body. These vengeance-obsessed Accursed make excellent hunters and trackers. However, the Revenant's obsession typically means they rarely seek out roles that require learning and patience, such as alchemy or white witchcraft.

The Enochians welcome Revenants into the Order of the Penitent, for there are none more committed to removing the Witches from Morden. In fact, the head of the Order himself—Victor Von Drake—is a Revenant. However, the Order is also keenly aware that the same obsessions that make Revenants so exceptionally motivated can, from time to time, lead a Revenant astray or into a trap. Thus, the Order prefers to pair Revenants with other Accursed as a means of enhancing their strengths and balancing their weaknesses.

The body of a Revenant may be dead, but the power of the dark cauldron that gave him birth means that he nevertheless can heal and recover from damage over time. Despite their uncanny resilience, many Revenants find that their bodies continue to slowly decay over time, making it more and more difficult for the Revenant to interact with normal humans. Revenants possess an unusual vulnerability to cold iron, and any wound inflicted by that metal causes the Accursed's flesh to blister and smolder. Some scholars amongst the Enochians surmise that this effect is due to the Morrigan's witchcraft that animates the Revenant's form—it is theorized that some kind of link exists between the dark cauldron itself and the mysterious Fey.



WITCHBREED PACKAGE

All Revenant characters gain the following racial package:

Undead: All Revenants have died and been reborn within the Morrigan's Cauldron. They do not suffer additional damage from called shots, and never suffer Wound Modifiers. They receive a +2 bonus when attempting to recover from being Shaken. They are beyond the concerns of the body, so do not suffer from disease or poison.

Power of the Crypt: Revenants begin with a d6 starting Vigor. Furthermore, a Revenant's natural maximum Vigor is $d12+2$, and he can reach this with normal Advances without applying the Professional or Legendary Edges (which can bump his Vigor to $d12+3$ and $+4$, respectively).

Dead Already: While they need not be particularly spiritual, Revenants have already faced and overcome death. There is little that they fear. In any situation calling for a Spirit test where Fear is concerned, or in the case of Intimidation, a Revenant can roll his Vigor in place of Spirit. Note that other Spirit-based tests are not affected.

Restless Dead: During situations where there is little to draw the Revenants full attention, these Witchmarked can become impatient and utterly focused upon their vow. At the Gamemaster's discretion, he may call for a Spirit test. Upon failure, the Revenant character becomes irritable and unfocused. He temporarily gains the Mean Hindrance, and suffers a -1 distraction penalty until action enters the story.

Overriding Goal: Each Revenant has a single overriding obsession that enabled the Witchmarked to sustain its focus on the journey through the Morrigan's Cauldron. It continued to drive the character forward like a merciless taskmaster. With the Gamemaster's approval, the player may choose any obsession he wishes, but it is typically centered on revenge against the Witches. If the character takes actions that are in opposition to achieving this goal, the Witchmarked suffers a level of Fatigue. That level cannot be recovered until the character takes some action to work towards the final goal. Revenants can suffer multiple levels of Fatigue in this way, and even become incapacitated from them.

Animated Corpse: Many see Revenants as little more than vengeance-obsessed corpses, and the average person finds their decomposing bodies extremely distracting. They suffer a -2 Charisma penalty among mortal humans.

Cold Iron Weakness: Revenants take +4 damage from cold-forged iron weapons (see page 92). "Cold" refers to their relative purity—not their temperature.

RACIAL EDGES

Revenants have exclusive access to the following Racial Edges. These Edges can be taken at character creation if Edge selections are available and the requirements are met. Alternatively, they can be purchased with Experience Points as the character grows and develops. In many cases, as the Revenant becomes more focused upon his Overriding Goal, it begins to forget its former humanity, accepting the full capabilities of its unliving body.

Strength of the Grave

Requirements: Novice, Revenant

Many Revenants are far stronger than their skeletal bodies would suggest. Revenants who gain this edge increase their Strength by a die type. In addition, they increase their natural maximum by +1. Revenants may take this Edge once per Rank, in addition to the attribute advance normally allowed with each rank.

Beyond the Flesh

Requirements: Seasoned, Revenant, Vigor $d8+$

Revenants who select this advance have learned to ignore many of the physical limitations of their once human body. The character ignores the pain and injury that would normally be associated with adjusting its form into extreme shapes. For example, dislocating a joint, or shifting bone structure to escape capture or squeeze through a very small opening can occur without suffering Wounds or Fatigue. Note that the Revenant cannot completely disassemble itself, but it can rearrange its components in improbable ways, subject to the Gamemaster's discretion.

Boundless Perseverance

Requirements: Veteran, Revenant, Spirit $d8+$

As Revenants work towards better achieving their goal, many become capable of persevering through even the most wretched of conditions. Characters with this Edge are capable of sustaining four Wounds instead of three prior to becoming Incapacitated.

No Need for Light

Requirements: Novice, Revenant

Some Revenants are fully capable of perceiving their environment, even in obscuring conditions. These Accursed suffer no attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting. They are also fully capable of perceiving normally through thick fog or smoke, polluted water, and other conditions that would normally restrict vision.

Shades

The presence of a Shade is unsettling for most citizens of Morden—these Accursed are pale and wan, every color of their body and clothing muted. A Shade's eyes are black and without pupil. Their voices have a resonant, hollow quality. Perhaps the most unusual factor of the Shade's appearance is that, from time to time, they become translucent, allowing onlookers to glimpse outlines of things through the Shade's own body. Lastly, Shades possess an unnatural aura that raises the hackles of any being nearby—most animals and beasts cannot tolerate a Shade's presence.

The Witch known as Hecate—also referred to as the Dark Queen—is responsible for the creation of this terrifying Witchbreed. At the onset of the Bane War, she damned hundreds of men and women of the Outlands to an everlasting ghostly existence. Only those with the strongest connection to their former lives were able to retain their sense of self. These hardy few became the Shades, while those who failed the Dark Queen's test instead became mindless creatures of shadow.

Intended to act as scouts and infiltrators, Shades have a number of unique abilities that allow them to move about undetected and to sow fear and discord. First, a Shade that marshals his willpower can become nearly entirely incorporeal, able to move through physical barriers or even travel through solid ground. A Shade's incorporeal nature also assists them in battle—many well-aimed blows simply fail to connect. However, Shades are halfway between one world and the next, and eventually any foe can land a lucky blow. A Shade can also focus the unnatural chill of his aura as an attack, striking fear into all beings nearby.


For all their strengths, Shades also suffer from significant weaknesses. The most significant of these is salt—Shades simply cannot abide its touch. A Shade cannot cross a line of salt drawn on the ground, nor can they travel across salt water. Weapons coated in salt inflict wounds that burn the Shade's very spirit.

Second, the Shade's unnatural aura means that animals react strongly to their presence. Guard dogs, horses, and the like sense a Shade's approach from far away. Their strange half-existence means that Shades sometimes have difficulty exerting their full strength, and Shades often face challenges when interacting with others—even other Accursed.

Many Shades possess a strong will and sense of self, tools that are essential to those who follow the path of a white witch. Witchcraft comes very naturally to Shades, as their creator—the Witch Hecate—possesses great power in that discipline. However, Shades also face an increased risk compared

to most other Accursed, for should Hecate gain stronger influence over one of her wayward creations, the Shade may well fade away entirely from the world, never to be seen again. Shades are rarely involved with alchemy or serve as front-line soldiers, but there are many who act as spies and investigators. A few Shades focus their efforts as Witch Hunters, preferring to use firearms as a way to offset their relative physical weaknesses.

Shades suffered greatly at the end of the Bane War, largely due to the ignorance of the Enochian Church. The Enochians initially thought them to be merely another bane, and many Shades were slain in misguided exorcisms.

However, the efforts of many brave Accursed finally revealed the truth, and the church  has done its best to make amends.

Understandably, few Shades are

willing to trust the Order of the Penitent, but over the last few years, some have learned to appreciate the Order's purpose and efforts to benefit Morden. At Massif Helsenn, the Order's head librarian is a Shade known as Jassarion, and his ghostly abilities are often in demand for locating and retrieving tomes of forgotten lore.



WITCHBREED PACKAGE

All Shade characters gain the following racial package:

Fear: Shade's Witchmark exudes an aura which may be focused through the will of the Shade to frighten sentient creatures. A Shade may invoke the fear power with a successful Spirit roll at -1; the LBT must be centered on the Shade. She may gather her will for a full round in preparation to cast fear as her next action (no movement, no multiple actions and must avoid disruption); by doing so she ignores up to 2 points of Spirit roll penalty but loses the benefit if not used. If the Shade rolls a 1 on the Spirit die (regardless of Wild Die), she cannot use fear for the rest of this encounter or until she spends a benny to negate the Backlash.

Limited Presence: While they are still alive, Shades have difficulty interacting with the real world through physical touch. Their Strength requires two points per step to raise during character generation and the Shade must dedicate two Advances to raising their Strength during game play.

Out of Phase: The Shade's physical form exists partly out of phase with reality. The Shade begins with Subterfuge at d6, a +1 Parry and gains a +2 bonus to resist all negative environmental effects (heat, cold, pressure, etc.).

Phasing: Due to her partially insubstantial nature, a Shade gains a form of Burrowing called Phasing. While Phased, the Shade can pass through solid structures and may sink into the ground and travel up to her Pace as an action. She may strike by materializing and taking her opponent by surprise, making an opposed Subterfuge roll versus the target's Notice. If the Shade wins, she gains +2 to attack and damage that round, or +4 if she gets a raise. The Shade must become fully corporeal to make the attack. If the victim wins and was on Hold, he may try to interrupt the Shade's attack as usual. The Shade cannot be attacked physically while Phased unless the attacker uses magical items, magical weapons, spells or supernatural powers.

Unnatural Aura: Any creature of animal intelligence [those with a Smarts designator of (A)] automatically senses the unnatural presence of a Shade within a distance of 6" and will not willingly approach closer to the Shade. If forced to do so, either through threat or duress, the animal becomes panicked and immediately moves its full Pace plus running die away from the Shade and is Shaken.

Vulnerability (Salt): When exposed to salt or salt water, Shades suffer a -1 penalty to all Trait tests. Damage-causing powers with a salt Trapping or weapons coated in salt cause +2 additional damage. Shades cannot cross salt water or an unbroken line of salt under their own power.

RACIAL EDGES

Shades have exclusive access to the following Racial Edges. These Edges can be taken at character creation if Edge selections are available and the requirements are met. Alternatively, they can be purchased with Experience Points as the character grows and develops.

Spectral Constitution

Requirements: Seasoned, Shade, Vigor d8+

The Shade becomes even more inured to effects from the real world and her bonus to resist all negative environmental effects (heat, cold, pressure, etc.) increases to +4. Additionally, the Shade receives +2 to Soak rolls versus physical attack damage as she becomes slightly intangible momentarily after getting hit.

Spectral Chill of the Grave

Requirements: Seasoned, Shade, Vigor d10+

A Shade may focus her will through her Witchmark to invoke the damage field power with a successful Spirit roll at -2. She may gather her will for a full round in preparation to cast damage field as her next action (no movement, no multiple actions and must avoid disruption); by doing so she ignores up to 2 points of Spirit roll penalty but loses the benefit if not used. The damage field causes 2d6 cold damage with a success, 2d8 with a raise. The damage field power may not be maintained. If the Shade rolls a 1 on the Spirit die (regardless of Wild Die), she cannot use damage field for the rest of this encounter or until she spends a benny to negate the Backlash.

Spectral Camouflage

Requirements: Seasoned, Shade, Subterfuge d8+

The Shade's body becomes less corporeal. As an action, in any Dim or worse illumination, the Shade can cloak itself in any existing shadows by making a successful Spirit roll. On a success, the Shade is considered to have an additional -1 attack penalty against her or -2 on a raise. This penalty is effective against all attacks focused directly at her; area attacks ignore this penalty and these penalties stack with any cover or other lighting penalties. This ability is negated by any movement by the Shade over half Pace or if the lighting condition improves to normal lighting around the Shade. She may attack while camouflaged as if she was Phasing but loses the benefit of this ability if she does so.

Spectral Flight

Requirements: Novice, Shade, Spirit d8+

The Shade's form continues to become more out of phase and begins to lose its tethering to the earth. Through strength of will, a Shade may fly with Flying Pace 10 and Climb 3.

Vargr

The Vargr are the chosen of Baba Yaga. They are her shock troops, implacable warriors and brutal combatants with a nearly insatiable taste for the flesh of men. Once normal mortals, they now walk a ragged edge between beast and man. The Vargr are werewolves, a people cursed, or blessed depending on one's point of view, with the ability to become half human, half wolf possessed of a ravenous and all-consuming hunger. Their bestial forms give them increased size, strength, speed, and stamina. It also sharpens their senses, allowing them to see, hear, and smell far beyond the limits of mortals. However, the transformation is more than skin deep—they become savage creatures operating on little more than instinct and low cunning.

In company, a Vargr's manners tend to be rustic and crude, his conversation low, and his hygiene of dubious quality. The speech of a Vargr is often guttural and muddled, much given to growls, mumbling, and other animal sounds. Those mortals who have had dealings with the Vargr describe them as filthy, uncouth, ignorant savages who care for little more than fighting and debauchery. While some of this judgment is certainly warranted, it is also largely an unfair assessment of the Vargr. It is true that their bestial nature and their powerful curse does, in fact, make them unpleasant company to outsiders. However, despite stories to the contrary, the Vargr vary in intellect as much as the average Gradniki. When they change and the beast takes control, however, their human intellect is completely subsumed by the instincts and cunning of the wolf. While they lose their ability to speak and reason like men, they become deadly hunters and dangerously cunning opponents, especially in the dark recesses of Steppengrad's forests. The Vargr are not individuals to be trifled with in either form, and many a foolish mortal has learned this valuable lesson at the cost of their looks, their limbs, or even their lives.

HISTORY OF THE CURSE

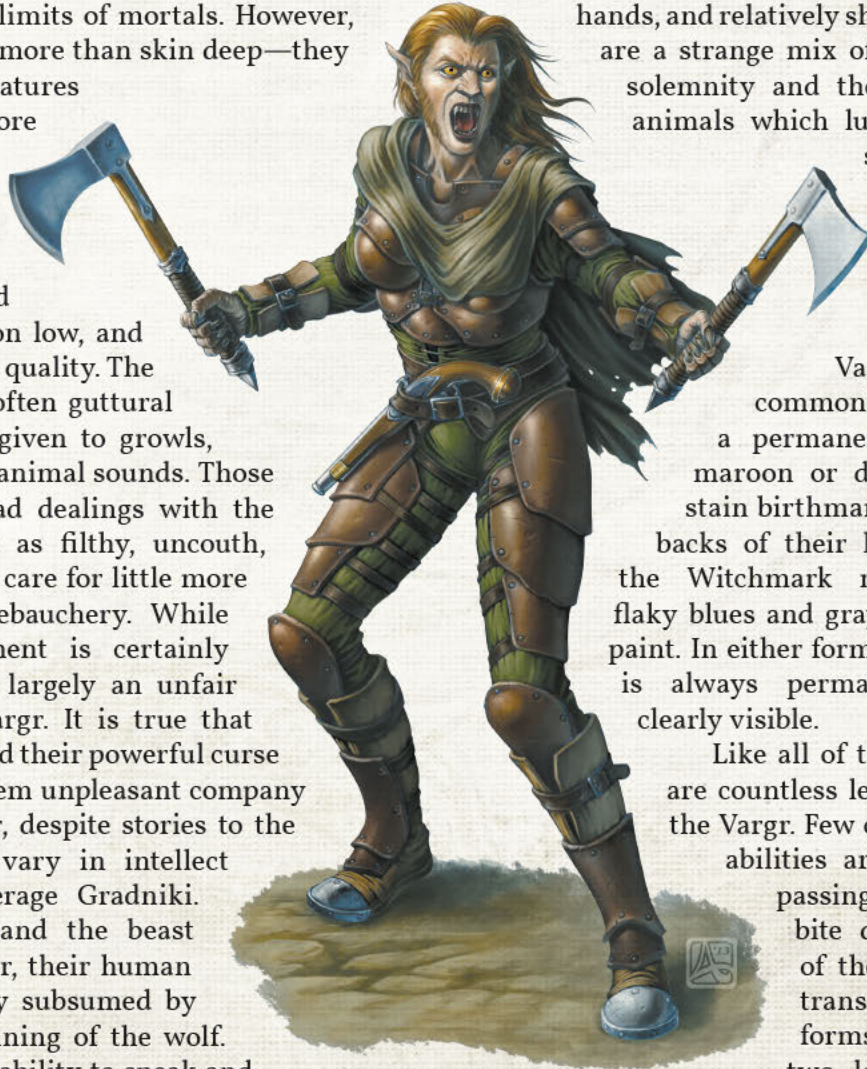
Originally culled from the Outland nation of Seaharrow, the first Vargr to come over the mountain in the vanguard of Baba Yaga's forces were a motley collection of races with little uniformity among them other than their Witchmark and their inherent savagery. After decades of living among the Steppefolk however, the Vargr of today are a much more homogeneous group. Swarthy and dark eyed with inordinate amounts of dense, bristly body hair, the Vargr are typically short in stature with broad shoulders, long arms ending in large, powerful hands, and relatively short legs. Their features are a strange mix of the Gradniki's fierce solemnity and the feral beauty of the animals which lurk just beneath their skin. Like all Accursed,

the Vargr carry their Witchmark in a more or less conspicuous place on their person. The Vargr's Witchmark

commonly takes the form of a permanent livid bruise or a maroon or dark purple port-wine stain birthmark on their head or the backs of their hands. In some cases the Witchmark manifests in chalky, flaky blues and grays that resembles war paint. In either form, a Vargr's Witchmark is always permanently hairless and clearly visible.

Like all of the Witchbreeds, there are countless legends associated with the Vargr. Few of them are true. Their abilities are not limited by the passing of the moon. Their bite does not create more of their kind. They do not transform into true animal forms. However, there are two legends that are very true. The Vargr is possessed

of a bestial spirit, which the Witchmark can make physically manifest. When in the full throes of their bestial form, the Vargr is an extremely potent warrior. However, it is at this time that the truth of another legend is also revealed. In spite of their resiliency, Vargr suffer grievous wounds when wounded by silver weapons.



WITCHBREED PACKAGE

All Vargr characters gain the following racial package:

Insatiable Hunger: Vargr require incredible amounts of food and drink in both their human and bestial forms, and must consume at least three to five pounds of food every 24 hours to keep their strength and fend off illness. If a Vargr cannot secure this daily food requirement, the character immediately begins suffering from severe hunger. Starting the first day of the hunger, the Vargr must make a Vigor test with a -2 penalty. Failure on the Vigor roll means the character has gained a level of fatigue. After the first day, if the Vargr cannot find food, the character must make Vigor tests as above every twelve hours. At least a pound of decent food allows a hungry Vargr to recover a Fatigue level every hour, or every 12 hours after reaching Incapacitation. A character Incapacitated by hunger dies within 3d6 hours unless they can be fed.

Bestial Form: Vargr may freely transform between their mundane form and their bestial one. In non-stressful situations, the transformation never requires a test to complete and takes only a few moments to complete. In the heat of battle, a Vargr can attempt a Spirit test to transform. On failure, the transformation requires three rounds with no other activity. On success, the shift requires two rounds. With a raise, the transformation is completed in a round. With two raises, the character completes the transformation and act normally that same round.

When in Bestial Form, the Vargr gains Lupine Senses and Natural Weapons (see below). In addition, his Strength and Fighting both increase by two die types. Both have a maximum value of d12 + 2. The Vargr's Charisma suffers -4.

Lupine Senses: While in their Bestial Form, Vargr enjoy the benefits of the wolf's heightened senses. Vargr enjoy +2 to Notice when using their sense of smell. In addition, the Vargr are less affected by darkness, as they are not nearly as dependent upon their sense of sight. They suffer no penalties from Dim or Dark lighting. This does not allow them to see in complete darkness, however.

Natural Weapons: In Bestial Form, a Vargr's teeth and claws are incredibly sharp, capable of inflicting gruesome wounds on even the toughest skinned opponents. These natural weapons deal Strength+d6 damage in combat.

Silver Vulnerability: Any damage caused by silver inflicts +4 damage against a Vargr in Bestial Form.

RACIAL EDGES

The Vargr have exclusive access to the following Racial Edges. These Edges can be taken at character creation if Edge selections are available or by spending Experience Points as the character grows and develops.

Strength of the Motherland

Requirements: Novice, Vargr, Gradniki

The Gradniki are tied to Mother Steppengrad more strongly than any other race in Morden, and their enduring strength of will is said to come from their deep love of the motherland. The Vargr are no exception to this, especially those who were born and raised in Steppengrad before they were cursed, and this connection to the land sometimes manifests as increased physical strength. When a Vargr with this Edge enters bestial form, his Strength increases by three die types instead of two.

Rapid Recovery

Requirements: Seasoned, Vargr, Spirit d10+

In Bestial Form, Vargr can learn to channel their bestial fury in different ways. Some learn to actually use this energy to heal themselves from wounds. At the start of a round, the Vargr can spend a benny and make a Spirit test. A success heals one wound (or removes Incapacitated status) and each raise heals an additional wound. Wounds inflicted by Silver weapons cannot be healed in this way. Vargr using this edge cannot attempt any other actions in the same round.

The Wilding

Requirements: Veteran, Vargr, Berserk

In their bestial form, Vargr become very aggressive, finely honed killing machines. In the heat of battle, an experienced Vargr can enter a trance called the Wilding that increases their combat prowess as they channel their rage. While in the Wilding trance, a Vargr's Parry is reduced by 2 but he gains +2 to all Fighting, Strength, Toughness, and melee damage rolls. He ignores all wound modifiers for the duration of the trance, but he cannot use any skills, Edges, or maneuvers that require concentration such as Shooting or Taunt as the trance reduces his Smarts to d4 (A). A Vargr automatically exits The Wilding when all foes have fallen. To exit the trance while any foes remain standing, the Vargr must succeed at a Spirit test. A Vargr cannot use Berserk and the Wilding at the same time.

Setting Rules

Morden is a bleak world, ravaged by the Bane War. Those who dwell there are forced to overcome brutal challenges on a daily basis. The horrors created by the Witches yet dominate the populace, often working as their agents. Supplies necessary for survival are often rationed, and many are treated as precious goods. Little can be taken for granted.

In spite of their environment, the Witchmarked have a chance to represent salvation for their world. Accursed incorporates a number of Savage Worlds Setting Rules. This combination can significantly change the feel of the game. Gamemasters are encouraged to test out this combination prior to adding or removing any rules.

From the Savage Worlds core rules, Accursed uses both Blood & Guts as well as Critical Failures Setting Rules.

Horror Companion Rules

Accursed uses the following Setting Rules, modified as noted from the Horror Companion:

CHRONOLOGICAL PHENOMENA

In place of the dates recommended in the Savage Worlds Horror Companion, each of the Witches in Accursed have specific times of power. Creatures affiliated with a specific Witch—including those who bear her Witchmark—apply the bonus at the following times, as explained below. Note that some of these times are not necessarily annual events.

Baba Yaga: All of her creations know their greatest power on the night of the full moon. The bonus only applies when in direct moonlight.

The Blood Witch: Drawing her power from passion, the Blood Witch is at her greatest power when her prey is excited. Any time there is a day of festivities or celebration, her creations benefit from the nearby enthusiasm.

The Chimera: Each night Turrus Atra relocates at midnight. In the two minutes before its journey, the Chimera and her creations are all at the height of their power.

The Crone: All of this Witch's creations are at their greatest power during a thunderstorm.

The Dark Queen: Hecate and her banes are at their greatest power when the New Moon is overhead.

The Djinn: The Djinn's powers are governed by the arrangements of the planet and the stars. Any particular alignment lasts an hour or less, but one can occur any time the Gamemaster feels it is necessary.

The Gorgon: Serpents embrace the heat of the noon sun, enjoying their greatest for that single minute each day.

The Morrigan: Death is ever-present and unending in its march. On the final day of each season, the Morrigan comes into her power, reminding her victims that everything must end.

RITUALS

Any character using Arcane Background (Witchcraft) may take advantage of the Rituals option. Rituals do not apply to Arcane Background (Alchemy).

SIGNS & PORTENTS

Gamemasters are encouraged to make use of this Setting Rule on an irregular basis. It need not be a recurring theme, but can help to set a tone if selectively used in context with appropriate adventures.

Dedicated Setting Rules

In addition, Accursed uses the following Setting Rules:

ALL OUT MOVE

There are times when Heroes need to cover great distances quickly in order to arrive in the nick of time. In this setting, the All Out Move is added as a maneuver. When a player declares this as the Hero's action in a round, this is the only thing the Hero can do (with one exception, to follow). His Pace is doubled, and then a "Run" die is added. This becomes the total distance the Hero moves on his turn. When performing an All Out Move, the Hero's Parry is reduced by 4 (to a minimum of 2). Anyone performing a ranged attack against the Hero gains a +1 to their skill roll.

The Hero must move in a relatively straight line; minor adjustments for obstacles and terrain can be made, but there are no major turns or doubling back allowed. The GM is the final arbiter on the path taken. The one action a Hero can take at the end of an All Out Move is a Charge (if he has that Edge). His Fighting roll is made at -2, but he gains +4 to any damage he does if he hits. He must make an Agility roll at -2 after resolving the attack; if he fails, he ends the turn prone. Note: A mounted Hero can use the All Out Move with a mount; all of the same rules apply. A mounted charge, using this maneuver, will do +8 damage (+4 from the basic Mounted Charge rules and the additional 4 from this option). The Charge Edge is not required to perform this variant, though the usual rules about fighting from horseback apply.

DAMAGED CHARACTERS

The Great War had a grievous and lasting effect upon all of Morden's inhabitants. This can result in characters that suffer from serious mental, physical, and emotional trauma. At the Gamemaster's discretion, if the player has a good explanation, a character may take an additional Hindrance, garnering an appropriate number of additional points that can be spent as usual.

DEFEAT THE CASTER, DEFEAT THE SPELL

In the Savage Worlds core rules, powers are indicated as having a set initial Duration, after which they may be "maintained." This can be interpreted to mean powers will continue even after an arcane caster is incapacitated, until the base Duration runs out. In Accursed, even these spells must be maintained by the Witch who cast them. Whenever the character who cast a spell using Arcane Background (Witchcraft) is overcome, the spell dies with him. Note that this restriction does not apply for Arcane Background (Alchemy).

JUST AS LUCKY

Bennies are a critical currency in any Savage Worlds game, but they represent a two edged sword in Accursed. Any time that a Benny is spent on an action that directly affects another Wild Card, the affected Wild Card can choose to spend a Benny to cancel that spend. The two Bennies effectively cancel one another out. Neither character gains the game effect of having spent a Benny (though both are lost). If a Wild Card somehow has a means to spend more than one Benny on a single action, an opponent can only counter the first, unless he has a relevant comparable ability.

Note that a Benny spent for a Soak Roll or to remove a Shaken condition never counts as acting against another Wild Card. Bennies spent in this way can never be cancelled with this Setting Rule.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

The life of a Hero is full of pain and discomfort. He constantly faces danger in all kinds of ways, suffering wounds and Fatigue on a regular basis. Through force of will or the simple manifestation of good fortune, a Hero can shift the effects of severe trauma and extreme effort to better endure and survive.

Upon suffering a wound, a Hero can spend a benny to transform it into a Fatigue level. This must be done at the time the wound is suffered; the Hero can't wait until later and then make the transformation. He may spend a benny to attempt to Soak it first, and if he fails, spend a second benny to make the change.

Normally, however, a Hero will best make use of this effect when he is already at 3 wound levels. This

would enable him to fight on past his maximum wound levels, at least until the Fatigue reaches Incapacitation as well. If a Hero reaches Incapacitation through the Fatigue track by use of this conversion, the Damage Effects Incapacitation table is still consulted.

In reverse, Fatigue levels can be converted to wounds, also at a rate of one benny per Fatigue level converted.

SITUATIONAL BONUS

Players are clever, especially when it comes to developing an effective scheme to overcome their foes. Within the constraints of combat, the Drop handles the most extreme cases of getting a serious advantage against an enemy. However, a +4 bonus can be too severe of an advantage for many situations. In Accursed, Gamemasters are encouraged to use the concept of Surprise maneuvers to reward clever play. When a player comes up with an action in combat that impresses the GM and other players with its cleverness, simply add a +2 "Situational Bonus" to the action. This bonus applies to both the attack roll and the damage.

For example, perhaps a very stealthy character spends three rounds sneaking around behind the main villain while the rest of the group is fighting him head on. The character jumps out from behind to attack him, but the GM feels he's too prepared for battle to warrant this attack gaining the Drop. A Situational maneuver bonus of +2 on the Fighting and damage roll proportionately rewards the tactical foresight and effort.

THE WITCHES' GUIDANCE

In moments of dramatic tension, a bane or devotee may cry out for the aide of the Witch who sponsored or created the entity. If the moment is of significant import to the Witch, she may—at her discretion—grant succor. This typically is expressed as an additional benny, but may negate situational modifiers instead. Gamemaster's may use this ability no more than once per game session and only for a NPC Wild Card.

Options, Not Restrictions

Every campaign is unique; the rules in this section are intended to reinforce the core concepts of Accursed, but may not be the best fit with every group. The Gamemaster should carefully consider these rules before adopting them into his campaign, because they may have an impact on the overall tone of the game.

Skills

In *Accursed*, there are a number of revisions made to the basic skills list for *Savage Worlds*. These revisions were made so that characters in the setting could focus better on the elements that were most central to gameplay in Morden.

ATHLETICS

The *Accursed* of Morden typically have a military background, most commonly as veterans in the Bane War. As part of their training, these individuals were forced to endure grueling physical regimens, which included climbing, swimming, and forced marches. Those who survived the war were often capable in all of these fields. The Athletics skill combines the Climbing and Swimming skills into a single skill. Core *Savage Worlds* rules that refer to either of these skills should instead substitute Athletics.

GUTS

Experience with terror can cause a character to become inured to the experience. Over time, characters who have continuously experienced the terrors of the Bane War and its aftermath recognize the dangers and learn to react to their presence in an appropriate manner. When called upon to make a Fear check, Characters use their Guts skill in place of a Spirit roll.

SUBTERFUGE

The Bane War left Morden's nations in ruins. Citizens survive only on rations. The most precious of materials have already been surrendered to the Witches. There are few items worth stealing. Characters who are focused upon theft or prestidigitation are also universally adept at doing so in a sneaky way. Subterfuge combines the Stealth and Lockpicking skills into a single skill. Core *Savage Worlds* rules that refer to either of these skills should instead substitute Subterfuge.

Removed Skills

Vehicles are not a key element to *Accursed*. While characters may use them for transportation, they are typically elements of the setting rather than a focal point in a conflict. Consequently, the three skills involved in directly controlling a vehicle—Boating, Driving, and Piloting—are all removed. More generally, simply using Agility is perfectly adequate. Characters are much more likely to drive horse-drawn carriages or carts using other beasts of burden. In these cases, if a check is required, characters should use their Riding skill.

Knowledge Skills

Gamemasters may need to adjust the list of Knowledge skills based upon the fields of greatest interest to the Player Characters. Note, however, that there are only two Arcane Backgrounds in Morden. These are Witchcraft and Alchemy. A knowledge focus on either of these arts could be applicable, and would substitute for the Arcana focus.

In *Accursed*, there is no tracking of languages. All characters are assumed to be able to effectively communicate with one another. Historians argue that different languages have not yet had time to develop, as this world was only colonized from the Lightning Bridge relatively recently.



Hindrances

The limitations an Accursed suffers are as identifying as their abilities. Players are encouraged to select Hindrances for their characters during character creation. Note that Damaged Characters (see page 67) can grant access to an extra Hindrance.

CORE HINDRANCES NOTES

For a variety of reasons, Accursed removes Anemic, Bloodthirsty, Obese, and Outsider. Note that at the Gamemaster's discretion, all Accursed can be considered Outsiders when dealing with mundane humans. Decisions to apply the appropriate Charisma penalty or bonus are entirely subject to the situation.

ADDITIONAL HINDRANCES

A number of additional Hindrances are also available to characters in Morden.

DESTITUTE (MAJOR)

The character begins play with markedly less starting gear than normal. This should include the absence of key pieces of equipment normally required to fully exploit his starting Skills and Edges. Further, the character starts with a Personal Resource Die (see page 84) of d4.

GLASS JAW (MAJOR)

Your hero has a glass jaw and can't take a solid hit. He suffers a -2 penalty to Soak rolls.

JINGOISTIC (MINOR/MAJOR)

The character is fiercely devoted to his home country, believing his culture to be vastly superior to his inferior neighbors. For example, a Hebronite might have no patience for a Hyphratian or Manreian. Because of this, the character takes every opportunity to belittle these cultures and their inhabitants. A character taking the Minor version suffers a -2 Charisma among individuals of other cultures. The penalty increases to -4 for the Major hindrance.

In both cases, the character may not use Command Edges with "foreigners" until he has worked with them for at least one week.

OBLIGATION (MINOR/MAJOR)

The Hero has ties to a group or organization, which has an occasional or regular impact on his life. The Order of the Penitent, the Enochian Faith, and even the Valkenholm nobility are all examples of entities to which a Hero might owe an Obligation. As a Minor Hindrance, the Hero has a great deal of autonomy, but he is still subject to be called on at any given time by the organization. The

Hero is also expected to consider the agenda and goals of his organization, before taking any action.

As a Major Hindrance, the Hero is in active service to the organization, living his daily life as a member, taking missions and tasks from those higher up in the structure, and under constant scrutiny by superiors. This level of the Hindrance requires the GM's approval, as it is likely the defining characteristic of a campaign.

A Hero with Obligations and Connections to the same individual or organization has a special relationship with the person or group in question, and gains a +2 or +4 bonus to Persuasion rolls (depending upon whether their Obligations are minor or major) when dealing with them. In essence, the Connection has a vested interest in the Hero, and is more likely to want to see him succeed.

UNWITTING TOOL (MAJOR)

A more powerful member of the Accursed's Witchline has the means to observe through the character's senses at will. In most instances, this should be the appropriate Witch, but it could be a powerful bane or Witchmarked who remains loyal to the Witch. The entity who holds this power is assigned at the Gamemaster's discretion. Neither the character nor the player are necessarily aware of the being's identity. Note that the entity cannot possibly be watching the character's actions at every given moment.

VULNERABILITY (MINOR/MAJOR)

Some specific substance or situation has a significant affect on the Witchmarked's abilities and nature. This can vary substantially even between specific members of the same Witchbreed, due to the way that a Witch might have applied the curse. When in the presence of the triggering condition or substance—which must be common—the character suffers a penalty. Examples could include a cooking spice, flowing water, sunlight, fire, or even total darkness. Attacks that incorporate this condition or substance also deal additional damage.

As a minor hindrance, the penalty is a -1 to all Trait rolls. Attacks that incorporate the condition or material inflict an additional +2 damage.

If selected as a major hindrance, the penalty is a -2 to all Trait rolls. Attacks that incorporate the condition or material inflict an additional +4 damage.

WEAK WILLED (MINOR)

The character is a follower not a leader. He lacks the tenacity and the willpower to act of his own accord. The hero suffers a -2 penalty to Tests of Will (both to perform them and resist them), as well as any opposed use of arcane powers requiring a Spirit roll. A weak willed individual cannot have the Strong Willed Edge.

HINDRANCE REFERENCE LIST

All entries without annotation are from the Savage Worlds core rules.

Name	Type
Arrogant	Major
Bad Eyes	Minor
Bad Luck	Major
Big Mouth	Minor
Blind	Major
Cautious	Minor
Clueless	Major
Code of Honor	Major
Combat Shock*	Minor/Major
Curious	Major
Death Wish	Minor
Delusional	Minor/Major
Destitute†	Major
Enemy	Minor/Major
Glass Jaw†	Major
Greedy	Minor/Major
Habit	Minor/Major
Hard of Hearing	Minor/Major
Heroic	Major
Illiterate	Minor
Jingoistic†	Minor/Major
Lame	Major
Loyal	Minor
Mean	Minor
Obese	Minor
Obligation†	Minor/Major
One Arm	Major
One Eye	Major
One Leg	Major
Overconfident	Major
Phobia	Minor/Major
Quirk	Minor
Slow*	Major
Small	Major
Stubborn	Minor
Ugly	Minor
Unwitting Tool†	Major
Vengeful	Minor/Major
Vow	Minor/Major
Vulnerability†	Minor/Major
Wanted	Minor/Major
Weak Willed†	Minor
Yellow	Major
*From Savage Worlds Horror Companion.	
†Hindrance from Accursed	



Hindrances and Witchmarks

In selecting Hindrances, it is always useful for players to consider how a Hindrance might simply be a particular manifestation of the Accursed's Witchmark. It could be that their particular curse triggers a mental or a physical limitation that is not characteristic of others. This is particularly appropriate for Vulnerability or Phobia, but could be considered for Vows, Obligations, Jingoistic, and other Hindrances as well. In many cases, these unusual features might show a physical manifestation on the character's Witchmark. Iconography that is reflective of the weaknesses might be present. A character vulnerable to wood might have a broken tree branch on the inner ring of their marking. If the character were later able to somehow overcome the limitation, that marking could later change, in a way that was reflective of their growth—likely replacing the symbol with one representing a different one of the character's central aspects.

Edges

An Accursed can specialize in a myriad of different ways. Some of these are specific to the character's Witchmark (see Racial Edges, as included with the descriptions of the different Witchbreeds). Others are a consequence of the way the Witch applied the curse, the character's experiences, or even the mortal life that the character lived prior to undergoing transformation. Players are encouraged to select Edges for their characters during character creation and advancement.

CORE EDGES NOTES

In Accursed, there are only two Arcane Backgrounds. These are Witchcraft and Alchemy. Both are described in Chapter 3: Unholy Powers, see page 77. Because of this, any Edge that references a different Arcane Background is removed. A number of additional edges that are not compatible with the setting have also been removed (see chart on page 76). Gamemasters can, of course, reintroduce these at their own discretion.

As a reminder, Accursed does remove and consolidate some of the skills. This can alter prerequisites for Edges. For example, the Thief and Assassin edges substitute Subterfuge for Stealth and Lockpicking requirements.

Note that the Necromancer Edge (from the Savage Worlds Horror Companion) substitutes Arcane Background (Witchcraft) for Arcane Background (Magic). This edge is not available to characters who only possess Arcane Background (Alchemy). Note also that Necromancers are generally assumed to be working in conjunction with the Morrigan.

ADDITIONAL EDGES

A number of additional Edges are also available to characters in Morden.

ALWAYS ARMED

Requirements: Seasoned, Fighting d8+, (Mongrel, Mummy, or Vargr)

The character has become intimately familiar with the modifications included as part of its Witchmark. Whenever the character fights with the weapons that are inherent in its transformed body, its damage is increased by a die type.

ARCANE BACKGROUND (ALCHEMY)

Requirements: Novice

Arcane Skill: Alchemy (Smarts)

Starting Power Points: 10 (see below)

Starting Powers: 3

In Morden, Alchemy is considered a sort of science. While not strictly limited by rational physical laws, alchemists are capable of preparing potions, poultices, and other recipes that can trigger supernatural effects. Notably, an alchemist is not believed to endanger his soul by preparing one of his products. Further, alchemy does not appear to require any sort of inherent ability. Rather, anyone who can accurately read and follow an alchemical formula is capable of creating the product that it is intended to produce.

However, the skill does introduce two layers of complexity. The first is that learning to follow an alchemical formulae is not particularly easy. When brewing a potion, the character must make an alchemy test. If the power is Rank Seasoned or higher, the Alchemist suffers a -2 penalty to the test for each rank above Novice. So, a Seasoned Power would have a -2 penalty, while a Legendary Power suffers a -8.

In addition, each potion brewed also requires at least one unusual ingredient. Gamemasters and players should work together to identify the particular ingredient at the time that the Power is selected. Even Novice level powers should require something that is not easily obtained. Higher ranked powers should require rarer ingredients, potentially near unique ones for Legendary Powers. Obtaining the components necessary to brew a particularly powerful potion could require multiple adventures.

Alchemists never cast spells on the fly. Instead, they brew potions, in expectation of some future need. Each Power that an alchemist possesses represents a formula that he has thoroughly studied and come to understand. When brewing a potion, the alchemist commits the necessary power points into making it. These remain committed until the potion is utilized. At which point, the Alchemist immediately regains access to them. However, the power points are only useful when the character has time to brew another potion.

Full information on the Powers available to alchemists along with the relevant trappings, game mechanics, and additional details are provided in Chapter 3: Unholy Powers.

ARCANE BACKGROUND (WITCHCRAFT)

Requirements: Novice

Arcane Skill: Witchcraft (Spirit)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 2

In Accursed, the true Witches are veritable forces of nature. Their powers are largely unknowable, as are their motivations. Some speculate that their souls are forever damned, while others firmly believe that a Witch is so far from a mortal being that they may never have had souls. In spite of this enormous gap in understanding, there are some humans who still attempt to dabble with powers that they cannot hope to comprehend. The risk is certainly huge—all loyal Enochians believe that Witchcraft corrupts the soul. However, for one who already bears a Witchmark, the threat of damnation is nothing new.

White witches are those who have some small grasp of the magics involved in Witchcraft. They wield only a tiny fraction of the power that a true Witch holds. In spite of this, they can still wield tremendous power—sometimes enough to change the world.

Full information on the Powers available to white witches along with the relevant trappings, game mechanics, and additional details are provided in Chapter 3: Unholy Powers.

The Unholy: When a white witch gains two or more raises on a spellcasting attempt, the power touches his soul directly. The character must immediately make a Spirit test. With success, there are no further effects. However, if the character fails the test, he immediately moves one additional step towards Acceptance of his Witchmark. If the character has already fully Accepted his Witchmark, then on failure, it draws the direct attention of the Witch who cast the curse. The consequences of this attention are left to the Gamemaster's discretion.

CHARGE

Requirements: Seasoned, Fighting d10+

The warrior is experienced at moving across a large distance and getting the most effect out of rushing their foe. He may ignore the standard multi-action penalty for Running when making a Fighting attack. He may also initiate an attack at the end of an All Out Move (see Setting Rules on page 66).

IMPROVED CHARGE

Requirements: Veteran, Charge

If he moved at least one inch past his normal Pace, the warrior gains +2 to his damage when making a Fighting attack with the Charge Edge.

CHOSEN FATE

Requirements: Seasoned, Witchmarked

Players may decide that their Gamemaster's decision about how the character is moving towards Acceptance or Denial of their Witchmark (see Chapter 5: Witchmarks) along the Fate Track is not the way they intended. This Edge offers the player an option to deliberately change their hero's path. Each time Chosen Fate is selected, the character may choose to move one step on the path towards either Acceptance or Denial. Characters may only select this Edge once per Rank.

CLARITY OF THE DRAW

Requirements: Novice, Accursed, Sp d8

Some Accursed are particularly sensitive to the different Witches and their banes that plague mortal Mordenites. They have learned to not only recognize when innocents are in danger (see Drawn to Those in Need page 99), but also the type of threat. Any time their Witchmark calls them to help someone, Accursed with this Edge may make a Spirit roll. On success, they can identify the Witchline involved in the threat. With a raise, they can identify the type of bane or other entity triggering the draw.

DIRTY FIGHTER

Requirements: Seasoned

An experienced combatant knows that sometimes survival is more important than honor. Those with this Edge will do anything to win out in a fight.

The character is particularly good at tricks. He adds +2 to all Trick maneuver rolls.

ENOCHIAN

Requirements: Novice, Knowledge (Enochian) d6+

The Enochian religion is broad in its beliefs and generally accepting of differences within the faith. However, they have no tolerance for those who do not embrace the wishes of the Creator and the importance of the three virtues. Those who disregard the virtues, or who traffic in things that the Creator did not intend are clearly ignorant blasphemers in their eyes.

Characters who choose this Edge hold a position within the formal organization of the Enochian church. The precise title and role used varies based upon their nation, and even their Bishopric of origin. However, with this Edge, it is not a high-ranking position. They might be an itinerant member of a religious order or even a travelling preacher.

Regardless of the precise title, their dress and knowledge offer more than a modicum of respect from the faithful inhabitants of most rural communities.

When they visit a larger town, they may impose upon the local church or monastery to provide them with food and shelter upon request. They are also able to request and usually receive basic provisions for longer trips.

When dealing with the faithful—which is a significant majority of Morden's population—an Enochian receives a +2 Charisma bonus. Note that this can offset the penalty commonly suffered by many Accursed. The simple act of wearing the robes and composing oneself as religious has a significant impact upon the reaction received from the community of faithful.

FAMILIAR

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Witchcraft), Witchcraft d10+

The character has acquired an animal familiar. The creature gained varies with the character's Rank when first taking the Edge. Use the Available Familiars table to determine the type of animal a white witch may choose.

Available Familiars

Rank	Animal Types
Novice	Bat, Cat, Rat
Seasoned	Raven, Serpent, Wolf
Veteran	Alligator, Bear, Eagle
Heroic	Animal Intelligence Bane
Legendary	Any Bane

The character and the familiar acquire the Loyal Hindrance with regard to each other. The familiar is not a slave, however, and can refuse to follow orders, especially ones which will cause it harm. Unless ordered otherwise, the familiar follows its natural instincts. For example, a cat familiar may stop to chase a mouse, take a quick nap, or sate its curiosity about a small hole, and it's likely to hide during combat.

The strong bond allows the familiar to resist the effects of beast friend. Each Rank of the mage adds +1 to the creature's Size for the purpose of how many Power Points are needed to control it.

Both can understand each other's speech. To others, the familiar is simply making animal noises — the mage speaks his normal language.

The familiar is a Wild Card with respect to wounds and the Wild Die, but has no bennies. The mage may spend his for the familiar, however.

A practitioner of witchcraft can dismiss a familiar to gain another if he chooses.

Each additional time this Edge is taken, the character can pick one of the powers below. Each power may only be taken once. The character may take this Edge only once each Rank. Taking it during character creation allows the character to take it again while he's a Novice.

- The mage can transfer wounds and Fatigue levels to or from his familiar as a free action.
- The mage can use the familiar's senses as if they were his own. This requires concentration. The maximum range for this ability is the mage's Smarts x 100 yards.
- Any spells the mage casts on himself also affect the familiar. If he casts armor with a raise, both he and his familiar gain +4 Armor for the duration, for example.
- The familiar has 5 Power Points, which the mage may use as if they were his own. They recharge at the same rate as the mage's (usually 1 per hour).

GRAND COVEN VETERAN

Requirements: Novice, Fighting d8+, Guts d6+

The Accursed fought for the Witches during the Bane War. This character remembers well the savagery of the fighting as well as what it was like to be compelled to serve the Grand Coven. This has left the character largely inured to many of the attempts that others might make to intimidate and ostracize him. After all, he has already faced agents of the Witches, including some of their more powerful banes. A mortal, or even a bane working without a full support network, is not nearly as terrifying as what he has previously seen.

Because of this, the character receives a +2 bonus to resist any Test of Will attack. If the character suffers a Shaken result due to a failed attempt to resist a Test of Will, the character may immediately make a Spirit roll in an attempt to clear the Shaken result without spending a Benny. Note, however, that if the character does achieve a raise on this attempt, he does not immediately gain any further actions.

KNAVE

Requirements: Seasoned, Persuasion d8+, Streetwise d8+

Some citizens of Morden prefer to rely upon a well-turned phrase instead of a well-honed blade. A knave always tries to advance his own goals through manipulating others. The question, of course, is whether those goals actually coincide with the ones of his target, or if they are purely for the character's benefit.

A character who selects the Knave Edge has become particularly adept at identifying a foe's social vulnerabilities as well as assembling the most compelling story possible. Whenever a Knave is looking for assistance or a trade partner in a civilized area, the character can make a Streetwise test. On

success, the character is able to locate a person who has the necessary information or assets that the knave seeks. In addition, the Knave is able to learn some bit of information about the potential trading partner that grants a significant advantage in negotiations. This might be a particular trade item that the person seeks, but it could also be as devious as potential blackmail fodder. The character must then decide how to most effectively exploit this information and complete the negotiations.

KNIGHT OF THE REDHAWKS

Requirements: Novice, Fighting d10+, Intimidation d8+, Riding d8+

Before the Bane War, Valkenholm had dozens of knightly orders. Each was devoted to a particular cause, and possessed of its own systems of advancement, heraldry, and traditions. In many regions of the nation, the traditions of the local knightly order were tightly interwoven with the society, so that the knights represented near legendary heroes, whom the populace adored.

During the decades of the Bane War, thousands of Valkenholm's boldest knights were overwhelmed in the fighting. Though they battled valiantly, they were simply overwhelmed by the vast numbers that the Grand Coven could field. As the knights fell, their standards, ancestral armor, and even their traditions were lost to living memory. By the end of the war, only a handful of the orders remained functional.

After coming to power, Sanguinara disbanded all of the orders except the Knights of the Redhawks. Many of its members are now Dhampir or Vampire, though not all. A few who still bear the order's iconography have fled Kulidar and now attempt to redeem the name of their order.

Knights of the Redhawks are particularly focused in cowering their enemies, so that they lose any will to fight back. With a successful Trick action, the Knight's opponent suffers a -4 to Parry, instead of the usual -2.

OFFICER OF THE ALLIANCE

Requirements: Seasoned, Intimidation d8+, Guts d8+, Knowledge (Tactics) d8+

The Bane War dragged on far longer than either side had expected. The mortal inhabitants of Morden expected that the war would be a swift one, much like the small battles that their nations had fought between one another since the time of the Lightning Bridge. The Grand Coven thought that mortals could offer little resistance to their power. In the end, the Grand Coven proved triumphant, but the cost for both sides was far greater than either expected from the outset.

The leaders of the Alliance of Light were all put to the sword, but many of their officers survived the final battles. During the waning days of the war, many were cursed with Witchmarks, so the Witches could more easily probe their minds to learn the Alliance's disposition and strategies. In spite of their surrender, many of these officers still harbor resentment and resistance in their hearts. Some of them have continued the battle to resist the Witches' agents, even without the direct support of their compromised governments. These soldiers fight boldly, often as members of the Order of the Penitent.

Characters with this Edge remember fighting the Grand Coven and are driven to continuing the battle, no matter the cost. They enthusiastically sacrifice themselves, in the hopes that their bodies can persevere now, to make up for their failure in the Bane War. In any physical conflict that directly involves a Bane, an Officer of the Alliance receives one additional Benny. In addition, once per game session, they may reroll their damage dice without spending a Benny on an attack against a Bane.

OUTLANDER

Requirements: Novice, Notice d8+, Survival d8+

The Bane War began when the Grand Coven crossed the Darkfall Peaks. Enormous hordes of horrific creatures accompanied the Witches into the unsophisticated lands. They struck quickly, decimating the region's natives. Cities, fields, and forests alike were all put to the flame. Many of the natives were slain in the initial assault. Those who survived were among the first Mordenites to receive a Witchmark. It was these survivors who became the shock troops that battled against the Alliance of Light.

With the war over, many of the Accursed have tried to recapture the lives they remember from the days before the war. For some, this involves returning to their former homes—which in the Outlands are little more than a decimated ruin. Fields and forests that were verdant and filled with life and bounty are now little more than scorched earth. Attempting to eke out a life where food and water are precious commodities is a challenge, even for those Accursed who live in a state of un-life.

Characters who try to dwell in these environments must become particularly adept at finding food and shelter, even among the wastes. They have become familiar with the habits of those animals and plants that can dwell in the ruins of the Outland Nations, and recognize which are dangerous and which are potential prey. They receive a +2 to any Survival or Knowledge tests related to the region. They also receive a +2 Charisma bonus to interactions with survivors from the Outlands.

PENITENT

Requirements: Novice, Knowledge (Enochian) d6+, Tracking d6+

While the Enochian faith believes in the possibility of redemption for all, they see the Witches and their dark magics as the very essence of vice incarnate. They maintain that a curse is linked directly to one's soul. Those who bear one—or who would dare to cast one—must bear its mark and face its consequences. In their worldview, particularly severe curses, including Witchmarks, are enough to damn a soul to an afterlife spent apart from the Creator's graces.

The Enochian faith is the dominant religion in Morden. The vast majority of Accursed remains true to this faith. The idea of an afterlife apart from the Creator is anathema to them. As such, they seek any possible way to cleanse themselves of their Witchmark. To aid the Witchmarked, they founded the Order of the Penitent. The Order is devoted to protecting Morden's populace from the Witches' ongoing threat.

Some characters in the Order learn to recognize the interaction between their own Witchmark and other signs of witchcraft. With a successful Tracking test, they can recognize the presence of, general orientation, and distance to anything else created by Witchcraft—including active spells, banes, and other Accursed—within a one-mile radius. Note that not every member of the Order has this Edge.

TAKE THE HIT

Requirements: Novice, Vigor d10+

Characters with this Edge are good at rolling with punches, are lucky, have fate on their side, or are perhaps just really tough. They add +2 to Soak rolls made to eliminate wounds.

WEALTHY

Requirements: Novice

The character has managed to acquire a broad array of personal assets and resources, even through the struggles of the Bane War. Somehow, he has managed to keep these valuables secure and hidden from the Witches and their minions. If this Edge is taken at character creation, the hero begins play with one item of exceptional quality or rarity, subject to Game Master discretion. Further, the character begins with a Personal Resource Die (see page 84) of d8.

WITCH HUNTER

Requirements: Veteran, Knowledge (Witches) d8+, Guts d8+

In the wake of the Grand Coven's triumph, there are many who refuse to accept their ongoing tyranny. Some of these individuals devote their entire lives to opposing the invaders' rule. Many act in a largely passive way, selectively trying to make life harder on the new rulers. Others, however, continue to directly oppose them. Most commonly, this involves guerilla techniques, as they wage a battle with limited resources against a powerful foe.

While there are a few instances of Witches and their trusted advisors assuming actual governmental roles, there are many more instances where a bane maintains control through terror. Often, this is a monstrous bane that dwells in an uncivilized area. Rather than assuming direct control, the creature terrorizes the inhabitants of one or more small villages, keeping the population in a state of fearful devotion to the Witches.

Individuals who deliberately track down and oppose such banes—and their masters—are known as witch hunters. They learn to recognize the vulnerabilities for many types of banes, and carry the necessary armaments to overcome them. Characters who take this Edge have thoroughly familiarized themselves with the different types of banes currently active in Morden. A character with this Edge can make a Knowledge (Witches) test any time he comes into contact with a bane. On a success, he immediately knows of a material that the creature is Vulnerable. With a raise, he also has that material on hand in a format that can be used as a weapon.



EDGES REFERENCE LIST

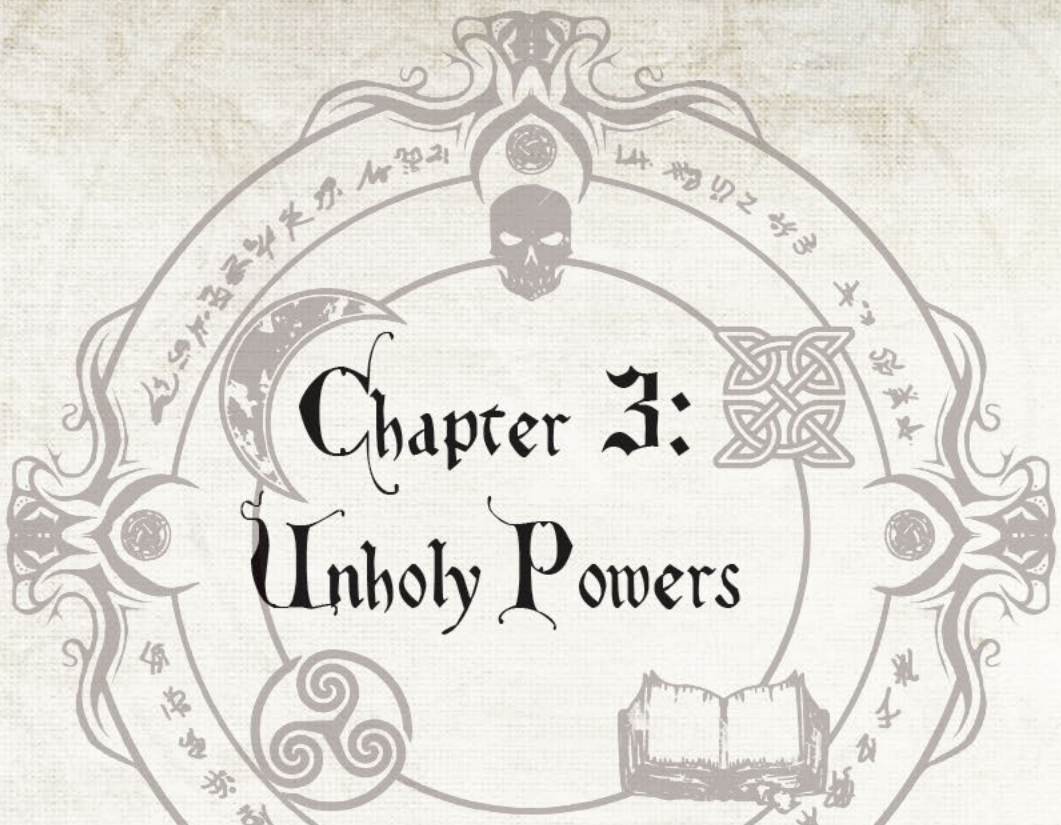
All entries without annotation are from the Savage Worlds core rules.

Acrobat	Enochian†	Nerves of Steel
Alertness	Extraction	–Improved Nerves of Steel
Always Armed†	Familiar†	New Power
Ambidextrous	Fanaticism*	Officer of the Alliance†
Arcane Background (Witchcraft or Alchemy)	Fast Healer	Outlander†
Assassin	Fervor	Penitent†
Attractive	First Strike	Power Points
–Very Attractive	–Improved First Strike	Professional
Beast Bond	Fleet-Footed	–Expert
Beast Master	Florentine	–Master
Berserk	Followers	Quick
Block	Giant Killer	Quick Draw
–Improved Block	Grand Coven Veteran†	Rapid Recharge
Brave	Hard to Kill	Relentless*
Brawler	–Harder to Kill	Scavenger
–Bruiser	Healer	Scholar
Brawny	Hold the Line!	Sidekick
Charismatic	Improvisational Fighter	Soul Drain
Charge†	Inspire	Steady Hands
–Improved Charge†	Investigator	Sweep
Chosen Fate†	Jack-of-All-Trades	–Improved Sweep
Clarity of the Draw†	Killer Instinct	Strong Willed
Combat Reflexes	Knave†	Tactician
Command	Knight of the Redhawks†	Take the Hit†
Command Presence	Leader of Men	Thief
Common Bond	Level Headed	Tough as Nails
Connections	–Improved Level Headed	–Improved Tough as Nails
Counterattack	Liquid Courage	Trademark Weapon
–Improved Counterattack	Luck	–Improved Tr. Weapon
Danger Sense	–Great Luck	Two-Fisted
Dead Shot	Marksman	Weapon Master
Dirty Fighter†	Mighty Blow	–Master of Arms
Dodge	Natural Leader	Wealthy†
–Improved Dodge	Necromancer*	Witch Hunter†
Elan	–Master Necromancer*	Woodsman

*From *Savage Worlds Horror Companion*.

†Edge from *Accursed*





Chapter 3: Unholy Powers

For centuries, humans who dwelt in Morden knew little of magic. These people worked to develop their technologies, creating new tools that took advantage of their knowledge and drove society onwards. Their fields of study included alchemy, biology, and physics. They engineered magnificent structures, such as the cyclopean Luxarra of Hyphrates and the breathtaking domed spires in Aziev. They classified the many living things that dwelt in their native lands, and began to study the processes by which they existed. Medical treatments began to improve at the same time as artisan crafters learnt to create products in far more consistent ways.

Alchemy was refined as a tool that could be used in conjunction with other scientific developments. Skilled alchemists learned ways that they could consistently transform their world through the recombination of common and often esoteric components. Only a few were capable of mastering the techniques due to the complex processes involved. However, even the most devout Enochian faithful recognized that the processes involved no danger to the mortal soul. Rather, the dangers were most often physical, for even the slightest inaccuracy in a formulation could yield disastrous results.

Magic, in sharp contrast, was kept at a distance. Humans recognized it as dangerous physically and to the soul as well. The ever-present fey consistently used unnatural abilities to drive their negotiations with the mortal who summoned them.

Very few humans could argue effectively enough to learn these techniques from the inhuman beings. The materials that they studied often transformed those who did both physically and mentally. This typically left the initiates to fey magic as social outcasts. Only rarely did these individuals pass on any of their knowledge to other mortals.

When the Grand Coven invaded, information about witchcraft became far more available. Many of the Witches' banes were also accomplished warlocks. Countless mortals learned about the techniques involved in witchcraft when they fell prey to it. Some who survived dedicated their lives to mastering the subject. Books and scrolls stolen from bane warlocks provided some of the information. White witches working with human resistance groups extracted more from captured prisoners. During the later days of the war, a few spells were even learned from seelie fey, before they vanished with the Summerlands.

Ultimately, mortals know very little about witchcraft. The techniques that white witches have mastered are nothing compared to the powerful workings that the Witches perform. However, even these minor tricks represent a major increase in the amount of magic available to the human residents of Morden. While Enochians shudder in horror and constantly warn the faithful about the dangers to the mortal soul, curious individuals continue to study witchcraft. Some even come to achieve some level of expertise in the field.

Alchemy

Alchemy is a tradition that combines philosophy and a study of both natural and supernatural materials. Most often, alchemists are learned men and women who use their knowledge to create unusual effects by combining exotic materials. The trade produces rare and exceptional elixirs, potions, and salves, but some scholars have refined their craft for use in the engineering fields like masonry and metallurgy. According to Enochian historians, the practice of alchemy in Morden was originally systematized over three hundred years ago. The earliest records of alchemists practicing their trade began among the palaces of the Pharaohs in Hyphrates and slowly spread throughout the other realms.

When their numbers began to grow, a group of alchemists cooperated to found a powerful guild that acted as a central point of organization. In those early days, all alchemists belonged to the guild. In return for a yearly fee, the guild provided certain privileges and protections from many of the nations of Morden. The guild had many traditions, including a stubborn insistence on sharing the secrets of alchemy only with one another and select students—never to an outsider. The guild sanctioned masters to take on worthy apprentices, and many alchemist shops displayed the guild sigil as a matter of professional pride.

However, the guild survived only slightly more than a century due to an unfortunate political choice. During the War of Ash, the alchemist's guild sided with the Romani against the conquering armies of Steppengrad. In the ensuing conflict, both the Romani and the guild were shattered beyond repair. One mixed blessing to emerge from that event was that alchemy's battlefield effectiveness was proven beyond any doubt.

Most larger towns and cities in Morden now possess at least one practicing alchemist, although the total number of alchemists has grown slowly since the guild's dissolution. The uses of alchemy apply very widely; some are most useful in the field of medicine, though others are present in many different fields of expertise. It is common for an alchemist to be able to provide tinctures against poisons or disease, glues, solvents, stinkpots and even the famous Hakim's portable feast. Alchemists that have access to exotic materials can produce even more remarkable effects, such as preserving the bodies of the dead, healing grievous wounds, and even transmute small quantities of base metals. Although most known alchemy takes the form of potions and elixirs, it is also useful in the construction, shaping, and decoration of other materials including blackbriar wood and the rare moonsilver metal.



Alchemists generally preserve their knowledge as complex formulae, recorded upon scrolls or thick tomes. Some alchemists claim that the formulae is the truest expression of alchemy's power, and that some have truly astonishing abilities. There are legends of alchemical formulae that contain the secrets of eternal youth, restoring life to the dead, and creating steel of unbreakable strength. If any such formulae exist, however, they are either lost with the ancient guildmasters or have been kept hidden for over three centuries. Anyone who rediscovered such potent formulae, could quickly become one of the world's preeminent master alchemists.

Alchemy, as it is practiced in Morden, is both incredibly physically and intellectually challenging. The sheer amount of information an alchemist must read and memorize is staggering. A good alchemist knows the classical names and practical applications for most of the creatures that walk, crawl, or fly in Morden, as well as most of its plants and minerals. They know the tracks of the stars in the heavens, and the languages of the stones beneath the mountains. Long nights of study and experimentation take their toll on an alchemist, and many suffer from insomnia, fatigue, and other stresses related to their calling. In addition, the alchemical compounds and natural

forces with which they work are often, by their nature, incredibly unstable and deadly. It's a rare alchemist who isn't missing a finger or doesn't bear some strange burn or scar caused by a wayward experiment.

Each country in Morden has its own Alchemical traditions. While they all share the same foundations and use similar formulae, each country's tradition is uniquely informed by its individual culture. In places like the Outlands and Cairn Kainen, where the many advancements of modern technology haven't quite reached, alchemy is still as much a mysterious and arcane art than it is a science. Here it is bound in superstition and, in the case of Cairn Kainen, in ancient tribal myths. In the various more modern countries like Valkenholm and Steppengrad however, alchemy is treated more as a science. These countries have codified alchemy to varying degrees, treating alchemists as learned men of science rather than as ranting madmen smelling of brimstone and asafoetida. In wealthy, forward-thinking Manreia, alchemy ranks with the electric fluid as the technology that promises to lift the country out of the post-war malaise and see them into the future. Its use in military, academic, and industrial applications is relatively widespread throughout the country, and its practitioners are lauded in drawing rooms and salons as some of the greatest thinkers of their time.

Alchemical Formulae

Alchemists tap into their arcane gifts by infusing their magics in potions, salves, chemical concoctions, and other inanimate substances. Alchemists may fuse the following powers into their creations: Alchemical Fortitude†, Armor, Blast, Blind, Boost/Lower Trait, Darksight, Drain Years*, Electrolytic Transferal†, Entangle, Fear, Growth/Shrink, Intangibility, Invisibility, Light, Liquefy Object†, Obscure, Quickness, Rejuvenating Draft†, Slow, Slumber, Smite, Speed, Stun, Transmute Element†, Transmute Weapon†, Wall Walker.

*From Savage Worlds Horror Companion

†Power from Accursed

ALCHEMICAL FORTITUDE

Rank: Novice

Power Points: 2

Range: Self

Duration: 10 minutes

Trappings: A blend of fermented spices and grains.

Alchemical Fortitude is a simple draft that steels a drinker's mind and soul against the terrors that abound in Morden. Once imbibed, the draft grants a +4 bonus to Fear checks for the duration of the draft. In addition, any time the drinker spends a Benny to make a Trait roll, including Soak rolls, he adds +2 to his total. This does not affect damage rolls. The downside to this miraculous draft is the fact that it clouds the mind, causing the drinker to take unwise risks and make ill-advised decisions. While under the influence of the draft, a user is at -2 to all Smarts and Smarts-based checks.

ELECTROLYTIC TRANSFERAL

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 5

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant

Trappings: Chernovash array, electrohydraulic generator, von Nachtmachen coils.

Electrolytic Transferal is a power that harnesses the newly discovered electric fluid to heal the creations of Baba Yaga. Discovered by the great Gradniki alchemist Dmitri Cherenkov, this technique requires a number of specialized devices constructed to generate and control the electric fluid. Once the equipment is set up and active, the alchemist can use it to channel the electric fluid to a wounded or damaged construct such as a golem, manikin, or colossus. With a successful Alchemy roll, the technique restores one wound plus one additional wound per raise. The Alchemy roll suffers a penalty equal to the number of wounds affecting the target.

Since the electric fluid is so capricious and, thus far, so poorly understood by the learned of Morden, Electrolytic Transferal is a tricky technique with some very real and deadly consequences for failure. If the alchemist rolls a 1 on his skill die, the machinery shorts out and no healing takes place. If he rolls a 1 on both his skill die and his wild die, the machinery shorts out, no healing takes place, and the construct being healed takes 1d10 damage and immediately bursts into flames. See the rules for Fire in the Savage Worlds core rulebook.

LIQUEFY OBJECT

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 1

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 hour

Trappings: A mixture of acids and solvents obtained from specialized sources

A key tool in construction and development, alchemists devised a specialized solvent that can temporarily turn any non-living object into a liquid form. The amount affected is one cubic yard per potion. Once liquefied, the substance immediately flows naturally. At the conclusion of the effects duration, the target object returns to a solid, but its shape is constrained by its liquid form. Sculptors and engineers work with alchemists to mold objects with this working, but it is also useful for quickly removing raw materials or creating an opening in a wall.

REJUVENATING DRAFT

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 4

Range: Self

Duration: 1 minute/Rank

Trappings: Alchemical stimulants, concentrated and distilled coffee beans, leaves of coca.

The rejuvenating draft is one of the many alchemical concoctions brewed with an eye toward enhancing the performance of humans and Accursed alike. Brewed with a number of different stimulating compounds, one dose of the draft removes all Fatigue penalties for the duration as dictated by the alchemist. Once the draft wears off however, the drinker immediately gains twice the number of levels of Fatigue that they should have suffered while the draft was in effect.

TRANSMUTE ELEMENT

Rank: Heroic

Power Points: 8

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Trappings: Acid baths, chemical washes, high-temperature kilns, electric fluid enhancement

This power allows an experienced Alchemist to turn small amounts of inorganic elements into other inorganic elements. Stone can be turned into iron, for example, or lead into gold. Five pounds of material can be transmuted on a successful Alchemy roll, plus one additional pound per raise.

TRANSMUTE WEAPON

Rank: Novice

Power Points: 3

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 minute/Rank

Trappings: Weapon, diamond paste, alchemical washes, infused fire beetle shells

Some Banes are far more vulnerable to weapons made of specific substances. This power temporarily transforms existing weapon so that it becomes a manifestation of a bane's vulnerabilities. This does not give the wielder a bonus to hit his foes, but it does enable the weapon to more effectively damage its target. The infusion somehow recognizes its target's vulnerabilities and replicates whatever material that is, so that a single weapon may represent multiple different types of attack materials over the course of its duration, if different types of opponents are attacked.

Witchcraft

Spells, curses, charms, chants, or hexes—all of these are part and parcel of witchcraft as it is known on Morden. Witchcraft is the manipulation of magic to achieve specific goals—and it is the most powerful tool of the Witches that have conquered Morden. However, it is not the Witches alone who can wield witchcraft and channel it into charms or spells. Many banes and some humans can learn to harness the supernatural forces of witchcraft. This magic can accomplish tasks both small and large, from cleansing the dirt out of a hovel to collapsing a mountain pass. There is an astonishing variety of uses for witchcraft, and the use of this magic in itself is neither particularly good nor evil. Those who perform witchcraft as agents of the Witches are known as warlocks, while those who seek to use witchcraft instead for the common good or to aid in the resistance against the Witches' dark influence are often called "white witches."

The specific manner in which a warlock or white witch wields witchcraft can take many forms. Across Morden and the Discordian Sea, there are innumerable different styles and approaches. However, the forms of witchcraft that are most often seen in Morden are three: invocation, sympathy, and sigilism.

Invocation is the broadest form of witchcraft and is often associated with charms and spells of low complexity, such as spells that are often used in battle. Invocations take the form of commands, often as the warlock or white witch calls elements of the world into his magic to take form as the spell. An example of an invocation to create a blast of ice or frozen wind would be thus: "I call the North Wind from the sky, take form of frost and razor, to my enemies fly!"

Witchcraft that involves sympathy draws a link between the warlock or white witch's charm and the target. Like produces like, and an effect resembles its cause. Sympathetic magic often is used in spells that affect the body, such as to cause harm or healing, and in charms that involve the senses, such as illusions or to cause light and darkness. A warlock using sympathy and contagion could focus his energies upon a piece of earth taken from a road, and by moving his small sample of earth he could cause vast portions of the road to move as well.

The practice of sigilism requires the warlock or white witch to create a symbol, drawing, or other representation of what he wishes to accomplish with his witchcraft—the result is called a sigil. The warlock then concentrates on the sigil, filling it with his will and his power, and through the sigil the spell or charm takes form. Sigilism witchcraft typically involves physical, non-living objects such as stone or wood, and sigilistic witchcraft typically produces very long-lasting effects.

The effects of witchcraft can be incredibly useful to nearly any enterprise upon Morden, but there is a risk to tapping into these unnatural powers. Using magic associated with a particular Witch gives that being a hold upon the caster, meaning that many warlocks and white witches have paid a steep price for their gifts. This risk can be managed and often is minimal for minor charms with prior planning and a strong will. However, the risk is always present, and only escalates in times where great power or hasty preparation is required. The Enochians, perhaps surprisingly, do not speak out against white witches—the church acknowledges that witchcraft incurs a threat to the caster's soul, but little more. It is known that the Enochians have sponsored some of their own to learn the ways of white witchcraft in order to better oppose the Witches plaguing Morden.

Charms and Spells

Witches may make their wards and charms with the following powers: Beast Friend, Blast, Blind, Bolt, Boost/Lower Trait, Circle of Thorns†, Confusion, Corpse Senses*, Curset†, Damage Field, Darknight, Disguise, Divination, Drain Power Points, Drain Years*, Enhance Undead*, Entangle, Farseeing†, Fear, Feral Form†, Fly, Grave Speak*, Growth/Shrink, Havoc, Intangibility, Invisibility, Mind Reading, Nightmares*, Object Reading†, Obscure, Power Negation†, Probe†, Puppet, Quickness, Shape Change, Slow, Slumber, Speed, Squall†, Steal Wounds†, Stun, Transmogrify†, Wall Walker, Zombie.

*From Savage Worlds Horror Companion

†Power from Accursed



CIRCLE OF THORNS

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 4

Range: 10/20/40

Duration: 5 (1/round)

Trappings: A piece of spiked jewelry or clothing, a thorn vine, or a blackbriar wand

The witch gestures, and dozens of thorn-covered vine tendrils burst from the ground. They fill a Medium Burst Template, affecting everyone within its boundaries.

All those within the area must make an immediate Agility test in opposition to the Witchcraft roll made to cast the spell. On success, victims lose their next action, but may move out of the effect radius. With a raise, victims can move out of the effect radius without losing their next action. If the witch succeeds, victims lose their next action and become entangled within the thorn-covered vines and are unable to move or use any skills linked to Agility or Strength. On a raise, they suffer 2d6 + 2 damage, armor applies normally.

Each following round, a character held by this spell must make an Agility test to break free. On success, he escapes the effect radius. With success and a raise, he may move outside of the effect radius and still act normally. On failure, he remains unable to act and suffer an additional 2d6 + 2 damage, armor still applies normally.

CURSE

Rank: Seasoned

Range: Touch

Duration: Special

Trappings: Evil eye, hexing, spoken curse

Some white witches use their arts for good while others use theirs to inflict pain and suffering upon their foes. To use this particularly nasty spell, the witch pits his Witchcraft skill against the victim's Spirit. If the caster is successful, the victim becomes sick and suffers Fatigue immediately. Each day, at dawn, he must make a Vigor roll or suffer another level of Fatigue. Once he becomes Incapacitated, he makes a Vigor roll each day to avoid death.

FARSEEING

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 3

Range: Self

Duration: 10 minutes (1/minute)

Trappings: An object or a link to the person being scryed.

When casting this spell, the Witch typically burns, boils, or otherwise destroys the object that provides a link to the spell's target. In so doing, the ash, smoke, or steam from the linked item is consumed or washes over the Witch's face. Her senses are then transferred to location of the targeted person or object. For the entirety of the spell's duration, the witch's sense of sight is transferred to the targeted device. For each raise on the arcane skill roll, the caster may send an additional sense to the targeted location. So, with one raise, the witch could both see and hear from the object's location.

FERAL FORM

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 3

Range: Touch

Duration: 3 (1/round)

Trappings: The witch summons the essence of an animal, using bones, fur, or feathers from one to associate its essence with the target.

Feral form bestows the partial appearance and powers of an animal upon one of the white witch's allies. The ability bestowed must be chosen when the power is used. The mental faculties of the target are not affected. The ability bestowed depends upon the feral form chosen.

- **Bear:** Target increases Strength and Vigor by 2 steps.
- **Hawk:** Target grows wings bestowing a Flight Pace of 6" and Climb of 2".
- **Hound:** Target gains a +4 bonus on Notice rolls and a bite attack that inflicts Str+d4 damage.

- **Ox:** Target grows horns that inflict Str+d4 damage. If the character with feral form moves 6" or more before attacking they add +4 to their damage total.
- **Toad:** Target can leap d6+2", adding +2 to Fighting and Damage if he leaps into combat.
- **Wolf:** Target gains a bite attack that inflicts Str+d6. With a raise on his Fighting roll, he hits a foe's most weakly-armored location.

ILLUSION

Rank: Novice

Power Points: 3

Range: Spirit

Duration: 3 (1/round)

Illusion makes the target see something that isn't there, or else see things differently than they actually are. The caster's arcane skill is opposed by the target's Spirit. Success means the target perceives the illusion as real with one of their five senses. Once they examine the illusion with any of their other senses, the illusion is broken. A raise indicates that the target perceives the illusion as real with all senses.

Illusory attacks can never actually wound a target, though they can cause a target to become Shaken. Passive illusions, like a wall, take little effort to maintain. The Power Point cost must be met, but only normal maintenance penalties apply. Active illusions, such as a black cat or phantom enemies, require constant concentration to maintain. The caster may move a normal Pace, but may take no other actions while maintaining such an illusion.

This spell only works on sentient, living beings. It is useless against animals, spirits, or the undead.

OBJECT READING

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 2

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant

Trappings: An object must be placed in a boiling cauldron, and a recipe customized to its nature is brewed.

Object reading is the ability to see the past of a specific, inanimate object, discovering who held it, where it has been, and such like. A success allows the witch to see previous owners of the object, starting with the most recent and working backward. A raise provides more accurate details. The witch sees only images—he cannot learn the person's name or current whereabouts through this power.

POWER NEGATION

Rank: Legendary

Power Points: 5

Range: 5/10/20

Duration: 5 (1/round)

Trappings: A wooden twig, a pair of handcuffs, a hangman's noose

The witch snaps the twig, locks the cuffs, or tightens the noose with a gesture towards her subject. As she completes the gesture, make an arcane skill roll, opposed by the target's Spirit. On success, the subject loses access to one Edge or Special Ability of the witch's choosing—this can include Arcane Backgrounds or racial abilities. Each raise on the test enables the witch to negate an additional Edge or Special Ability. The victim loses complete access to these Edges or Abilities for the duration of the curse.

PROBE

Rank: Seasoned

Power Points: 3

Range: Special

Duration: Instant

Trappings: The witch must physically constrain her target and make physical contact with a portion of the victim's body.

The mind reading power only allows for the scanning of surface thoughts, but to reach deeper into a victim's mind the witch must use Probe. The witch must make a Witchcraft roll opposed by his victim's Spirit. The character must beat his victim's roll and score a success.

SQUALL

Rank: Heroic

Power Points: 8

Range: One square mile

Duration: 2d6 minutes

Trappings: A gesture of arms and a gathering of clouds.

This spell summons up a small but powerful storm that can obscure areas, frighten off enemies, and cause incredible damage to plant life, structures, and living creatures caught within. These highly focused storms feature high winds, driving rain, large hail, incessant thunder, and deadly sheets of lightning. When caught in a squall, living creatures take 1d4 points of damage per turn due to hail, stinging rain, slipping and falling, and flying or falling debris until they can reach suitable shelter. This damage ignores armor.

During a Squall, visibility is extremely limited and the ground turns quickly to a quagmire of mud and hail, making walking quite difficult. All movement counts as if it were through Difficult Ground, and all attack rolls made while in the storm are at -2. In addition, any gunpowder carried by people caught in a squall is ruined unless it is sealed in watertight casks.

STEAL WOUNDS

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 4

Range: 5/10/20

Duration: Instant

Trappings: A syringe, an empty vial, or some other container to capture the target's vitae

With a gesture, the witch draws a portion of the target's life force out of her body and into a receptacle. This life energy can immediately be redirected to heal the witch or one of her allies.

The arcane skill roll to cast the spell is opposed by the target's Spirit. Success causes the target to lose a wound, which the caster may immediately apply to heal a lost wound on herself or an ally within the spell's range. Each raise causes the target to lose an additional wound, which may also be redirected. All wounds stolen from the subject must be transferred to the same recipient.

TRANSMOGRIFY

Rank: Heroic

Power Points: 10

Range: Touch

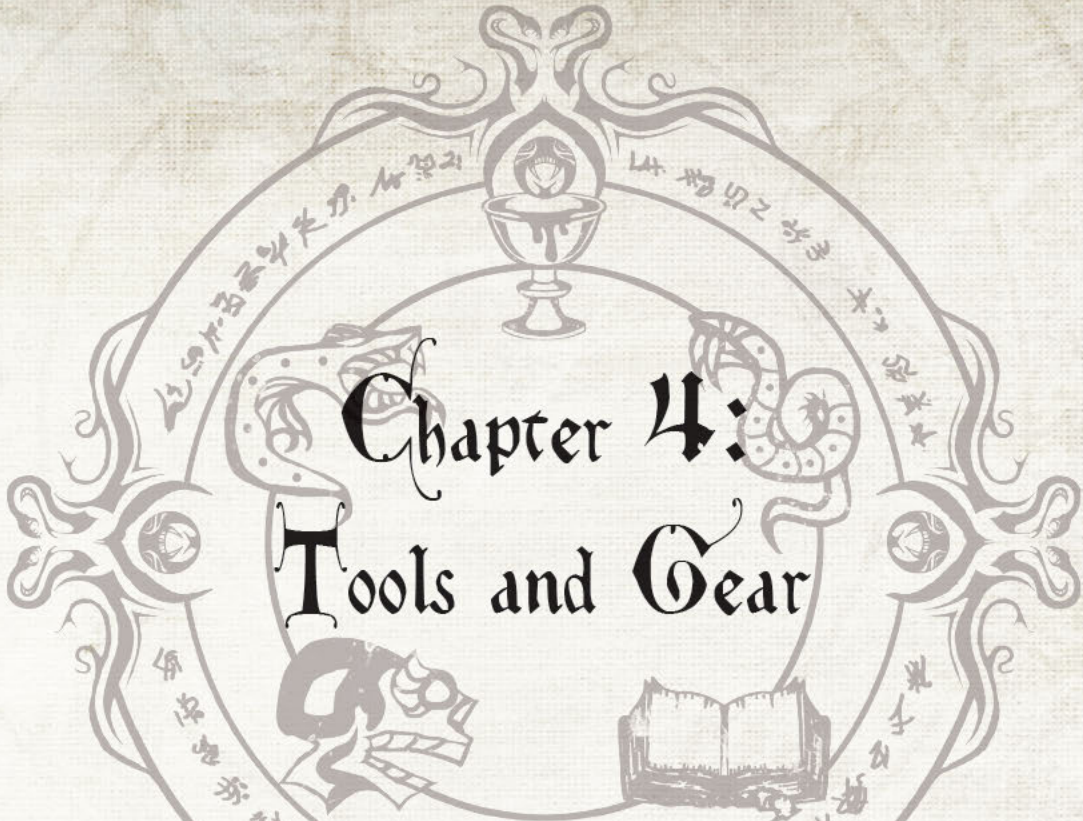
Duration: Permanent

Trappings: A living animal of the targeted type.

Holding a small living animal—traditionally a toad—in one hand, and touching a subject mortal or Accursed with the other, the Witch makes an arcane skill roll, opposed by the target's Spirit. On success, the target's soul and mind are transferred into the target animal. The target's former body immediately enters a deep coma, from which it will die unless life-sustaining measures are taken.

While trapped in the animal body, the subject retains his innate intelligence and awareness. However, he has no physical abilities beyond those the animal would naturally possess. If the animal has some means of communication, the victim could exploit that, but the animal cannot talk normally.

The only certain way to reverse this spell would be to find the animal that holds the subjects spirit and to cast Transmogrify once more, before the victim's original body dies.



Chapter 4: Tools and Gear

In the Accursed RPG, rules for acquiring a character's starting weapons and equipment are different than those presented in the Savage Worlds core rules. In most Savage Settings, each hero begins character creation with starting funds for buying their equipment. Weapons, armor, clothing, tools, and sundry gear items all come out of this beginning money. This typically puts the character on a tight budget and requires the player to make some hard decisions about what they can and cannot do without at the beginning of the game.

In this setting, new characters begin with weapons and gear that makes sense within the context of the campaign and the characters' back stories. For example, if the Accursed are a group of investigators working for the Enochian church under the auspices of the Order of the Penitent, they might be fully equipped with the finest weapons and gear in the Church's armories. If they are unaffiliated mercenaries, then they have at least basic gear and a primary weapon. If they are newly escaped from bondage or have suffered some other hardship, they may have little more than the clothes on their back and a basic stick or club. The Game Master has the final word on what a character does and does not have on his person at character creation, and he should keep in mind the story he is trying to tell and the backgrounds of the heroes.

The Personal Resource Die

For the Accursed setting, the bookkeeping entailed in tracking specific amounts of money has been replaced with a dice-based system. Each Accursed has a personal resource characteristic. This characteristic—represented by dice ranging from d4 to d10 depending upon a character's background—indicates roughly how much money and how many tradable goods a character has on his person at any given time. For the majority of characters, this characteristic starts at d6, and is modified by Edges and Flaws taken during character creation.

As fortunes wax and wane, each character's personal resource die slowly increases. As an Accursed gains experience and rises in rank, so too does his personal resource die. A character normally gains one level on his personal resource die once per Rank, to a maximum of d10. Under special circumstances, a modifier can be applied to an Accursed's personal resource die at the Game Master's discretion. This could reflect the group gaining or losing access to church resources for members of the Order, the discovery of some great lost treasure, buying a round at a tavern, or anything else that temporarily increases or decreases their wealth and spending power. In cases such as these, the Game Master should consider adding a modifier to a character's personal resource die for the next roll they attempt.

More extreme expenditures justify a penalty to the character's personal resource die for an extended period. Examples could be if a character were robbed or made a substantial donation to a worthy cause. In essence, if the situation has conspired to leave the character particularly poor or wealthy, then more extreme penalties are applicable. Some of these could readily remain in place until story reasons have resolved the issue.

Gear Value and Availability

Every item in Accursed has a value rating and an availability rating, both of which modify a player's roll when purchasing an item. An item's value rating is a rough representation of its purchase price, and its availability is a reflection of how common an item is. These numbers are largely a suggestion and reflect the value and availability of an item under perfect conditions. They can be further modified by the Game Master depending upon supply and demand, current location, or any number of external factors.

GEAR VALUE TABLE

Value	Rating
Cheap	+2
Moderate	+0
Expensive	-2
Exorbitant	-4
Priceless	-6

GEAR AVAILABILITY TABLE

Availability	Rating
Surplus	+2
Common	+0
Uncommon	-2
Scarce	-4
Rare	-6



The Acquisition Roll

When a character chooses to buy an item, whether a sword or a keg of powder or a piece of information, he makes an acquisition roll. The acquisition roll uses the character's personal resource die, and rolls against a difficulty of 4 modified by the item's value and availability. In addition, further modifiers to the acquisition roll may be applied at the Game Master's discretion to reflect the use of skills such as Intimidation, Persuasion, and Streetwise. Successes on these skill rolls could typically add +1, with an additional +1 per raise, if the Game Master feels it is appropriate. Failure leads to -1 or -2 penalties to the acquisition roll depending upon the severity of the failure, plus any additional complications the Game Master sees fit to impose.

CURRENCY IN MORDEN

While each of the sovereign nations of Morden mints its own currency, the Manreian ducat (represented by the symbol §) is the strongest and the most stable. Since Manreia survived the Bane War with its economy relatively intact, the ducat became the most commonly used currency throughout Morden. Now a functionally international currency, the ducat is pegged to the price of gold and is accepted as legal tender nearly everywhere. The ducat is issued in one, five, ten, twenty-five, and fifty ducat coins consisting of differing bi-metal alloys depending upon the denomination. The central bank of Palmyra also issues a number of bank notes for larger sums, typically in the hundreds or thousands of duchats. These are promissory notes, in effect a promise to pay the bearer in coins, and are used to move large sums more easily and securely over long distances.

While the ducat is incredibly common and trusted throughout Morden, there are still places where it is not accepted. These are usually poor or backwater areas with little use for metal coins or foreign paper. In these benighted areas, barter is the most common currency. In some isolated regions, local currencies do exist, but they are generally valueless outside of those places.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE

As mentioned earlier, each nation in Morden mints their own coins and controls their own currency. These currencies—the Piaster from Hyphrates, the Grivna from Steppengrad, the Shequel from Hebron, the Leiu from Valkenholm, and the Sceat from Cairn Kainen—all trade against the ducat at differing rates depending upon a number of factors such as the strength of local economies and the number of coins in circulation. Currencies can be exchanged at banks or common moneylenders found in any sizable town

or city. Currency exchange rates are left to the Game Master's discretion, although GM's are encouraged to err on the safe side when asking the heroes to trade their strong duchats for weaker local currencies.

Gear Notes

Specific clarifications are necessary for some of the presented gear.

Ammunition

With the development and widespread use of firearms in Morden over the past decades, a number of different ammunition types have come into use. These range from common round ball ammunition for muskets to bird shot to unique and exotic ammunition like spin-stabilized bullets and rounds coated in Alchemical compounds made to deal greater damage to the banes of the Witch armies.

ROUND BALL

The standard ammunition of musket shooters all throughout Morden, the round ball is a simple, large caliber ball of soft lead. Round ball ammunition is slightly smaller in diameter than the bore of the musket in which they are used to facilitate easy loading in a weapon already fouled by previous powder charges. The downside to this is that the smaller ball and blunt shape of the ball makes a musket relatively inaccurate at long distances.

SHOT

Used in blunderbusses, fowling pieces, and the occasional musket, shot is simply a collection of small, loosely packed lead pellets. When fired, these pellets spread out over a wide area and can catch multiple targets in their spread. The effects of using shot ammunition in a weapon are discussed further in the section on fowling pieces and pepperboxes.

SCATTERSHOT

Scattershot loads simply combine loading a standard musket ball with a handful of the lead shot pellets. They are most commonly loaded into fowling pieces. A musket gains +1 to Shooting rolls when loaded with scattershot.

PAPER CARTRIDGE

Paper cartridges were designed during the Bane War to speed up the reloading of muskets and pistols. These short, cylindrical cartridges contain the necessary powder, wad, and shot for loading a firearm in a handy, easy to use package. The fast burning paper used in the cartridge is typically coated in beeswax, lard, or tallow to give it some measure of moisture resistance as well as to lubricate the cartridge so that it can be rammed into even the dirtiest barrel quickly and cleanly. To use, the entire cartridge is simply rammed down the barrel, paper and all, and the weapon is ready to fire. Weapons loaded with paper cartridges have their reload time reduced by one action. A paper cartridge may contain any specialty round, including scattershot, shot, or Witchkiller rounds. Paper Cartridges add +1 to both Value and Availability of any ammunition.

Armor

Armor has been made largely obsolete by the widespread use of firearms, but most mercenaries and adventurers still like to have a little bit of extra protection on their backs in case of emergency.

BRIGANDINE

Perhaps the most common type of armor used in Morden is the brigandine. This relatively lightweight armor consists of thin steel plates between layers of felt, linen, or silk sewn into the lining of a garment—typically a weskit or heavy coat or jacket. Brigandine provides good armor protection to the arms and torso, and can be as plain or heavily ornamented as the owner wishes.

GORGET

Made of either hardened leather or metal, a gorget consists of a tall collar that protects and reinforces the wearer's neck, and a small breastplate that typically only covers the heart. While their size and specificity may seem to limit their usefulness, gorgets are incredibly popular in Valkenholm. Both the forces of Sanguinara and those who struggle against her use them frequently.

REINFORCED GREATCOAT

Greatcoats are a popular and versatile garment worn by both men and women among the fashionable people of Morden. Cut in a variety of lengths and styles, greatcoats are typically made from heavy wool with quilted linings. They can be made of anything the wearer desires, from exotic leathers to linen to watered silk, so long as an individual has the duchats to pay for it. Reinforced greatcoats add a layer of thin steel plates and hardened leather pads at strategic points in the coat, giving the wearer a layer of additional protection.

OTHER ARMOR

Older, pre-gun powder armor can still be found in use in the more out of the way places throughout Morden. Chain and plate are perhaps the most common, but it is not unknown for a mercenary or adventurer to use bits of full plate, scale, or other types to protect themselves. Full suits of these old armor types are vanishingly rare, and typically only one or two pieces at a time are available for purchase. For more information on pre-gun powder armor, see the Savage Worlds core rules.

Common Equipment

There are many common tools that are vital to characters attempting to live independent of society and battle against the Witches' agents.



ALCHEMIST'S TOOLS

An alchemist's tool kit is a collection of beakers, scales, bottles, vials, grinders, chemicals, elements, and other esoteric tools for use in making alchemical compounds. A new set of alchemist's tools has 10 units of chemicals and elements and grants +2 to any rolls made to concoct alchemical items. Restocking Alchemist's Tools costs 100\$ per charge.

APOTHECARY KIT

An indispensable accessory for surgeons and physicians, the apothecary kit contains a number of surgical tools, bandages, and various patent medicines for treating common ailments. A new kit contains ten doses of medicine and bandages. A character using an apothecary kit gains +2 to Healing rolls, and each use of the chest consumes 1d4 doses. Apothecary kits can be restocked at a cost of 50\$ per dose.

CANDLE

A candle provides clear light in a 2" radius for two hours. A candle blows out if the character holding it runs or is in strong wind.

CROWBAR

Crowbars are three-foot lengths of hardened steel with a clawed hook on one end and a flat horizontal prying blade on the other. They allow a user to more easily shift heavy loads, pry open doors, and complete many other tasks where a little leverage goes a long way. Use of a crowbar increases a user's Strength by one die type for the purposes of breaking through doors, opening locked chests, and shifting heavy items like stones and statues short distances. Crowbars also make excellent improvised weapons. They deal Str+d6 damage, are -1 to parry, and have 1 AP.

GRAPPLING HOOK AND LINE

A grappling hook is attached to a light line of variable length but usually no more than 15 yards. The user throws the hook just as if he were attacking a target. It has a range of 3/6/12. On a successful Throwing attempt, the hook has set and can hold up to 200 pounds of weight.

GUNSMITHING TOOLS

Characters who attempt to repair firearms or cannons with this toolkit receive a +2 bonus to their Repair rolls. It also includes bullet molds, which allow the user to create 12 lead balls in an hour with a successful Repair roll. A raise halves the time. A gunsmith may purchase additional molds for 50\$ each, and may work with up to four at one time. (Make one roll for the entire batch.) The metal costs 1\$ per ball.

LANTERN

A lantern provides light in a 4" radius for three hours per pint of oil. There is a 50% chance the lantern breaks if dropped, and a 1 in 6 chance it sets normal combustibles alight. (See the rules for fire in Savage Worlds).

LANTERN, BULLSEYE

A bullseye lantern acts as a regular lantern, but also has a shuttered reflective hood that can direct light through a small opening fitted with a powerful focusing lens. When used in this way, it provides a cone of light equal to the Cone Template. There is a 50% chance that the lantern breaks if dropped.

LOCKPICKS

A character who tries to pick a lock without these tools suffers a -2 penalty to his roll.

OIL (1 PINT)

Besides providing light when used in lanterns, oil can also be used as a weapon. Putting oil in a ceramic flask with a lit fuse is the most common way to do this. The flask is then thrown at the target where it breaks and the fuse sets the oil alight. Lighting a fuse requires 1d6 rounds with flint and steel (1 round with open flame), so it's best to light the fuse before a fight starts (a fuse continues to burn for 10 minutes). The flask's range is 3/6/12. Anything it hits is set alight on a d6 roll of 5–6, causing 1d10 damage per round. The fire has a chance of spreading as usual.

PICK

Picks are unbalanced as weapons. This inflicts a –1 penalty on the user's Parry and Fighting scores. They deal Str+d6 damage.

ROPE (20 YDS)

The rope can safely handle 300 pounds without worry. For every 50 pounds over that, roll 1d6 every minute or whenever the rope suffers a sudden stress. On a 1, the rope breaks under the strain.

SNOWSHOES

Broad paddles of wood or cane mesh strapped to a wearer's boots, snowshoes allow a character to move through deep snow with little difficulty. Wearing snowshoes removes the Difficult Ground penalty for walking through snow.

TORCH

A torch provides clear light in a 4" radius. Properly prepared torches last for one hour. Temporary torches can be made with some wood, rags, and 1 pint of oil for every 10 torches. Improvised torches last half as long as prepared torches.

Weapons and Accessories

The dangers of the Bane War led to rapid technological innovation in Morden, especially as it comes to the art of killing people and monsters.

PEPPERBOXES AND FOWLING PIECES

Fowling pieces, along with specialized, multi-barreled pistols called pepperboxes, fire a cloud of lead pellets called shot that deals damage over a wide area in front of the weapon. The cloud of pellets disperses as it moves away from the weapon's muzzle, also causing the damage it deals to decrease. At Close Range, these weapons deal full damage, at Medium Range they deal their middle damage, and at Long Range they deal their least damage. This is made up for by the fact that it's

often easier to hit a target with a spray of small pellets than it is with a single ball, granting the weapons a +2 bonus to all Shooting rolls.

Some fowling pieces are equipped with two barrels in either an over-under or side-by-side configuration. In dire circumstances, both barrels can be fired at once at the same target, which increases damage but reduces accuracy. If the attacker wants to fire both barrels at once, he rolls an additional Shooting die just like when firing Full Auto (plus Wild Die if appropriate), including recoil (which cancels out the usual +2 for shotguns). Roll damage for each successful shot separately.

Pepperboxes fire all of their barrels at once, and the damage and accuracy is already accounted for in their game statistics. Because of this, they cannot gain an additional bonus for simultaneously firing multiple barrels.

ARTILLERY

Artillery—heavy, large caliber, crew served guns mounted on carriages, ships, or in emplacements—revolutionized large-scale strategic warfare in the same way that the introduction of personal firearms revolutionized the infantry. Before the introduction of gun powder from across the Discordian Sea, ancient siege weapons like the catapult and ballista were considered state of the art throughout Morden. With the development of firearms, however, artillery has blossomed and become one of the most powerful forces on the modern battlefield.

Artillery pieces are constructed in a variety of shapes and calibers to fit specific roles, from the light and portable falconet field gun to the heavy hitting culverin. Despite this variety, nearly all artillery pieces share a number of common design elements. Most common field cannons like the falconet and culverin are heavy, smooth bore, muzzle loading weapons designed for both anti-personnel and siege warfare. Served by a crew of four to six men, cannons can be reloaded in one action with a full crew, or two actions with a light or reduced crew. Most cannons are line of sight weapons. Gun crews must be able to see their targets to hit them. Howitzers, mortars, and bombards may fire at targets they cannot see (assuming they know roughly where the target is) at a –4 penalty, and double shot deviation.

Depending upon conditions, cannons can fire a number of different types of ammunition: action shot, canister, and shrapnel. Round shot is just that—big round balls made to batter walls or plow through packed ranks of troops. To fire, the leader of the gun crew makes a Shooting roll as usual. A target directly behind and adjacent to the first is also hit on a d6 roll of 1–3, and takes full damage. This continues until there are no more adjacent foes.

Shrapnel is an explosive shell filled with metal balls, nails, and other scraps. The debris is hurled outward when the shell explodes, shredding lightly armored targets in a shower of steel. Shrapnel is an area effect attack, and uses the Medium Burst Template.

Canister is a shell made to detonate inside the barrel of the cannon. The jagged metal inside the "canister" sprays out of the cannon to shred anything within its deadly cone, like a giant fowling piece. To determine the effects of canister, place a ruler in front of the cannon in the direction you want it to fire and make a Shooting roll with no range modifiers. If the shot is missed, move the far end of the ruler 1" left or right (roll randomly). Now place a Medium Burst Template at the near end of the ruler and move it directly forward along that path for 24". Every target under the template is hit for 2d6 damage. Cover acts as Armor just as with any area effect weapon, meaning prone characters add +2 to their Toughness.

DE ACOSTA MODEL IV RIFLE

A recent addition to Manreia's arsenal, the Model IV rifle is the bleeding edge of firearms technology. Using a design attributed to the genius inventor Aureliano de Acosta, the Model IV is a breech loading long arm that fires a specially designed bullet housed in a paper cartridge through a heavily grooved barrel. The spiral grooves cut into the barrel, called rifling, add a fast spin to the bullet, increasing range and accuracy over a musket or rifled musket. The bullet itself is conical with a soft base and a hollow tip that deforms when fired to better fit the barrel and increase the weapon's hitting power. Model IV rifles are still exceedingly rare and expensive. Their firing mechanism remains relatively fragile and prone to failure. When a shooter rolls a 1 or 2 on his Shooting roll, the weapon jams and must be cleared with a Repair roll before it can be reloaded and fired again.

MAUCHER SWIVEL BARREL

Developed by a gunsmith from Valkenholm named Johann Maucher, the swivel barrel is a heavy pistol designed for use by cavalry troopers. Resembling a cut-down double-barreled, over-under fowling piece, this heavy caliber pistol allows a shooter to fire two shots in quick succession without reloading. The two barrels are loaded separately and mounted on a central rod that allows them to be rotated into position quickly. Swiveling the barrel on this pistol takes one action, and it can be fired twice before it requires reloading. The swivel barrel cannot fire both barrels at once.

MAGALHÃES CUTLASS PISTOL

Developed for the infant Manreian navy by renowned gunsmith Esteban Magalhães, this weapon is a large caliber flintlock pistol that mounts a short, broad cutlass blade beneath the barrel. Designed for boarding actions, the pistol has recently found popularity among adventurers and mercenaries for its power and versatility. The blade itself deals Str+d4 damage and imposes -1 to Parry due to awkward weight distribution.

NYKORYUK GUN

Built by the famed Gradniki gunsmith Mikhail Nykoryuk, this deadly weapon is as much a danger to its users as it is to its targets. The Nykoryuk Gun is a heavy, carbine-sized weapon consisting of seven short musket barrels welded together, mounted to a single reinforced stock, and fired all at once by means of a standard flintlock mechanism. Incredibly destructive over short ranges, when fired the gun sprays large caliber musket balls in a broad cone. When firing a Nykoryuk Gun, the shooter places a Cone Template and makes a single Shooting roll. Every opponent beneath the template who is aware of the incoming attack must beat the Shooting total with an Agility test or suffer 2d8+2 damage. The gun is also heavy, awkward, and possesses monumental recoil. The recoil imposes a -1 penalty to Shooting rolls. If the shooter rolls a 1 on his Shooting roll he suffers one level of Fatigue due to pulled muscles and sprained shoulders.

WITWENMACHER VOLLEY GUN

Volley guns are crew served, anti-infantry guns consisting of several barrels mounted to a common firing mechanism and rigged to fire all barrels at once. The Witwenmacher volley gun from Valkenholm mounts a dozen barrels set at different angles to help spread the shot and is exceedingly deadly when used against massed infantry or cavalry. When firing a Witwenmacher the gun captain places a Cone Template and makes a single Shooting roll. Every opponent beneath the template who is aware of the incoming attack must beat the Shooting total with an Agility test or suffer 2d8 damage. Each barrel must be reloaded individually. Consequently, it requires a total of 12 actions to reload the weapon.

VON NACHTMACHEN REPEATING CANNON

Deployed at the very end of the Bane War with mixed results, the repeating cannon is a primitive rapid fire weapon designed by the mad engineer von Nachtmachen. Roughly the size of a falconet, the repeating cannon consists of twelve fixed rifled barrels mounted in a cylinder mounted to a standard cannon carriage. The weapon is breech loaded with a pre-loaded twelve-shot cartridge designed so that each round lines up with one of the weapon's barrels. Once clamped on, a crank is inserted into the cartridge, which readies the weapon for firing. Turning the crank activates a complex internal firing mechanism that fires the barrels one at a time in rapid succession, filling the air with a short but deadly flurry of lead balls. Once empty, the cartridge and handle are removed and a fresh cartridge is inserted. It takes two actions to mount a fresh cartridge. On a roll of 1 on the gun captain's Shooting roll, the weapon is hopelessly jammed and requires a Repair roll at -1 to clear and reload before it can be fired again.

RIFLE SCOPES

Techniques for making mirrors and lenses have improved leaps and bounds over the past few decades, driven, as many other technological advances were, by the necessities of the Bane War. While magnifying lenses have been common in civilized areas of Morden for centuries, only recently have they become precise enough and easy enough to manufacture to be anything more than a novelty. Along with the development of powerful telescopes with which to study the heavens, and extremely sharp and clear spyglasses for use on land and at sea, one of the most important products to come from these technologies was the rifle scope.

Attributed to the genius Manreian engineer de Acosta, a rifle scope is a series of precision ground lenses housed in a brass or bronze tube. This tube is then fitted to a rifle or rifled musket to allow sharpshooters to make incredibly accurate shots over long distances. A rifle scope provides a +2 bonus to Shooting rolls at ranges of Medium or higher as long as the shooter does not move this round.

WHIPS

Whips—especially those made from iron, studded leather, or steel links—make excellent, if awkward, weapons. Along with the damage they deal, whips can also be used to entangle opponents. If the wielder scores a raise on his Fighting roll, he can choose to entangle his opponent rather than deal the standard additional d6 damage. Entangled victims suffer -2 to Parry until they can make a successful Agility check to disentangle themselves.

Technological Advances

When it comes to the development of technology, the nations of Morden are a study in contrasts. In many places, life continues today as it has for centuries. Serfs still tend fields for their lords, shepherds still watch over their flocks, and carts still wend their way across roads that are, in many places, little more than goat paths. Military tactics and technology are also largely antiquated despite recent advances in ballistics, technology, and military and materials science, and the sword is still the most common weapon wielded by a fighting man.

Fortunately, not all of Morden is trapped in the past. The emergence of alchemy, the development of gun powder and firearms, and ongoing improvements in both medicine and agriculture have all made their mark on Morden in recent years. Due to decades of war, however, many of the new technologies developed over the past few generations are martial in nature. These tools are dedicated solely to waging war. Alternative applications have often not even been considered.

There have also been significant advances in stellar navigation and naval architecture in the past century. In the years before the Bane War began, men of science and industry were turning their attentions towards new methods of shipbuilding and seafaring that surely would have led to a widespread exploration of the untamed and largely unknown Discordian Sea had not the Witches invaded.

BALLOONS

Little more than a curiosity for scholars and the idle wealthy before the war, balloons proved their worth as a tool of war many times over. Balloons are, essentially, large fabric envelopes filled with either flammable gas such as hydrogen or coal gas or heated air as a lifting agent and propelled by the wind. During the Bane War balloons were used to carry generals aloft to observe battles, to scout enemy positions, and even in some desperate circumstances, as a weapon against entrenched enemies.

Today, Balloons have reverted mainly to being curiosities or are built for scholarly work. Some few are still in use by the remains of Morden's armies, and it is rumored that some brave or foolish adventurers recently attempted to explore the Darkwall in a gas balloon. While their popularity has waned slightly since the end of the Bane War, their use has led to further study of aeronautics and flight. Many scholars look to these as the next great scientific achievements.

CLOCKWORKS

While water clocks, sundials, and other primitive time keeping devices have been popular in Morden since antiquity, recent advances have led to the development of precision machined devices using springs and gears. Further development of the clockworks found in modern timepieces has led to the use of clockworks on a small scale in other devices such as toys, orreries, and music boxes. Recently, more robust clockworks have been developed for use in lighthouses and in light industrial applications. Further experiments with clockworks by both de Acosta and von Nachtmachen are already showing surprising results and have caused quite a stir in the learned communities of Morden.

ELECTRIC FLUID

This is one of the more recent technological discoveries to come out of Manreia, and it is attributed to both de Acosta and his mad rival von Nachtmachen. Study of the electric fluid promises to revolutionize life throughout Morden. An extremely fickle and dangerous element, known to be quite unstable and capable of causing painful burns and even stopping hearts, control of the electric fluid has thus far eluded even the most dedicated and learned scholars. So far, little has come of experiments with electric fluid save for some maimed and dead scholars and libraries full of theories about its nature and its possible uses.

FIREARMS

Introduced to Morden shortly after the arrival of gun powder, firearms changed the face of warfare in Morden more than perhaps any other recent technological advancement. The spread of firearms throughout Morden's military forces rendered most armor obsolete almost instantly, as even the lightest charge of powder from the most poorly crafted musket can blast a hole through an iron breastplate as if it were cloth. During the Bane War, firearms helped balance out the arcane powers of the Witches as even the most horrible Bane could not stand up to a sustained and concentrated volley of fire from competent gunners.

Currently, the most common and accepted firearm is a muzzle loading smooth bore weapon fired by means of a flintlock mechanism. Powerful but wildly inaccurate at medium and long ranges, these weapons are grouped into two general categories: muskets and pistols. Muskets are long arms with full wood stocks and long barrels. Typically as tall as a grown human, muskets have become the standard infantry weapon in the armies of Morden. Along with their powerful projectiles, many muskets can be fitted with a long

bayonet that turns the weapon into a makeshift spear. In addition, thanks to their sturdy construction and heavy wood stock, most muskets can be used as clubs to great effect.

Pistols are, essentially, shortened versions of muskets that use the same technology in a smaller, lighter package. Typically of a smaller caliber and using a lighter charge than their larger cousins, pistols make excellent weapons for up close work and personal defense. Also, similar to muskets, pistols can be used as an ersatz club in case of emergencies, especially those heavily built, over-engineered weapons that come from the smithies of Steppengrad.

GUN POWDER

No other technological advancement has affected Morden more than the introduction of gun powder. Brought to the shores of Morden more than a century ago, gun powder was first produced some time in antiquity by one of the ancient and mysterious lands across the Discordian Sea. Made from a mixture of common elements, gun powder burns hot and fast when set alight, and explodes when ignited under pressure. Its use in warfare is, by now, well documented, but it also has many industrial applications such as blasting for mining and road building.

Keep Your Powder Dry

One of the greatest enemies of gun powder is moisture. Any time powder gets wet, roll 1d6 per shot. On a roll of 1-3 for damp conditions (drizzling rain, wading through a deep stream), the shot is ruined. If the powder was soaked (heavy rain, swimming), each shot is ruined on a d6 roll of 1-5.

PRINTING PRESS

Perfected in the decade before the beginning of the Bane War, the printing press revolutionized the book trade and, in its own way, proved to be every bit as dangerous a weapon of war as a cannon or a musket. Before the war, printing presses were used mainly by the Enochian Church to mass-produce religious texts to disseminate to the peoples of Morden. During the Bane War, they were used to mobilize and organize resistance to the Witches, a fact that led to printing presses and countless books being hunted down and destroyed at the hands of agents of the Grand Coven. Since the end of the Bane War, the few surviving printing presses have been put to work printing both pro- and anti-Witch propaganda, as well as new types of printed materials such as novels, newspapers, and pamphlets.

STEAM POWER

As with many modern conveniences, Manreia is the undisputed master of steam-based technologies. Having said that, the scope of steam power is extremely limited even in Manreia as the technology is still in its infancy. Primarily used in industrial applications, Manreia uses steam generators to power industrial machines, to pump water from deep wells, and other such menial tasks. They even have a primitive rail system used in the mining industry that is little more than a simple steam engine used to move heavy mine carts around quarries and mining sites. While steam technology is still very limited, it has shown obvious potential for future development.

Alchemical Compounds and Devices

Alchemy is a tradition that combines philosophy and a study of both natural and supernatural materials. Most often, alchemists are learned men and women who use their knowledge to create unusual effects by combining exotic materials. The trade produces rare and exceptional elixirs, potions, and salves, but some scholars have refined their craft for use in the engineering fields like masonry and metallurgy. According to Enochian historians, the practice of alchemy in Morden was originally systematized over three hundred years ago. The earliest records of alchemists practicing their trade began among the palaces of the Pharaohs in Hyphrates and slowly spread throughout the other realms.

ALCHEMICAL SALTS

Salts are one of the most important ingredients of Alchemical concoctions. They are used for a number of purposes, from adding color to fireworks to increasing the potency of gun powder to countless other, more esoteric alchemical applications. Alchemical salts also cause increased damage to those rare creatures who possess a vulnerability to common salts. Alchemical salts count as regular salt and possess +2 AP when used against banes from Hecate's Witchline. In addition, on a Raise, they add +2 damage.

BLACKBRIAR WOOD

This dark-colored wood is generally located in groves near regions associated with the Fey. Treated with complex alchemical methods, blackbriar becomes as hard and resilient as iron. When treated properly, some rare strains of blackbriar can sprout long, razor-sharp thorns when touched by the wielder's blood. Blackbriar is more dangerous than normal wood to Vampires, Dhampir, and other creations of the Blood Witch. Weapons or stakes made of blackbriar

wood deal an additional +4 damage to the children of Sanguinara, including Dhampirs. An item or weapon made from Blackbriar Wood increases its Value by -2 and its Availability by -2.

COLD IRON

Cold-forged iron is alchemically treated to be nearly as resilient and strong as regular iron. The result is known as cold iron, and its touch is deadly to both creatures of the Morrigan and any beings of the Unseelie Fey. Making an item or weapon from Cold Iron increases its Value by -2 and its Availability by -2.

DARK GLASSES

Popular among explorers and miners, dark glasses are specially designed eyewear that allow users to see in the dark. Sold as both regular glasses and as eye-protecting goggles, dark glasses contain two precision-ground glass lenses coated with a number of alchemical compounds. Wearing a pair of dark glasses grants the ability to see in the dark as per the Darksight power. Wearing dark glasses is taxing on the eyes, however, and users are advised to remove them occasionally to rest their eyes. Users wearing dark glasses must make a successful Vigor roll after each hour of wearing them or suffer one level of Fatigue.

MOONSILVER

Moonsilver is a metal of exceptional quality refined through alchemical processes. The origin of its name comes from the way moonsilver sparkles in its natural state at night. When polished, moonsilver gives off a perfect reflection, even allowing an individual to see invisible creatures and to see through illusions by looking in the reflection, and when worked it takes on the strength and hardness of bronze. Moonsilver counts as regular silver and grants +2 AP when used against banes from Baba Yaga's Witchline. In addition, on a Raise, it adds +2 damage. Making an item or weapon from Moonsilver increases its Value by -2 and its Availability by -4.

NAPHTHA

Naptha is an alchemical concoction consisting of a number of volatile, flammable compounds suspended in a viscous, gelatinous medium. When exposed to a strong impact, such as when a container filled with naptha is dropped or thrown against a surface, it bursts into intense and long-burning flames which are incredibly dangerous and difficult to extinguish.

Thanks to its nature and composition, naptha sticks to anything, is hard to dispose of, and even burns under water for a short time. While it is used mainly for alchemical and industrial purposes, naptha also makes a fantastic anti-bane weapon. When weaponized, naptha is sealed in glass or ceramic containers designed to be easily thrown and to shatter on impact. When the vessel shatters, the naptha bursts into flame and ignites everything within a Small Burst Template. Any creature or individual caught in the area of effect immediately takes 1d10 damage, and continue to take damage per the rules for Fire in the Savage Worlds core rulebook. Creatures with a particular vulnerability to fire take 2d10 damage. In addition, naptha ignites any flammable material on a roll of 4 or higher.

PALMYRIAN STEEL

The smiths of Palmyria jealously guard the secrets of Palmyrian steel. While none outside of a few master smithies knows exactly how Palmyrian Steel is made, rumors suggest that it is an alloy of up to a dozen different metals heated in special forges and folded hundreds of times until the desired results are reached. Whatever its composition, items made of Palmyrian steel are quite tough and exhibit a striking pattern of dusky colors described by some as a black rainbow. When forged into weapons, Palmyrian steel holds an edge for much longer than regular steel, and exhibits incredible strength. It is so strong in fact, that swordsmen regularly tell stories of cutting through stone, iron, and even through the swords of their opponents with blades constructed of this rare and wondrous metal.

Items constructed of Palmyrian steel gain a +4 bonus to their Object Toughness. Hand weapons, such as swords, mauls, and daggers, along with arrowheads and crossbow bolts, also gain +3 AP. Making an item or weapon from Palmyrian Steel increases its Value by -4 and its Availability by -4.

PATENT MEDICINES

Prepared in a variety of forms, from pills and smelling salts to salves and tinctures, patent medicines have only recently gained popularity and acceptance in Morden. Sold mainly by apothecaries, patent medicines come in a dizzying variety and are said to be able to cure anything from indigestion to gout to any of the strange illnesses brought over the Darkwall by the Witch armies. Most of these medicines are placebos made of sugar and chalk at best, and actively dangerous at worst. Some, however, actually are what they are advertised as, especially those produced by respected apothecaries and Alchemists.

SILVER

Normal silver is not suitable for weapons other than for ceremonial uses. An alchemical treatment, however, makes weapon-grade silver possible. This material is often prized by those hunting creatures of Baba Yaga. Making an item or weapon from Silver increases its Value by -2.

SPIRIT LANTERN

Spirit lanterns are used by monster hunters and explorers to expose the true nature of creatures or items obfuscated by magic. Based around a standard oil-burning lantern, these wondrous items use special lenses ground from rare crystal and coated in arcane alchemical compounds as opposed to plain glass. They burn a special alchemical fuel that produces a strange, flickering, bruise-colored light when ignited. When filtered through the lantern's lenses, the light produced by the alchemical fuel exposes creatures and items concealed by magic for what they are as per the Detect Arcana Power. A spirit lantern also provides light in a 2" radius for one hour per pint of alchemical fuel. There is a 50% chance the lantern breaks if dropped, and a 1 in 6 chance it sets normal combustibles alight. (See the rules for fire in Savage Worlds).

WOOD

Alchemically-treated wood can be hardened into a material suitable for some weapons. Sometimes, wooden shot is formed by carving the material into a rough sphere. Those who do battle against the forces of the Blood Witch value having wooden weapons on hand. Making an item or weapon from Wood increases its Value by -2.

WITCHKILLER ROUNDS

Made from rare and wondrous alloys and coated with esoteric alchemical compounds, Witchkiller rounds are designed to deliver extra damage to banes, Witchbreeds, and the various creatures created by the Witches that infest Morden. There is little standardization among these rounds, but each one grants +2 damage against their specific Witch and her minions. For example, a Witchkiller round designed to kill the minions of Baba Yaga might be made of moonsilver and filled with alchemical quicksilver. When used against Baba Yaga's banes or against Vargr, each round adds +2 to the damage dealt by the weapon. Making standard ammunition into Witchkiller Rounds increases the ammo type's Value by -2 and Availability by -4.

Hand Weapons

Type	Damage	Weight	Value	Avail.	Min Strength	Notes
Bayonet	Str+d4	1	+0	+2	-	A bayonet fixed to a musket or rifle increases the damage to Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands
Club	Str+d4	1	+2	+2	-	
Dagger	Str+d4	1	+2	+2	-	
Hand Axe	Str+d6	2	+0	+2	-	
Long Sword	Str+d8	8	+0	-2	d6	Includes scimitars and shamshirs
Scythe	Str+d6	5	+0	+2	d6	Parry -1, Reach 1, 2 hands
Short Sword	Str+d6	4	+0	+0	-	Includes cavalry sabers, cutlasses, and rapiers
Spear	Str+d6	5	+0	+2	d6	Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands
Staff	Str+d4	8	+2	+2	-	Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands
Whip (Leather)	Str+d4	2	+0	+2	-	Parry -1, Reach 2, See notes
Whip (Steel Link)	Str+d6	3	-2	+0	-	Parry -1, Reach 2, See notes

Ranged Weapons

Type	Range	Damage	RoF	Value	Avail.	Weight	Shots	Min Strength	Notes
Throwing Axe	3/6/12	Str+d6	1	+0	+0	2	-	-	
Bow	12/24/48	2d6	1	+0	+2	3	-	d6	
Crossbow	15/30/60	2d6	1	+0	+2	10	-	d6	AP 2, 1 action to reload
Dagger	3/6/12	Str+d4	1	+2	+2	1	-	-	
Spear	3/6/12	Str+d6	1	+0	+2	5	-	d6	

Armor

Type	Armor	Weight	Value	Availability	Notes
Brigandine	+2	4	-2	-2	Covers torso and arms
Gorget	+1	1	+0	+0	Covers neck and chest
Reinforced Great Coat	+3	3	-2	+0	Covers torso, arms, and legs

Alchemical Items

Item	Value	Availability	Weight
Alchemical Salts (per pound)	+0	-2	1
Blackbriar	-2	-2	Varies per item
Cold Iron	-2	-2	Varies per item
Dark Glasses	+0	+0	5
Moonsilver	-2	-4	Varies per item
Naptha (per container)	-2	-4	1
Patent Medicines	+0	+0	1
Silver	-2	+0	Varies per item
Spirit Lantern	-2	-2	2
Wood	-2	+0	Varies per item

Firearms									
Type	Range	Damage	RoF	Value	Avail.	Weight	Shots	Min Strength	Notes
Pistols									
Gradniki Hand Cannon	8/16/32	2d6	I	+0	-2	5	-	d6	-1 to Shooting Rolls due to recoil
Pocket Pistol	5/10/20	2d4	I	+0	+0	2	-	-	
Ingrande Cutlass Pistol	5/10/20	2d6	I	-2	-2	4	-	d6	AP 1, see notes
Pepperbox	5/10/15	2d4	I	+0	-2	4	-	-	See notes
Flintlock Pistol	5/10/20	2d6+1	I	+0	+2	3	-	-	2 actions to reload
Valkenholm Swivel Barrel	5/10/20	2d6+1	I	-2	-4	4	2	d6	See notes
Long Arms									
Blunderbuss	10/20/40	1-3d6*	I	+0	+2	12	-	d6	2 actions to reload, see notes
Fowling Gun	12/24/48	1-3d6*	I-2	-2	+0	15	-	d6	4 actions to reload, see notes
de Acosta Model IV Rifle	24/48/96	2d8	I	-4	-4	15	-	d6	AP 1, 1 action to reload
Musket	10/20/40	2d8	I	+0	+2	15	-	d6	2 actions to reload, See notes
Rifled Musket	15/30/60	2d8	I	+0	-2	15	-	d6	AP 2, 3 actions to reload
Nykoryuk Gun	Cone Template	2d8+2	I	-2	-2	18	-	d8	See notes
Artillery									
Bombard	100/200/400	2d8+2	I	-4	-4	-	-	-	AP 8, See Notes
Culverin (12 pdr)	100/200/400	3d8+1	I	-4	-4	-	-	-	AP 6, Heavy Weapon
Demi-Culverin (9 pdr)	50/100/200	3d6+1	I	-4	-4	-	-	-	AP 4, Heavy Weapon
Falconet (4 pdr)	40/80/160	2d6+2	I	-2	-4	-	-	-	AP 2, Heavy Weapon
Mortar	40/80/160	2d6	I	-2	-4	-	-	-	AP 4, See Notes
Von Nachtmachen Repeating Cannon	24/48/96	2d8	3	-6	-6	-	9	-	AP 2, See notes
Witwenmacher Volley Gun	Cone Template	2d8+2	I			-	-	-	AP 4, Heavy Weapon

Ammunition			
Item	Value	Availability	Weight
Ball (25)	+0	+0	5
Shot (25)	+0	+0	5
Scattershot (25)	+0	-2	7
Roundshot (per round)	-2	-2	Varies per cannon
Canister (per round)	-2	-4	Varies per cannon
Shrapnel (per round)	-2	-4	Varies per cannon
Powder (bag)	+0	+0	1
Powder (keg)	-2	+0	5
Powder (barrel)	-4	+2	25

Common Gear			
Item	Value	Availability	Weight
Alchemist's Tools	-4	-4	20
Apothecary Kit	-4	-2	10
Backpack	+0	+0	2
Bedroll	+0	-2	4
Blanket	+0	+0	4
Book (Blank)	+0	+0	1
Book (Printed)	+0	+0	1
Candle	+2	+2	1
Compass	-2	-2	1
Climbing Tools	+0	-2	5
Clock	-4	-4	10
Crowbar	+0	+2	4
Flask (Ceramic)	+0	-2	1
Flask (Metal)	+0	-2	1
Flint and Steel	+2	+0	1
Grappling Hook and Line	-2	-2	2
Gunsmith Tools	-4	-2	5
Hammer	+0	+2	1
Lantern	+0	-2	3
Lantern (Bullseye)	+0	-2	3
Lockpicks	-2	-2	1
Oil (Lantern, 1 pint)	+2	+0	1
Pick	+2	+0	6
Quiver (Holds 20 arrows or bolts)	+0	-2	2
Rope (20 yards)	+0	-2	15
Satchel (Cloth)	+0	+0	1
Satchel (Hide)	+0	+0	2
Shovel	+2	+0	5
Snowshoes	+0	-4	3
Soap	+2	+2	1
Spyglass	-2	-2	1
Tack (Riding)	-2	+0	8
Tack (Work)	-2	+0	8
Torch	+2	+2	1
Watch	-2	-2	1
Watch Fob	-2	+0	1
Waterskin	+2	+2	1
Whetstone	+2	+2	1

Clothing			
Item	Value	Availability	Weight
Formal Clothing	-2	-2	-
Foul Weather Clothing	-2	-2	-
Normal Clothing	+2	+2	-
Snowshoes	-2	-2	3
Tailored Clothing	-4	-2	-
Winter Clothing	+0	-2	3
Winter Boots	+0	-2	2

Food, Drink, and Dining

Item	Value	Availability	Weight
Average Meal	+0	+0	-
Cheap Meal	+2	+2	-
Expensive Meal	+0	-2	-
Week's Rations	-2	+2	5
Water (quart)	+2	+2	I
Wine (bottle)	+0	+0	I
Coffee (pound)	-2	-2	I
Tea (pound)	-2	-2	I
Spirits (bottle)	+0	+0	I
Beers and Ales (cask)	+0	-2	5

Lodging and Services

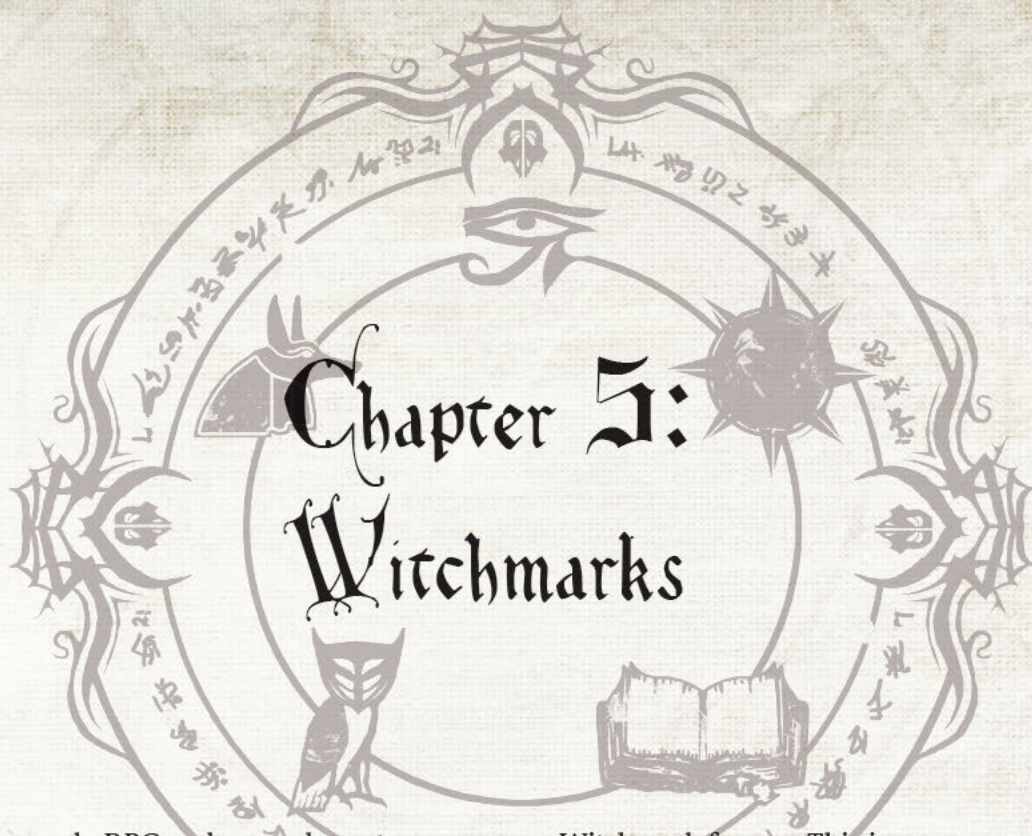
Item	Value	Availability	Weight
Barber	+2	+2	-
Bath	+2	+2	-
Courier	-2	+0	-
Physician	-4	-4	-
Room (Double)	+0	+0	-
Room (Single)	+0	-2	-
Room (Sleeps Six)	+2	+2	-
Scout	-2	-2	-
Surgeon	-4	-2	-
Teamster	+0	+2	-

Animals (Trained)

Item	Value	Availability	Weight
Dog (Guard)	-2	+0	
Dog (Hunting)	+0	+0	
Hawk	-4	-2	Includes falcons and other hunting raptors
Horse (Draft)	-2	+0	Pace 5
Horse (Riding)	-2	+0	Pace 10, Run d8, Sprit roll at -2 every round in combat. Horse bolts on a failed roll
Horse (War)	-4	-4	Pace 8, Run d8
Mule	+0	+0	
Oxen	+0	+0	

Vehicles and Travel

Item	Value	Availability	Weight
Barge (Passage)	+0	+0	-
Cart	+0	+0	-
Coach	-2	-2	-
Coach (Passage)	+0	+0	-
Riverboat (Passage)	+2	+0	-
Sedan Chair	+2	+2	-
Ship Passage	+2	-2	-
Sledge	-2	-2	-
Wagon	-2	-2	-



Chapter 5: Witchmarks

In the Accursed RPG, player characters are men and women who have been transformed by a Witch's curse into horrible monsters. These curses take physical form on the Accursed's body as a glyph called a Witchmark. Witchmarks are unique to each individual Witchbreed—for example, the Witchmarks of all Dhampir have many elements in common with each other, but look quite different from those of the Vargr. The individual elements that make up the Witchmark's design represent not only the nature of the Witch's curse, but also of the Accursed himself.

Unlocking the Witchmark

A Witchmark grows more complex over time as the Accursed learns more about himself and the nature of his curse. In Savage Worlds, this is represented through the various Ranks. A Novice Accursed, for example, would have a rather basic Witchmark representing simply his curse and Witchbreed. The Witchmark of a Veteran or Heroic Accursed can be incredibly intricate, showing not only his nature but telling the story of his life and actions by representing various Edges, Hindrances, and Skills acquired along the way. Whenever a player character reaches a new Rank, he unlocks a new portion of his Witchmark to signify his growing understanding and experience. Occasionally, an Accursed of exceptional will finds a way to transcend their curse, completely or utterly rejecting it and thus ridding themselves of their

Witchmark forever. This is a very rare turn of events in the Accursed RPG, and should represent the culmination of a long series of roleplay decisions. Other Accursed can fully embrace their curse, gaining access to even greater control over the abilities of their Witchbreed but, in the end, becoming wholly a monster.

Witchmark Abilities

As an Accursed grows more familiar with his Witchmark and unlocks its powers, he may find ways to harness its unique nature to his benefit. Some have learned to use their Witchmarks to communicate at long distances between their companions, while others have channeled arcane power into their Witchmark, allowing them to sense others of their kind and even detect the presence of their Witch creator's banes.

The Witchline

The monstrous creations of the Witches are found all across Morden, including the Accursed and the banes, such as leech-men or the cauldron-born. All creatures that share a link to a single Witch are known as a "Witchline." For example, the Dhampir, the vampires, and the leech-men are all creations of the Blood Witch—hence, these creatures are all part of the same Witchline.

The Accursed's desire for redemption may become so strong and overwhelming that he finds himself drawn to those in need by his Witchmark, experiencing an undefinable urge to seek out regions of Morden where the might of the Witches can be challenged and overcome.

At each Rank, an Accursed gains abilities associated with his Witchmark as outlined here:

NOVICE

Originally, Witchmarks were intended to assist the Accursed in working together as the vanguard of the Witch Armies. Since the sundering of the Grand Coven however, the Order of the Penitent has found new ways to utilize the curse's unique abilities. As a novice, the Accursed's Witchmark simply describes the character's origin and Witchbreed. The glyphs at this Rank are relatively small, covering only a palm's width or so of the Accursed's skin. The core of the Witchmark includes at least one symbol referencing the Accursed's desire for repentance, to become one of the heroes that Morden needs most in its darkest hour.

Witchbreed Sense: The Accursed may make a Notice Test to sense the nearby presence of banes and other Accursed of his Witchline. For example, a Dhampir could attempt to sense the presence of other Dhampir or any creature created by the Blood Witch.

Drawn to Those in Need: The Accursed's Witchmark responds to the presence of people who need his help. The sensation grows more intense if the people are in direct danger from the minions of a Witch, and gives the Accursed a general sense of direction and distance. The exact function of this ability is left to the Game Master's discretion, and serves as one means to drive adventures in the lands of Morden.

SEASONED

The Witchmark was intended to serve as a tool to bind the Accursed together and foment cooperation across wildly disparate and potentially antagonistic Witchbreeds. As the Accursed unlocks more of his abilities through experiences and realizations about his own nature and the nature of his curse, the Witchmark grows more elaborate and detailed. The symbols of the glyph now also represent the Accursed's key personality traits or attitudes. At this Rank, the Witchmark becomes larger and more complex, typically covering half of one limb or a prominent place on the Accursed's torso. The Witchmark's outermost ring contains markers signifying connections with other Accursed, often through the Order of the Penitent, and their ongoing struggle to free Morden from the Witches' dark influence.

Witchspeak: The Accursed can use his Witchmark to communicate to others of his same Witchbreed and any other Accursed with whom he is familiar that are within 1 mile. The Accursed must speak aloud to use this ability, and those he is communicating with hear his words as if he is right next to them. Note that other Accursed of the same Witchbreed within range also hear the communication, so this communication can be overheard by others nearby. This power also gives the Accursed the ability to speak to and understand any other creature of his same Witchline.

VETERAN

The sensitivity of the Witchmark extends to others of the Accursed's same Witchline, a measure intended by the Witches to be of use in organizing their forces. Increasing in size and detail, the Witchmark at this Rank covers an entire limb, or most of the front or back of the Accursed's torso. The outer ring of the Witchmark now contains symbols reflecting the Accursed's deeper fears, loves, or aspirations. Other emblems recount significant meetings and battles that the Accursed has fought against the Witches and their minions. Accursed that survive fighting against the Witches for long learn to trust the warnings of their Witchmark.

Warning: The Witchmark burns when there is Witchcraft in use or enemies of his Witchline nearby (within 25 feet). This means that the Accursed may sense enemy banes, but he may also be warned of a lingering spell or curse—the information provided by this ability is purposefully vague. In all other respects, this ability functions like the Danger Sense Edge, but does not function with regard to any other threats.

HEROIC

Some Accursed earn, through their deeds, a celebrated status as heroes amongst the Order of St. Vitus. These Accursed possess sprawling, highly detailed Witchmarks that cover nearly half of their bodies. These complex markings describe the Accursed's deepest held beliefs. Symbols on the inner ring now showcase both his greatest accomplishments and his most hated foes. Other emblems symbolize his connections with his closest friends and allies who have special meaning to him.

Bane Sense: The Accursed gains more information about Witchmarked or banes that he senses via the Warning or Witchbreed Sense abilities (up to 100 feet away). The power level of the target entity as well as distance, direction, and basic nature (including its Witchline and whether the creature is a bane or an Accursed) are available. The Accursed can now detect creatures from beyond his own Witchline.



LEGENDARY

While most Accursed are destroyed by the Witches or utterly consumed by their quest for revenge somewhere along the way, some rare and blessed few become legends throughout Morden. They possess Witchmarks that have grown to cover the majority of their body, the symbols contained within it completely recounting the Accursed's life story. Everything he is or ever was is depicted within the Witchmark, along with other symbols that the Enochians believe are hints to the Accursed's ultimate fate. Originally meant to distinguish Accursed leaders as generals in the Witch Armies, Witchmarks at this rank have a potent aura of power and authority that tend to either enhance the Accursed's force of personality or act as a defense, shielding him from harm.

Aura of Power: The Accursed may choose to gain one of the following three bonuses: the Power Points Edge, a one step Attribute increase, or +2 Toughness. These bonuses do not count as the character's once-per-rank purchase.

Acceptance or Defiance

At its heart, the Accursed RPG deals with powerful curses and the individual's struggle over them. How an Accursed reacts to his curse is absolutely core to the setting: Does he accept the curse as part of his life, or does he seek to fight against it and chart his own destiny? This section presents guidance on how accepting or defying the curse affects the Witchmarked, and how best to use that in an Accursed campaign.

The key thing that sets an Accursed apart from a common mortal is his curse. By accepting his curse, the Accursed becomes more monstrous—the unique abilities of his Witchbreed become stronger, but so do his weaknesses. In contrast, defying the curse means moving toward restoring the Accursed's humanity—the particular vulnerabilities of his Witchbreed diminish, but he also loses some of the corresponding strengths. In the end, fully accepting the curse means that the Accursed becomes much closer to a true monster, while fully defying the curse means that the Accursed can regain most of his human form.

The Fate Track

Each Accursed character sheet features a track to gauge a character's progress toward either Acceptance or Defiance of his curse. It is the Game Master's responsibility to judge when a character is ready to move along the track and toward which destiny. The Game Master should consider granting progress down these tracks as a reward, never a punishment. Acceptance or Defiance is a narrative tool to progress each character's story. They should not be a straightjacket guiding the character toward only one conclusion.

There are a total of three steps along the path toward either fate. The Game Master should carefully consider the pacing of awarding steps down the track with regard to the overall length of the campaign. It would generally not be appropriate, for example, for a character to progress down all three steps in the course of only one or two sessions. Instead, reaching the end of the fate track represents a major event in the life of one of the Accursed, a significant moment that changes him forever. A good rule of thumb for the Game Master is to consider awarding a step down the track after each Rank achieved by the player characters.

Ultimately, awarding movement down the fate track is a judgment call left to the Game Master, but below are some suggestions on criteria that the Game Master should consider. It is important to note that the examples listed below are merely that. The Game Master is the final arbiter of what is necessary for a character to earn the award of a step along the fate track.

THE FINAL STEP

Ultimately, the Gamemaster can only move an Accursed two steps down the Fate Track—judging the character's actions during the campaign can bring him right up to the edge, but only the player can choose when to commit and leap off into the final stage. To accomplish this, the player must select the Chosen Fate Edge (see page 72) to complete his journey down the Fate Track.

NO GOING BACK

The sealing of an Accursed's fate is no small decision. The Gamemaster should consider carefully before awarding a step down the Fate Track, because it is intended that the character should only move down one path; Acceptance or Defiance, and never both. Of course, the Gamemaster is the final arbiter of his own campaign, and if he feels it is appropriate for a character to have such a profound change of heart, he may allow a character to exchange his progress down one track for progress down the other. It is recommended that exchanging a character's progress in this manner should be a significant and extremely rare event.

Judging Acceptance

When a curse becomes part of the character's life, it means that she is taking the curse into herself and making it an integral part of her being. In many ways, accepting the curse is the most direct route to power. This is not without its risks, however. In acceptance, her powers grow, but so too do her vulnerabilities.

Accepting one's curse often involves reveling in the unnatural abilities of the Accursed. Simply using the Accursed's powers is not generally enough to count. If the character takes great pride in her monstrous abilities however, this is a good indication that the character is moving toward Acceptance. This can also involve taking pride in one's status as one of the Accursed, or if the character acts as if she is somehow superior to humanity.

The curse can take many forms beyond just the physical changes and supernatural powers that it grants to an Accursed. Many Witchmarked have fundamentally different natures due to their curse, having been turned into soldiers against their will. A character who particularly embraces her new role or who has shown that her Hindrances have a strong hold on her could be a candidate for acceptance of her curse.

Lastly, a refusal to change can also mark a character as accepting her curse. The course of a campaign can be long or short, but characters often find reasons to challenge their beliefs and find new lessons learned. A character that prefers to remain unchanged by her experiences fighting against the Witches may well find that her fate is to remain a monster for the rest of her life.

Judging Defiance

To defy a curse requires an individual to defy a portion of herself. It is not an easy path, to be sure, but at its end lies freedom from the curse. Those who defy their curse achieve what many Accursed long for: a return to humanity.

Characters who show a great distrust for their innate supernatural abilities granted by the curse are likely to be ones who could move down the fate track toward Defiance. Some characters prefer to rely upon skills and training rather than unholy powers. Others simply prefer to act in the same ways they did before becoming Accursed, using their powers only in times of great need.

An Accursed who chooses to spend more of her time working with the citizens of Morden rather than fighting directly against the Witches may be defying her curse in a different way. While many Accursed work with the Order of the Penitent to directly confront the minions of the Witches, not all wish to return to a life of conflict. Others prefer to help repair damage done to townships and villages, contributing in smaller ways to the restoration of the lands before the Bane War.

Accursed who seek to change their nature can be an indication of a character moving toward defying her curse. This can mean finding ways to alter or absolve her Hindrances, working to resolve a conflict with a rival, or even turning an enemy into a friend. A character who finds her beliefs adapting to the accomplishments she's made during her crusade against the Witches may discover that she is recovering some or even all of her lost humanity.

In considering Defiance, Gamemasters should review whether the Witchmarked has purchased Witchbreed specific Edges. If a significant portion of the character's experience has gone towards selecting such advances, then it is unlikely that the character is defying the curse. Characters who deliberately avoided purchasing any are much more likely to be denying the curse.

Acceptance by Witchbreed

Accursed who accept their curse become more powerful and true to their monstrous natures, but lose hold of their humanity in the bargain.

DHAMPIR

Stage 1: Acceptance

A Dhampir that embraces her curse may find that she enjoys using her abilities to bend the will of mortals, charming and manipulating her way through life. As the curse grows in power, the Dhampir finds her preternatural speed increasing slightly, making her faster on her feet. In contrast, however, the light of the sun becomes aggravating, distracting, and produces an ugly itching sensation upon her flesh.

Effect: The Dhampir's pace increases by 1, and she suffers -1 to all Tests when in direct sunlight.

Stage 2: Acceptance

At the heart of the Dhampir's curse is blood—the Dhampir who accepts her curse and grants it more power over her discovers that she craves blood more and more often, until she literally cannot survive without drinking blood from a living being. In return, her body's lightning speed improves a notch, making her much better able to defend herself against blows or leap out of the way of a gunshot almost before an opponent can pull the trigger. However, her flesh becomes even more sensitive to wood, and even the merest touch causes her skin to break out in blisters—any wound inflicted by a wooden weapon causes grievous damage indeed.

Effect: The Dhampir's gains a +1 bonus to Parry. The Dhampir can no longer survive on a diet that does not include drinking blood. The Dhampir now suffers double damage (instead of +4) from attacks inflicted by wooden weapons.

Final Stage: Acceptance

Completely accepting the Dhampir's curse means that, in many ways, the Accursed is now nearly indistinguishable from a vampire. Sunlight becomes nearly unbearable, and the Dhampir now must receive an invitation in order to enter someone's home. Her agility and hand-eye-coordination further improve, and the power raging in her blood now beckons to other powers and abilities that influence such vitae.

Effect: The Dhampir can no longer enter a home without an invitation and now suffers a -2 penalty to all Tests when in direct sunlight. Any abilities or powers that affect blood gain a +2 bonus against the Dhampir. The Dhampir's Agility Attribute increases by one step.

GOLEM

Stage 1: Acceptance

For a Golem, his curse has everything to do with the unnatural body within which his soul is trapped. If the Golem is able to embrace his new state of being, he finds that having a body formed of unliving materials can be quite a boon, for it does not suffer from the same shocks that a human suffers during battle. However, in return, the Golem also finds that becoming more aware of his body means his awareness of the larger world is reduced.

Effect: The Golem gains Immunity (electricity). Any of the Golem's Notice Skill Tests suffer a -2 penalty.

Stage 2: Acceptance

The Golem's soul controls its body. That same soul gains a stronger connection with the unloving body as it yearns to accept its curse. The improved connection between soul and physical form means that the Golem's body becomes even more resistant to damage, but its unique properties remain—and any particular vulnerabilities of that body become much more pronounced as well.

Effect: The Golem's Toughness Bonus from the Hulking Ability improves from +2 to +4. Attacks using the Golem's Weakness inflict double damage against him.

Final Stage: Acceptance

When a Golem completely accepts the nature of his curse, his body becomes more than the prison for his soul—it becomes part and parcel of the Golem's very purpose. So consumed is the Golem's soul that he finds he has sacrificed something of himself in order to strengthen the body itself, increasing the body's physical power in return. However, the stronger body is also heavier and harder to move, meaning that it becomes even slower than before.

Effect: The Golem's must choose either Agility, Smarts, or Spirit; the selected Attribute is reduced by one step. The Golem's Strength Attribute is improved by one step. The Golem's Pace is reduced by -1.

MONGREL

Stage 1: Acceptance

Mongrels who embrace their curse undergo further changes to their body, often caused by the power of their Witchmark. The Mongrel may, for example, find certain body parts spontaneously transforming into that of a beast, usually taken from a nearby animal of a similar type. The body part vanishes from the source animal, sometimes leaving behind curiously mutilated corpses. In addition, the pain of the Mongrel's various replaced body parts begins to grow more distracting, and he has difficulty focusing his senses on the world around him.

Effect: The Mongrel receives a bonus Edge as an Animal Component. The Mongrel suffers a -1 penalty on all Notice Tests.

Stage 2: Acceptance

As the Mongrel integrates more of his curse into the essence of his being, his animal features coordinate more evenly with his body. This has the effect of smoothing out some of the more uneven elements of his appearance. However, the process also increases the pain that the animal features impose upon his system.

Effect: The Mongrel's racial Charisma penalty is reduced to 0. The Mongrel can no longer increase his Spirit beyond its current level.

Final Stage: Acceptance

Once the Mongrel has completely accepted his curse, he becomes more animal than man. More of his body is replaced by bestial features. He is consumed by his animal instincts and finds his mental faculties much more limited.

Effect: The Mongrel receives a bonus Edge as an Animal Component. The Mongrel's Smarts Attribute is reduced by one step.

MUMMY

Stage 1: Acceptance

The Witchmarks of the Mummies are linked to the distant past of Hyphrates. The power of the Djinn locks the curse of the Mummy into both herself and her sarcophagus, linking the two forever. As the Mummy accepts her curse, her thoughts are more and more in tune with ancient history rather than the present, and the sarcophagus shell grows stronger and more durable.

Effect: The Mummy suffers a -2 penalty to all Common Knowledge Tests. The Armor bonus from the Mummy's Sarcophagus Shell Power improves from +2 to +4.

Stage 2: Acceptance

Mummies that embrace the Djinn's curse become more durable, their undead bodies and the sarcophagus stone with which adorn themselves grows more resilient. However, the Mummy finds that she can no longer remain apart from her sarcophagus for long. In fact, she finds that she is compelled to rest within the sarcophagus—just as she would if he were buried—for hours at a time.

Effect: The Mummy gains the Hardy Power, but she also must spend at least 10 hours of every day at rest within her sarcophagus.

Final Stage: Acceptance

When the Mummy integrates permanently with her curse, the Accursed finds herself driven to locate or construct a proper tomb. This tomb becomes the Mummy's home, only left for short periods of time and at great need. Some Mummies are able to infuse their tombs with power from their Witchmark and animate it into a kind of mobile fortress.

Effect: The Mummy must construct a tomb for herself and may only spend up to six hours per day outside of the tomb. At the Game Master's discretion, the tomb may be able to animate similar to the Mummy's control over her sarcophagus and move from place to place—perhaps the tomb is in the shape of a large Sphinx, for example, or perhaps it is a pyramid that can vanish from one location only to appear in another. If the tomb is inanimate or immobile, the Mummy instead gains up to 10 servants instead to tend to the tomb. The game stats of these servants should be up to the Game Master, but they should not be more capable than a Novice adventurer.

OPHIDIAN

Stage 1: Acceptance

As the Ophidian begins to accept its new form, it becomes harder for it to remember the ways that a normal human might act. Its reptilian nature comes to the forefront, replacing its human mindset, making the Accursed far bolder.

Effect: The Ophidian suffers a -1 Charisma penalty, but gains a +2 bonus to all Fear checks.

Stage 2: Acceptance

With greater acceptance comes a greater understanding of the Ophidian's unusual form. At this stage, many Ophidians become even more lithe, as their bodies slim and their appetites reduce. Some specimens even lose one of their lower legs and this stage, with the lower body transforming into a single tail.

Effect: The Ophidian's slimmer form enables it to more easily dodge attacks, granting a +1 Parry. However, the new physique is less capable of sustaining damage, yielding a -1 Toughness penalty.

Final Stage: Acceptance

Full acceptance of their Witchmark divorces the Ophidian from her human origins. As the Accursed fully embraces her transformation, she is truly a reptilian being. **Effect:** Under conditions of extreme cold, the Ophidian now suffers a -2 penalty to all Trait tests. However, this change comes with another reversion to its reptilian nature. Ophidians at this stage heal much more quickly from grievous injuries. They may make a natural Healing roll once per day.

REVENANT

Stage 1: Acceptance

Accepting the curse of a Revenant means accepting death itself. The Revenant who takes his curse into himself finds that his body slows down. Limbs and joints stiffen and become unresponsive. He also becomes more and more aware of the next step toward the one thing his mind is most focused upon—and for most Revenants, that is revenge upon the Morrigan.

Effect: The Revenant suffers a -1 reduction in Pace. The Revenant can now sense the direction and distance to the next event that makes progress toward his Vow.

Stage 2: Acceptance

Embracing the Morrigan's curse is difficult for many Revenants. The memories of the struggle to escape the Dark Cauldron are quite strong, but those who are able to accept the Witchmark's increasing burden are gifted with the uncanny ability to see in the dark. In return, their flesh becomes ever more sensitive to cold iron.

Effect: The Revenant gains the Low Light Vision Power. The Revenant's Cold Iron Weakness now results in double damage (instead of +4).

Final Stage: Acceptance

Upon fully accepting the Revenant's curse, his undead body decays at an accelerated rate. In order to remain whole, the Revenant now is required to eat human flesh. Because of his connection with death, the Revenant discovers that he is able to extend this connection to other corpses, briefly animating them long enough to give him knowledge of things they once knew in life.

Effect: The Revenant must consume 1 pound of human flesh per day or suffer a level of fatigue. The Revenant can now compel any dead creature within 25 feet to answer one question. The answer to the question is limited by the creature's intelligence and its ability to communicate when it was alive.

SHADE

Stage 1: Acceptance

As the Shade begins to accept her curse, she finds that her inherently otherworldly nature becomes ever more noticeable to those around her. Even the most oblivious of humans recognize that something is fundamentally unnatural about the Accursed.

Effect: The Shade receives a +2 bonus to the Spirit roll to activate her fear power. However, her inhuman nature unnerves those she encounters. She suffers a -1 penalty to any Persuasion rolls that rely on camaraderie.

Stage 2: Acceptance

Those Shades who start to more fully embrace their curse eventually recognize that their connection to the physical realm is tenuous. This is both a boon and a blessing. They are far less bothered by its impediments, but they also encounter ever-greater difficulties in interacting with the world around them.

Effect: The Shade's Phasing ability improves such that she can become fully Ethereal for up to 3 consecutive rounds. While Ethereal, she must make a Vigor roll (TN 6) as a free action any time she wishes to affect physical objects. She can only become Ethereal for a number of rounds per day equal to her Vigor die.

Final Stage: Acceptance

Any Shade who fully embraces her Witchmark becomes, in essence, a living spirit. The entity is now a creature who is inherently of the spirit world, and only interacts with the living through great effort.

Effect: The Shade's physical form becomes inherently separated from physical reality and she becomes permanently Ethereal. Her form strengthens such that she receives a +2 to Toughness and she is so far beyond the concerns of the body that she does not suffer from disease or poison. She must still make a Vigor roll (TN 6) to affect the physical world. However, when exposed to salt or salt water, the Shade incurs a -2 penalty to all Trait tests and damage-causing powers with a salt Trapping or weapons coated in salt now cause double damage.

VARGR

Stage 1: Acceptance

Vargr who consider their curse a gift are able to embrace the wolf within. Doing so sharpens the Witchmarked's already supernaturally acute senses, but there is a side effect as well. The Vargr's sensitivity to silver increases, meaning that the lightest scratch from a silver weapon inflicts a grievous injury.

Effect: The Vargr now suffers double damage from attacks inflicted by weapons made from silver. The bonuses from her Lupine Senses Power improves to +4 for smell and +2 for hearing.

Stage 2: Acceptance

Strengthening the curse's hold over the Vargr means that she gains a stronger connection with her bestial side. The wolf within becomes more fierce, and the beast's teeth and claws are far more pronounced when she transforms into a bestial form. Lunar cycles become more important as well, however, and the Vargr can no longer restrain herself from changing under the pale light of the full moon.

Effect: The Vargr is compelled to transform into her bestial form during the night of the full moon and for one night before and after. The Vargr's natural weapons improve from Str+d6 damage to Str+d8.

Final Stage: Acceptance

As the Vargr's curse fully takes hold on her, she becomes a wolf in human guise rather than the reverse. Her hunger is completely out of control, and she is forced to hunt and eat several times a day. Her teeth and claws become suffused with the curse's Witchcraft, able to strike with savage strength against any target.

Effect: The Vargr must now consume at least one pound of living animal flesh every six hours or suffer a level of Fatigue. The Vargr's natural weapons count as a Weakness against any foe possessing a Weakness, meaning that the Vargr's claws and teeth count as cold iron, wood, etc.

Keeping things Simple

The purpose of tracking a character's response to her curse is an important part of the Accursed setting. However, some Game Masters may prefer to take a simpler approach for a more focused Accursed experience. If this is the case, the Game Master may choose to ignore this section and merely proceed with the effects of the curse remaining static.

Defiance by Witchbreed

Accursed who defy their curse become progressively more human, eventually breaking free of their curse forever.

DHAMPIR

Stage 1: Defiance

A Dhampir who fights against her curse slowly finds herself more able to withstand the touch of wood, her flesh more tolerant of its presence. However, her supernatural eyesight begins to dim, until she sees in the dark as any mortal human.

Effect: The bonus damage inflicted by wood against a Dhampir decreases from +4 to +2, and the Accursed loses the Night Vision Power.

Stage 2: Defiance

As the Dhampir continues to defy the power of her curse, her body changes, able to handle contact with wood with only a mild discomfort. She discovers her senses slowly lessening, losing that supernatural edge that once had kept them so sharp. However, the Dhampir also finds that she is gaining more control over her own destiny, experiencing more good fortune than before.

Effect: The Dhampir's Notice Skill is reduced by one step, and she no longer suffers from Weakness (Wood). The Dhampir receives +1 bonus Benny at the start of each game.

Final Stage: Defiance

The final stage of acceptance impacts the Dhampir's appearance to a lesser extent than the other Witchbreeds. Nevertheless, significant changes occur—the Dhampir's fangs become normal-sized canines, her skin returns to a normal, healthy pink in color, and her eyes are completely restored to their original hue. The Dhampir finds that she has completely freed herself from the hunger for blood. In fact, her blood is now so pure that she easily resists any powers and abilities that normally can impact her vitae. She becomes even more fortunate by taking control of her fate, but at the same time, her ability to dodge incoming attacks is reduced as her speed and reaction time slow.

Effect: The Dhampir becomes fully human in appearance, and no longer suffers from Blood Hunger. The Dhampir's Agility is reduced by one step. The Dhampir now increases the bonus Bennies at the start of each game from +1 to +2. The Dhampir's blood is now so pure that she is immune to any powers or abilities that affect blood.

GOLEM

Stage 1: Defiance

Golems that rebel against the curse that locks their soul inside an unliving body shed some of the supernatural weaknesses bred into that physical form. In addition, the soul “driving” the body can push it harder, increasing its speed closer to that of a normal man.

Effect: The Golem's Pace increases by 1, and his Weakness reduces its bonus damage from +4 to +2.

Stage 2: Defiance

The supernatural power binding and animating the Golem's body is tied into the curse, and as the Accursed begins to deny the hold of that curse, that is reflected in the function of the body itself. The Golem's physical form becomes somewhat less resilient as that supernatural connection between it and the soul inside fades, but in return, the body's associated weaknesses also diminish. Additionally, the Golem's renewed focus on his own destiny grants him increased luck and good fortune.

Effect: The Golem no longer suffers from the Weakness Power, but he also loses the +2 bonus Toughness from the Hulking Power. In addition, the Golem gains +1 bonus Benny at the beginning of each game.

Final Stage: Defiance

When the Golem's soul has completely broken free from his curse, there is a startling transformation. The Golem's unliving body crumbles to dust, and from that dust steps the Accursed's human form. His body and soul are reunited, transformed by the power of the fading curse to restore what had been taken from him. The Golem's newly human form may not have the same strengths as his former shell, but the improved connection between body and soul means that his body is somewhat more durable. Also, his fully restored senses are awakened by his ordeal, and he finds that his destiny has grown even more fortuitous than before.

Effect: The Golem's body becomes fully human once again. He loses the following Powers: Constructed, Deliberate, and Hulking. His Vigor Attribute improves by one step (this increase does not count as his once-per-rank improvement), and he gains a +2 bonus to all Notice Skill Tests. The Golem now increases the bonus Bennies at the start of each game from +1 to +2.

MONGREL

Stage 1: Defiance

Defying the curse is not an easy step for Mongrels—more than most Accursed, the mark of their curse is always evident in the form of the unnatural joining of bestial flesh with the Accursed's body. However, unlocking the Witchmark allows the Mongrel to unbind his curse a piece at a time, transforming his body gradually back into its original form. A side effect of this process is that the pain no longer needs to be constantly managed through alchemical means, placing control of the pain into the Mongrel's own will.

Effect: The Mongrel loses one Edge from his Animal Components of the player's choice. The Mongrel also learns some means of dress so that he can conceal his remaining implant(s), interacting with Mortal humans without them recognizing his curse, whenever he succeeds at a Subterfuge check.

Stage 2: Defiance

The Mongrel grows more human as he pushes his curse further and further toward the breaking point. As his animal features fade, the Mongrel's features become more appealing. Seizing his destiny in this fashion also improves his overall good fortune and luck.

Effect: The Mongrel loses one Edge from his Animal Components of the Player's Choice. The Mongrel gains +1 bonus Benny at the beginning of each game.

Final Stage: Defiance

Once the Mongrel's curse is broken, his body returns to its natural form—all animal features are purged from his flesh. His experience with immense pain has completely inured him to that sensation. This means that no pain can compare to the agony he has already experienced, and he no longer has to fear pain from any source ever again.

Effect: The Mongrel's body is restored to human in all respects. He loses the Animal Components Power and the Agonizing Pain Power. The Mongrel no longer suffers Wound Penalties and is able to withstand any pain. He is immune to powers and abilities that have any effects based upon inflicting pain. The Mongrel now increases the bonus Bennies at the start of each game from +1 to +2.

MUMMY

Stage 1: Defiance

Mummies who seek to defy their curse discover that doing so is a mixed blessing. The Mummy's horrid, crumbling flesh slowly becomes smoother and her appearance improves. At the same time, the unnatural resilience of her undead body is mitigated.

Effect: The Mummy loses the Hideous Visage Power. The Mummy loses the +2 Bonus to recover from Shaken from her From the Tomb Power.

Stage 2: Defiance

As the Mummy makes progress toward sundering the link between her body and the sarcophagus, she grasps the strands of her own fate. This means that she gains improved luck and good fortune. However, she also discovers that her sarcophagus is no longer suitable for use as a weapon, the stone too brittle to serve in combat.

Effect: The Mummy gains +1 bonus Benny at the beginning of each game. The Mummy loses the ability to make bashing attacks with his Sarcophagus Shell Power.

Final Stage: Defiance

The sundering of a Mummy's curse is a momentous event. The power of the Djinn is not easily broken, but when her curse is lifted, the Mummy is returned to life as she once was. In addition, the lingering power of the Djinn surrounds the Mummy, granting her one wish that, when spoken out loud, is granted to a greater or lesser extent, depending upon the wish.

Effect: The Mummy's body is restored to fully human state. She loses the From the Tomb and Sarcophagus Shell Powers, but she increases the bonus Bennies at the start of each game from +1 to +2. In addition, the Mummy may make a wish, adjudicated by the Game Master, that can conceivably be granted by the power of the broken curse. Such Wishes generally cannot affect more than a small radius around the Mummy herself (up to 1 mile) and the duration and ramifications of all effects must be carefully considered by the Game Master.

Chosen Fate

The Chosen Fate Edge (see page 72) is meant to represent an element of player choice in her character's destiny. If a player wishes to influence her character's progression toward one fate or the other, she may choose to purchase this Edge in order to accomplish that.

OPHIDIAN

Stage 1: Defiance

As one of the more inhuman Witchbreeds, denying their curse requires a tremendous effort of Willpower. A casual glance at their reflection is enough to remind an Ophidian of its inhuman state. Those who are able to persevere find that it is a trying process, as they must learn to overcome their body's new nature.

Effect: The Ophidian's venomous bite becomes less potent, and its victims no longer suffer a penalty to their Vigor roll. However, the Ophidian also begins to carry some warmth in its heart once more, so that it no longer suffers a Pace penalty in cold climates.

Stage 2: Defiance

With a greater recollection of his human form, the Ophidian loses a portion of his flexibility. The Witchmarked must force himself to behave more like an inflexible human, both mentally and physically, and refusing to exploit the inherent flexibility granted by its curse.

Effect: The Ophidian loses the Disjointed racial ability as it attempts to force its body into a more static form. However, the long-term effects of its reduced venom begin to take hold, as the Accursed also loses the Caustic racial ability.

Final Stage: Defiance

When the Ophidian completely breaks its curse, it sheds its skin once more. The being that crawls forth from the layers of reptilian flesh is a fully restored human, rather than a reptile. Having the curse, the former Ophidian fully recalls the limitation and motivations of the serpentine mindset.

Effect: The Ophidian loses the Venomous Bite and Cold-Blooded racial abilities. However, he acquires the ability to use the beast friend power at will against any snakes he encounters. The character uses Spirit to make the test, per the No Power Points setting rule. The Ophidian also gains +1 bonus Benny at the beginning of each game.

REVENANT

Stage 1: Defiance

Defying the Revenant's curse takes the Accursed on a journey out of darkness and into the light. He becomes more aware of the world around him, able to focus his determination toward undoing the Morrigan's curse.

Effect: The Revenant loses the Restless Dead Power.

Stage 2: Defiance

The Revenant's flesh begins to knit together more like the flesh of the living as his curse begins to fray. Cold iron no longer burns him as it once did, but at the same time, the impact of wounds in battle are not so easily withstood. The focus of his singular vow loosens its grasp upon his free will.

Effect: The Revenant loses the Cold Iron Weakness and now suffers wound modifiers as normal. The Revenant no longer suffers Fatigue for ignoring the call of his Overriding Goal.

Final Stage: Defiance

The Revenant's victory over his curse is a victory over mortality itself. His body is restored to life in every respect. In fact, the Revenant is now immune to death's touch, and can survive nearly anything. A Revenant with a broken curse is a man whose life is nevermore in doubt.

Effect: The Revenant's body is returned to life as a normal human. He loses the Undead and Animated Corpse Powers. In return, the Revenant may now restore himself fully from death once. This ability only functions one time and then is forever gone.

SHADE

Stage 1: Defiance

Some Shades refuse to accept their insubstantial form. They attempt to remember what life was like as a human, and force themselves to live as though they had not suffered the curse. In the process of denying their Witchmark, they often refuse to use their supernatural abilities.

Effect: The Shade begins to recall more of what life was like before she received her Witchmark. She no longer gains any bonus to resist negative environmental effects. However, she is more capable of empathy and can turn off her Unnatural Aura ability at will.

Stage 2: Defiance

With practice and discipline, the Shade learns to actually overcome the limitations of its Accursed form. The supernatural is less of an obstruction, as she recalls and attempts to reintegrate her phantom form into a mortal body.

Effect: With a greater understanding of her lost humanity, the Shade becomes less affected by the trappings of the supernatural. The Vulnerability (Salt) racial ability is reduced so that the Shade may once more deliberately cross a line of salt or salt water. However, she is also less capable of inducing fear in mortals suffering a -4 instead of the -2 penalty to Spirit rolls used to activate her fear ability.

Final Stage: Defiance

The curse is broken, and the Shade recovers her mortal body. No longer is she a creature of shadow. Due to her experiences, she can confront the unknowable calmly and without fear.

Effect: The Shade is fully restored to human form. She loses the Out of Phase, Vulnerability (Salt), and Phasing abilities. However, she gains the Fearless monstrous ability. The Shade gains +1 bonus Benny at the beginning of each game.

VARGR

Stage 1: Defiance

Vargr who wish to break their curse must fight against it like an enemy they cannot see or touch. Defying Baba Yaga's Witchmark upon her flesh means that the Vargr begins to escape the grip of her never-ending hunger. The Vargr's connection to her bestial side weakens as well, and her claws and teeth are less pronounced in her werewolf form.

Effect: The Vargr's natural weapons decrease in damage from Str+d6 to Str+d4. The Vargr no longer suffers a penalty to her Vigor Tests to withstand her Insatiable Hunger power, instead gaining a +2 bonus.

Stage 2: Defiance

The Vargr starts to gain the upper hand in her conflict with her curse at this stage. Her flesh no longer recoils from the touch of silver, and she is able to influence her own fate more strongly, becoming luckier. Her link to her inner wolf decays further, and it becomes harder for her to summon the supernatural strength of her werewolf form.

Effect: The Vargr loses the Silver Vulnerability Power. In addition, she suffers a -2 penalty to transform into her bestial form. The Vargr gains +1 bonus Benny at the start of every game.

Final Stage: Defiance

When the Vargr is finally able to destroy the curse binding the wolf inside her, she exorcises the curse from her body completely. She retains some of the strengths of her animalistic nature, such as her sharper senses, but she is no longer a werewolf. The Vargr's bestial side emerges as a fully-formed beast, forevermore loyal and helpful to the Accursed.

Effect: The Vargr becomes fully human in all respects. She loses the Bestial Form, Natural Weapons, and Insatiable Hunger Powers. Her bestial-self takes physical form as a loyal wolf companion, and she gains the Sidekick Edge to represent this. The Vargr increases the bonus Bennies at the start of each game from +1 to +2.

Becoming Human

If one of the Accursed is able to transcend his curse, he becomes human once more. There are many abilities and Edges that he may have gained during his time as an Accursed that seem odd or out-of-place for a fully human character. The intention for achieving the final stage of Defiance on the Fate Track is that it is a positive and empowering experience for the character—thus, the intention is that the character may keep (and retain full use of) any and all Edges and Special Abilities that are not specifically addressed by the Final Stage's Effect notes. In the case of Accursed such as Golems and Mongrels, the character still appears fully human regardless of his Edges and Special Abilities.

Of course, the Gamemaster has the final say. If he feels that some abilities are simply not appropriate, he may of course restrict or remove them from the character. If this is the case, it is strongly recommended that the character receive bonus Edges to compensate for any Edges or Special Abilities lost in this manner.

Stigmata

Witchmarks take many forms, from the gold-etched cartouches common to mummies to the sewn-in scar tissue of the mongrels. No matter its nature, however, Witchmarks are sometimes given to revealing themselves. When a Witchmark is exposed to certain stimuli—including the presence of a powerful minion of the Witch who created that particular Accursed or when confronted with powerful Witchcraft—it makes its presence known. This display is known as stigmata, and it can vary wildly in its appearance depending upon the stimuli. Some Witchmarks bleed freely, whilst others glow with a pale, disquieting radiance. Still others pulse with heat or faintly writhe, squirming beneath the Accursed's skin.

Saints

There is a legend amongst the Enochians that some Accursed find a way to completely embrace or deny the curse that afflicts them. Those Accursed who achieve this remarkable accomplishment are sometimes called Saints, and they are vanishingly rare—so few exist that they are little more than stories to most of Morden. Saints are not only some of the most powerful of the Accursed, they are also representations of what an Accursed can become if she survives battling the Witches and their banes.

STIGMATA BY WITCHBREED

The expression of a Witchmark varies amongst the Accursed, but below are listed some of the most common.

Dhampir

For the elegant and lithe Dhampir, their Witchmark expresses itself upon the flesh as an image very similar to an intricate tattoo. Many Dhampir take pride in the artistic whorls of their Witchmarks, and the designs generally do not detract from the Dhampir's overall appearance.

Golems

Golems are often constructed out of particularly sturdy materials. There are many different types of materials that a Golem can be made from—some Golems are walking scarecrows, others statues of stone or jade, and still others built from dead flesh crudely sewn and bolted together. For this reason, a Golem's Witchmark takes the form of a carving, as if a craftsman actually cut or chiseled the design into the Golem's body.

Mongrels

The rampant experimentation that created Mongrels leaves a particularly unique Witchmark on their skin. Regardless of the Mongrel's bestial features and body parts, his Witchmark always expresses itself on a patch of his original, human skin. Perhaps due to the Chimera's cruel sense of humor, the Mongrel's Witchmark is a pattern that is literally sewn into the flesh. The threads that make up the sewn design vary in color from Mongrel to Mongrel, but the thread never decays, frays, or cuts.

Mummies

The Witchmark of the Mummy is perhaps the most unusual of all the Witchbreeds. The Djinn, creator of the mummies, enjoying taunting mortals and twisting their desires against them—thus, a Mummy's Witchmark takes the form of an intricate golden cartouche that is attached to their bandage-wrapped form. Typically, a Mummy's cartouche is placed on the center of their chest, but there are some Mummies who wear their cartouches on different parts of their body. If a Mummy is slain and its cartouche taken, the thief then suffers a horrible fate as his body transforms over the course of a day into another Mummy.

Ophidians

An Ophidian's Witchmark is created by the patterns of scales that cover its body. When their Witchmark changes, they shed their skin, revealing its new pattern. Among particularly accomplished Ophidians, this pattern can be so complex that it is only fully recognizable when the skin is shed and examined.

Revenants

When an Accursed is one of the living dead, the Witchmark seems like more of an afterthought. Although a Revenant's body can heal from damage inflicted upon it, the wound that initially caused the Revenant's death is always evident upon his body—the “death wound,” as it is known, never heals. Similarly, the Revenant's Witchmark takes the form of scar tissue upon his body, forming into the outline of the various symbols and glyphs that represent his curse.

Shade

For many Shades, their Witchmark represents their most profound association with the ethereal. When exposed, the marking—and the body beneath it—is completely transparent. In this way, their connection to Hecate is most clearly demonstrated by what is absent rather than what is present.

Vargr

The Vargr has multiple forms, from his normal human appearance to the bestial shapes he assumes when his lycanthrope nature takes hold. Regardless of his form, Baba Yaga's Witchmark lurks upon his skin in the form of a birthmark-like stain. The color of the Witchmark may vary amongst Vargr—some possess a more woad-like pattern, for example. Even when the Vargr's beast form covers him in the fur of a man-wolf, the area of skin where the Witchmark is displayed remains bare.

Removing Stigmata

The expression of a Witchmark is more than just skin deep on the flesh of the Accursed. Because the glyph is a physical manifestation of the Accursed's particular mystic transformation, many of them find its presence hateful, and many more have attempted to remove it through various means. However, the Witchmark is a core part of the Accursed's very nature—it cannot be permanently removed.

If the Accursed attempts to cut the Witchmark out, it simply reappears elsewhere upon his body. Tattooing over it simply does not work—the skin simply changes back to its former state in a matter of minutes.

The First Marked

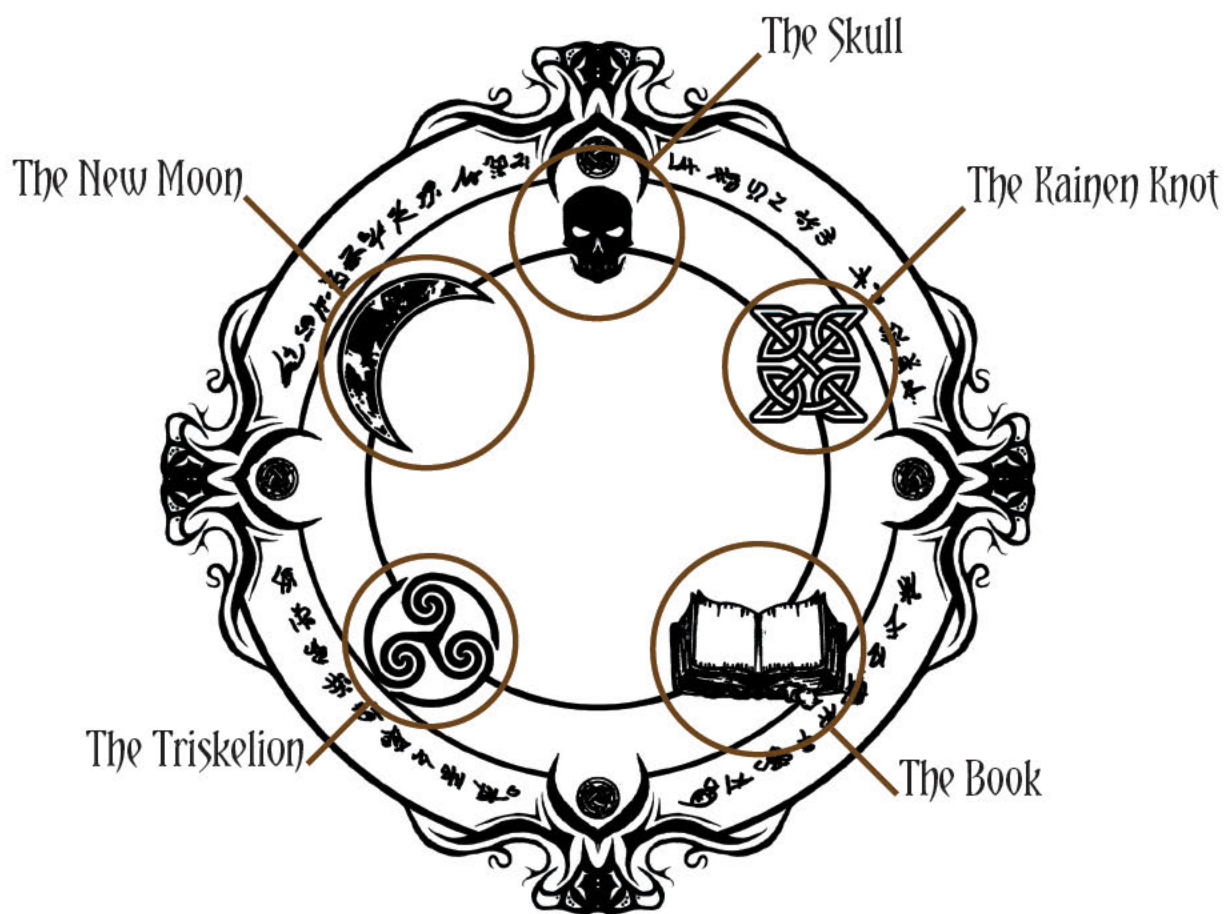
When the Witches first crossed the Darkwall Peaks they led armies of banes. The details from these earliest stages of the invasion come from the few survivors in the Outlands as well as the Witchmarked who served the Grand Coven throughout the war. A few of the stories indicate that some Witchmarked may have come with the invaders. Most others state that there were no Accursed prior to the earliest stages of the passage across the mountains. Enochian scholars now speculate that the ability to create a Witchmark was only discovered by the Witches of the Grand Coven after the early stages of the invasion. Without this technique, the Bane War could have ended in a very different way.

An Outland woman named Rachel Aliyah is believed to have been one of the first—if not the very first—Mordenites transformed into a Witchmarked. Aliyah was a victim of the Morrigan. When she emerged from the dark cauldron, she retained enough of her freewill to act upon her own initiative. This distinguished her from the other cauldron born, which were far more subservient to their commanders.

After the Bane War, Aliyah recounted her story to other Accursed—and to the Order of St. Vitus—countless times. In all of her retellings, the Revenant always explained that, initially, a grave knight ordered her to be destroyed when she was slow to respond to orders. However, the Morrigan took a personal interest in her, preserving her existence. For weeks, the Witch studied, tested, and tortured Aliyah, trying to identify her breaking points and the ritual that had made her so different from her cauldron born. The Morrigan released Aliyah from constant confinement only when her examination was complete. In short order, the Revenant was joined by others of her kind, and placed in a position of authority over cauldron born.

She served the Morrigan dutifully for the entirety of the Bane War as a member of the Witch Armies. However, throughout her service, she constantly chafed at the Morrigan's orders and the potent spells that kept her obedient to her Mistress. When the war concluded and she could once more act upon her own freewill, Aliyah began to try to find some way to recover a more normal life.

After the Bane War, Aliyah became an outspoken leader among the abandoned Witchmarked. She was instrumental in founding the Order of the Penitent, insisting that it could eventually form the basis for an independent nation of Witchmarked. Several years ago, Aliyah went missing. None are certain her final fate, though many remain devoted to the cause of a free nation that she once championed.



Anatomy of a Witchmark

To illustrate what a witchmark is composed of, please reference the witchmark displayed on this page. This witchmark is representative of a typical Revenant found in the Order of the Penitent.

THE NEW MOON

This symbol in the Witchmark's inner ring represents the Accursed's preference for subterfuge and stealth. He is skilled at moving unseen and evading detection.

THE SKULL

The emblem of the skull ascendant represents both the death magic of the Morrigan's Witchcraft and the Accursed's journey through the dark cauldron from life to undeath.

THE BOOK

The inner ring of the Witchmark contains symbols that are of special significance to the Accursed—the book means that he emphasizes knowledge. Clearly this Revenant values learning and intelligence over brawn and swift action. The Accursed may have even learned some charms of Witchcraft himself to use against the Witches and their banes.

THE TRISKELION

The triskelion is a symbol common to the Cairn Kainen highlands of rebirth and change. Many Revenants were created in or near Cairn Kainen, so it is no surprise that this Accursed's Witchmark bears symbols of that region.

THE KAINEN KNOT

The Kainen Knot is a representation of revenge. Most commonly, the knot is used to seal a feud between clans of the highlands, but in the case of a Revenant, it epitomizes the one driving goal to which he clings in order to maintain his free will.

Accursed Kickstarter Backer List

The creators of Accursed wish to extend our profound gratitude to all the backers for the Accursed Kickstarter—we couldn't have completed this project without your help!

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Monstrous Heroes Fight for Redemption...



Witches have ruled the land since the last battles of conquest, but their Grand Coven has been sundered, leaving behind remnants of a once-mighty army. The survivors of the horde include captured citizens of the conquered nations that fought as the Witches' shock troops.

These are the Accursed—the Witchmarks burned into their flesh and souls transformed these men and women into monsters. Now, unable to return to their former lives, the Accursed wander the land, giving aid to those in need in an attempt to atone for past sins.



Light has failed, darkness is ascendant. Only those bearing the forms of monsters can stand against the tide of the Witches' evil. The Accursed are this world's only hope—they must learn to embrace their curse or to fight against it, and find some way to free themselves forever of their Witchmark.

Accursed is a dark fantasy setting that requires the Savage Worlds Core Rules and Savage Worlds Horror Companion for use.

